

THE STRATEGY IN TEACHING VOCABULARY THROUGH WORDWALL FOR ENGAGING YOUNG LEARNERS IN ENGLISH CLUB OF SD NEGERI 2 BARABAI TIMUR

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Abstract: This study aims to describe the vocabulary teaching strategy employed by teachers using Wordwall in the English Club at SD Negeri 2 Barabai Timur and to analyze its classroom implementation and students' perceptions. Vocabulary mastery is fundamental in English learning, and interactive approaches are needed to support young learners. This research applied a qualitative field study, collecting data through observation, semi-structured interviews, questionnaires, and documentation. The participants were one instructor and 20 students of the English Club. Findings from the thematic analysis revealed that instructor employed various strategies such as contextual introduction, repetition, visualization, interactive games, thematic grouping, and formative quizzes. These strategy enhanced student engagement, improved vocabulary retention, and fostered a more enjoyable learning atmosphere. Furthermore, most students expressed positive perceptions of Wordwall, reporting increased motivation and confidence in learning English vocabulary. This study highlights the potential of integrating Wordwall not only as an interactive learning medium but also as an effective assessment tool, contributing to the development of engaging vocabulary teaching practices in elementary English learning contexts.

Keywords: English Club, Teaching Vocabulary, Wordwall

1. INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary mastery is a crucial foundation for English language learning, supporting students' skills in speaking, listening, reading, and writing. However, in elementary schools, vocabulary teaching often receives limited attention, relying on rote memorization and minimal textbook exposure (Mohammad, 2014). Initial observations at SD Negeri 2 Barabai Timur showed that although students were enthusiastic in English Club activities, they still faced difficulties in mastering vocabulary due to monotonous strategies and limited interactive media. This problem is particularly significant for young learners, who need engaging, interactive, and enjoyable methods to sustain their interest in learning.

Recent developments in education highlight the urgency of integrating digital media to improve learning outcomes. Studies have shown that digital game-based platforms such as Wordwall can enhance vocabulary acquisition, motivation, and retention (Ghanizadeh & Razavi, 2022; Lin & Lin, 2019; Alqahtani, 2022). However, research focusing on the use of Wordwall in elementary school English Club activities remains limited. Considering that English Clubs provide a relaxed and communicative environment where students can practice English more freely (Astuti, 2017; Hanim, 2018), this setting offers strong potential for exploring the effectiveness of digital tools in supporting vocabulary learning.

Aligned with the Kurikulum Merdeka that encourages technology-based, student-centered learning, this study seeks to investigate how teachers apply strategies using Wordwall in English Club activities and how students perceive its effectiveness in learning vocabulary. The findings are expected to contribute both theoretically, by enriching discussions on digital media in EFL vocabulary learning,

and practically, by providing recommendations for optimizing teaching strategies in elementary school English Clubs.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design, as it aims to provide an in-depth understanding of English vocabulary teaching strategies through the use of Wordwall in an English Club setting. The qualitative approach was considered appropriate because it enables the researcher to capture authentic classroom dynamics, explore students' engagement, and examine their perceptions of Wordwall as a learning tool. Data were collected through a field study method, involving direct observation, interviews, and questionnaires.

The research was conducted at SD Negeri 2 Barabai Timur, located in Barabai Sub-district, Barabai City, South Kalimantan. The participants were members of the English Club, an extracurricular program for students aged 7–12 years. Students were categorized into three proficiency levels beginner, intermediate, and advanced—to reflect their diverse linguistic abilities. One English Club instructor with prior experience using Wordwall was also involved. The study took place over four to six weeks, with English Club meetings held once a week.

Multiple sources of data were used to ensure validity. Primary data were obtained through semi-structured interviews with the teacher, classroom observations, and student questionnaires employing a Likert scale. Secondary data were collected from documentation such as lesson plans, Wordwall-based activities, and other instructional materials, as well as from relevant literature on vocabulary learning, technology integration, and student engagement.

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework. The process included transcribing interviews, reviewing observation notes, and coding responses to identify emerging themes. Triangulation of interviews, observations, documents, and questionnaires was conducted to strengthen the credibility of the findings, while literature analysis was used to provide a broader context and comparison with previous studies.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study was conducted at SDN 2 Barabai Timur from 28 April to 2 June 2025 during weekly English Club sessions. Participants included one English Club instructor and 20 student members (ages 9–12); 16 students were present and completed the questionnaire. Data sources comprised direct classroom observations recorded on an observation sheet, a semi-structured interview with the instructor, a 15-item Likert questionnaire for students, and supporting documentation such as lesson plans, photographs, and screenshots of Wordwall activities. All interview recordings were transcribed, observation notes compiled, and questionnaire responses tabulated prior to analysis.

The analysis revealed that the instructor consistently implemented six main strategies when teaching vocabulary using Wordwall: (1) contextual introduction, (2) repetition, (3) visualization through images/videos, (4) interactive game-based learning, (5) categorization/grouping of vocabulary, and (6) formative assessment using Wordwall quizzes. Observational evidence included concrete practices such as short video clips (e.g., children counting objects), contextual sentences to introduce vocabulary (e.g., "I have 2 books"), a projected team game ("Open the

Box”), and image-matching activities all of which were repeatedly employed across observed sessions.

Introducing vocabulary in meaningful contexts (contextual introduction) appeared to improve students’ ability to infer word meanings and to prompt more active responses; the instructor stated, “I always try to introduce new vocabulary in relevant contexts,” and observations showed that students responded more actively when words were presented in sentences or video contexts. Repetition was implemented through repeated exposure at lesson openings, pronunciation drills, quizzes, and games, ensuring target words reappeared across different activities; the instructor described using word games, quizzes, and oral exercises to strengthen students’ memory.

Visualization (images and videos) via Wordwall helped clarify word meanings and increased student focus—for instance, a body-parts video and image-matching tasks elicited faster and more enthusiastic responses. Interactive game-based activities (e.g., match-up, anagram, “Open the Box”) significantly boosted motivation and active participation: observations recorded healthy team competition and rapid student responses, and the instructor emphasized that game-based strategies effectively encourage engagement. Categorizing vocabulary by theme (animals, colors, classroom items) aided organization and recall, although observation suggested that categorization is most effective when combined with contextualized examples.

Wordwall was also used for formative assessment, enabling the instructor to run short interactive quizzes and obtain immediate results to identify student difficulties and adjust subsequent lessons. Observations indicated that these formative checks supported responsive, student-centered instruction, and that the gamified assessment format reduced performance anxiety and increased enjoyment for learners.

Questionnaire results ($n = 16$) reflected highly positive student perceptions of Wordwall. In summary: 94% of students “strongly agree” that Wordwall makes lessons more interesting; 88% “strongly agree” that Wordwall increases motivation and aids understanding of word meanings; 82% report greater confidence and ease in following instructions; and the majority (63%–88%) selected “strongly agree” or “agree” on items related to vocabulary recall, engagement, and enjoyment. No item received predominantly negative responses; a small number of neutral responses appeared on a few items.

Triangulating observation, interview, documentation, and questionnaire data yields a coherent picture: the instructor’s combined use of contextualization, repetition, visualization, gamification, categorization, and formative assessment facilitated by Wordwall correlated with increased classroom participation, frequent repeated practice, and strong positive student perceptions of the tool’s effectiveness. For example, the observed rise in rapid correct answers during image-matching games matches high questionnaire scores on motivation and interest.

Additional notes relevant to the findings: the strategies were applied consistently throughout the observation period and produced enthusiastic, collaborative learner behavior. However, limitations such as the relatively small questionnaire sample ($n = 16$), the short observation period (4–6 weeks), and the single-site design restrict generalizability and prevent strong claims about long-term vocabulary gains without quantitative pre/post measures.

In brief, the results indicate that integrating Wordwall with complementary teaching strategies supports student engagement and positive perceptions of

vocabulary learning in the English Club context. These findings recommend Wordwall as an effective motivational and formative tool, while also encouraging further research that measures learning outcomes quantitatively and across wider samples.

The findings indicate that the instructor at SDN 2 Barabai Timur employed a coherent, multi-strategic approach to vocabulary teaching through Wordwall, combining contextualization, repetition, visualization, game-based activities, categorization, and formative assessment. Together, these strategies not only supported students' comprehension of new words but also promoted active participation and positive attitudes toward learning. This integrated approach aligns with contemporary principles of task- and meaning-centered instruction and supports the view that vocabulary teaching is most effective when it is multimodal and embedded in purposeful communicative practice.

First, the contextual introduction of vocabulary appeared to facilitate inferencing and meaningful use. Presenting vocabulary in sentences, short dialogues, or video contexts helped learners grasp both meaning and function, confirming Nation's (2001) argument that learning words in context provides richer information about use and collocation. Observational evidence showed students more readily guessed meanings and used words when they had been modelled in realistic communicative situations, suggesting that context reduced abstraction and increased transfer to production.

Second, repetition and visualization worked synergistically to strengthen memory and recall. Repeated exposures across choral drills, games, and quizzes provided the multiple encounters necessary for transfer to long-term memory (Thornbury, 2002; Schmitt, 2000). Visual supports (images and short videos) reduced ambiguity and supplied dual channels for encoding, consistent with Dual Coding Theory (Paivio, 1986). The high student agreement on items related to recall and understanding supports the interpretation that frequency of exposure plus pictorial representation enhances retention, especially for young learners with developing linguistic systems.

Third, interactive game-based activities emerged as a particularly powerful driver of motivation and engagement. Wordwall's game templates and the instructor's competitive team formats created a playful learning environment in which students practiced vocabulary intensively and with low affective filter. This observation is consistent with research on game-based learning and digital play (Prensky, 2001; Wright, Betteridge, & Buckby, 2006): games can combine challenge, immediate feedback, and enjoyment to sustain attention and encourage repeated practice conditions that are conducive to vocabulary acquisition.

Fourth, categorization or semantic grouping helped students organize lexical items into manageable schemas, facilitating retrieval and reducing cognitive load (Nation, 2000; Thornbury, 2002). The data suggest that categorization is most effective when paired with contextualized examples; grouping alone may support recognition but is potentiated by meaningful usage that clarifies function and collocation.

Fifth, using Wordwall for formative assessment enabled responsive instruction. The immediate, low-stakes feedback from interactive quizzes allowed the teacher to identify difficulties and adapt subsequent lessons in real time, aligning with Black and Wiliam's (1998) emphasis on the instructional power of embedded formative assessment. Moreover, the gamified assessment format reduced test anxiety and increased student willingness to attempt answers, which likely improved

the reliability of classroom checks and supported scaffolding decisions (McMillan, 2014).

Pedagogically, these results underscore the value of integrating digital tools such as Wordwall within a principled pedagogical framework rather than using technology as an isolated novelty. The instructor's deliberate combination of context, repetition, visuals, play, organization, and assessment created mutually reinforcing conditions for learning. For practitioners, this suggests that teacher training should emphasize how to design multimodal activities and formative checks on digital platforms, how to sequence repetitions across sessions, and how to link thematic grouping to authentic communicative tasks.

Limitations of the current study should be acknowledged. The research took place at a single school over a relatively short period (four–six weeks) with a small questionnaire sample ($n = 16$), which limits generalizability and precludes strong causal claims about long-term vocabulary gains. The study focused on perceptions, classroom behavior, and instructional practice rather than on pre/post measures of vocabulary size or retention. Future research would benefit from a mixed-methods design that includes controlled pre/post testing, a larger and more diverse sample of schools, and an extended intervention period to measure retention and transfer.

4. CONCLUSION

The study found that using Wordwall combined with six complementary strategies (contextualization, repetition, visualization, game-based activities, categorization, and formative assessment) created a motivating, student-centered environment that enhanced vocabulary engagement, confidence, and perceived comprehension among English Club students. Classroom observations, teacher interview, and student questionnaires ($n=16$) consistently indicated positive responses to these practices. While results support Wordwall's effectiveness as an instructional and formative tool in informal settings, further research with longer interventions, pre/post measures, and multi-site samples is recommended to confirm long-term learning gains.

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