

Improving Junior High School Students' Vocabulary Mastery through Wordwall.net Media

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Abstract

This research attempted to investigate the effectiveness of using Wordwall.net media to improve junior high school students' vocabulary mastery. This research carried out classroom action research (CAR). Thirty students of class VIII.E at SMPN 7 Kota Bengkulu in the academic year of 2022/2023 were the research subjects. The instruments used were vocabulary test, observation checklist, and note. The results showed the improvement in students' vocabulary test that was proven in the percentage of students who passed the Minimum Mastery Criterion (KKM) from the pre-cycle to cycle 2. The improvement of classroom situations during the teaching-learning process also occurred in terms of students' attention, activeness, and confidence in learning English. Thus, wordwall.net is a potential medium to teach English vocabulary.

Keywords: Vocabulary Mastery, Wordwall.net Media, Junior High School Students

INTRODUCTION

The definition of vocabulary can vary. Typically, vocabulary is defined as knowledge of words and their meanings. It may also be thought of as a collection of terms with their definitions listed alphabetically. However, Schmitt (2000) stated that learning vocabulary is more complex than just understanding the meaning of a word, rather there are seven other aspects to master; meaning, register, association, collocation, grammatical behavior, written form (spelling), spoken form (pronunciation) and frequency. In line with it, Meyer and Schmitt (as cited in Asranida & Melansari, 2019) stated that language learners need to understand the meaning, form, and use of words to master vocabulary. In brief, language learners need to understand vocabulary as a whole unit.

Besides the complexities of vocabulary, it plays a crucial role in learning

English as a foreign language, and its importance remains relevant in recent years. It deals with an individual's language skills; listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Wilkins (in Alizadeh, 2016) stated, "Without grammar, very little can be conveyed, and without vocabulary, nothing can be conveyed." Vocabulary is such bricks to build a house as if it cannot be neglected when learning a new language. Thus, having a wide range of vocabulary allows language learners to convey their ideas and thoughts effectively and comprehend different contexts.

Developing the students' vocabulary mastery is not an easy task due to continuous learning. People continuously acquire new vocabulary along with getting their life experiences. The ability of students in acquiring vocabulary is also different among others that are probably influenced by many factors such as learning media, learning method, exposure, ability, hobby, learning style, etc. Besides, there are several rules for teachers in teaching vocabulary to the students: 1) new vocabulary items should be introduced in known structures, 2) vocabulary should always be thought in normal speech utterance, 3) whenever a familiar word is met in a new context, it should be taught again and practiced, 4) vocabulary items should be taught in the same way we teach everything else; 5) students should be encouraged to learn and use nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs which contain the same roots (Kusrini, 2012). After all, regarding the importance of vocabulary acquisition, the teacher has the important role to engage the students in the process of acquiring new vocabulary.

Based on the researchers' experiences while doing pre-teaching service at SMPN 7 Kota Bengkulu, several eighth-grade students feel unmotivated in learning English because they were lack of English vocabulary. Students lack in all language skills due to a lack of vocabulary mastery especially when students are told to memorize the vocabulary (Safura & Helmanda, 2022; Bahang et al., 2021; Kusrini, 2012; Dhillon et al., 2020). Lack of vocabulary leads students to feel laziness and boredom in learning English as a result of their ignorance of meaning. The problem of lack of vocabulary can be solved started by looking at the cause factors.

One of the significant challenges faced by junior high school students is the

acquisition of an extensive vocabulary, which plays a critical role in academic success. The preliminary study of grade VIII.E through doing in-depth interviews with the students who were lack motivation in learning English, showed that students were passive in learning English because they feel afraid of making mistakes as a result of a lack of vocabulary. They were unable to speak and understand the meaning of English texts and even they felt bored with learning English because they think that memorizing English words is difficult. The students hoped that English learning could be more interesting. From the information above, it can be inferred that the students need to be taught interestingly so that they feel motivated and enjoy learning while absorbing lots of new vocabulary.

A solution to this problem is by conveying interesting media in teaching vocabulary in a supportive learning environment to avoid students' anxiety. This idea is supported by Sari et al. (2019) in which one of the factors causing students' lack of vocabulary is the media to teach the vocabulary itself. As a good teacher understanding how to teach vocabulary in a fun way is important (Hanny et al, 2019). One of the techniques for teaching vocabulary is using media. According to Sudiran and Prasetyowati (2014), media may effectively convey information and optimize English teaching-learning activities. The function of teaching using media is to increase the student's motivation (Hidayati, 2016).

From the phenomenon discussed above, the researchers proposed wordwall.net as a suitable medium to teach vocabulary in more interesting way. Wordwall.net in this research is a wordwall web-based tool that can be accessed through the link <https://wordwall.net/>. It is a digital platform that can help the teacher to create a customized pack of interactive and printable activities in a very short time. Wordwall.net is different from word wall media strategy in which wordwall.net is a web tool that uses technology, while word wall media are a traditional strategy used in the classroom as a list of words displayed largely on a wall, bulletin board, or whiteboard so that easily visible from all students seating areas (Kahar & Baa, 2021; Wells & Narkon in Alpatikah, 2022).

In addition, wordwall.net can be flexibly adjusted to the teaching resource

and the teaching style as necessary in creating many interactive educational games to be brought to the classroom such as quizzes, match words, jumbled words, puzzles, words search, etc. It is a digital tool that helps create educational games for free (Lewis in Umar et al., 2023). Nowadays, having rich literature on digital technology is a must for every single person including English teachers and students. Handriyantini (2009) claimed that educational games are a sort of media used in teaching to enhance thinking and enhance attentiveness through distinctive and fascinating media. The Wordwall.net application reflects this collection of educational games.

Several studies on the effectiveness of using wordwall.net as teaching media were conducted from within and outside Indonesia. A study conducted by Umar et al. (2023) at SMPN 2 Majene found that students' vocabulary mastery had been significantly improved by using the Wordwall website. In line with Umar et al., Swari (2023) conducted a literature study to discover the wordwall's characteristics and its benefits on students' reading interests. The finding showed that the Wordwall platform can be used to improve students' interests in reading as long as the teacher chooses the appropriate learning activities for students. In addition, a study conducted by Wang and Vásquez (2018) examined the effects of using Wordwall in teaching vocabulary to English as a second language (ESL) learners. The findings indicated that Wordwall enhanced vocabulary learning and retention, increased student engagement, and improved students' attitudes toward vocabulary learning. Moreover, these studies prove that Wordwall.net can be a beneficial tool to help junior high students to improve their vocabulary mastery.

Based on several studies explained above, the findings showed that wordwall.net is an effective media to help teachers deliver vocabulary teaching effectively to second language learners and foreign language students. Yet because no similar studies were conducted in Bengkulu City, this research intended to fill the gap. The researchers decided to conduct similar research in junior high schools of Bengkulu City with a focus on investigating the effectiveness of using wordwall.net in improving junior high school student's vocabulary mastery.

METHODS

Classroom Action Research (CAR)

In this research, Classroom Action Research (CAR) was carried out as the research design. According to Cameron-Jone (as cited in Sari et al., 2019) action research is research conducted by researchers to improve the professional practice of researchers and understand it better. There are four stages of each cycle: (1) the planning of the action, (2) the implementation of the action, (3) classroom observation, and (4) the reflection of the action (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988). This research was conducted at SMP Negeri 7 Kota Bengkulu involving 30 students comprised of 15 females and 15 males of grade VIII-E in the academic year of 2022/2023.

1. Planning

In the planning stage, the researchers prepared the research instruments, designed the lesson plans, selected the students' worksheets, set the criteria of success, and arranged the schedule of the research.

2. Implementing

In this stage, a researcher rolled as a teacher who implements the action, while the other teacher observes the action being implemented.

Cycle 1

In this section, the researcher applied the treatment to the students based on the lesson plan which integrates Wordwall.net as the media. The researcher carried out the lesson integrated with wordwall.net by these main following steps: 1) delivering the material to the students, 2) asking the students to work in heterogeneous groups doing the worksheets given through Wordwall.net, 3) giving worksheets in printed form to be discussed in the group, 4) asking the students to present the group discussion result, and 5) analyzing and evaluating the work by giving appropriate feedbacks toward the students' works.

a. Meeting 1

First, the researcher asked the students some guidance questions about the topic to be learned on the day which was recount text. Second, the problem that

needs to be solved was presented by the researcher. Third, the researcher organized the students to learn by dividing them into heterogeneous groups to work on the tasks that had been given through Wordwall.net. Fourth, the students were given the worksheets in printed form to be done. Fifth, the researcher facilitated self-directed learning by encouraging the students to acquire the necessary knowledge related to the worksheets given; showing videos, and facilitating every group to ask questions to help them in finding the solutions to the problem. After that, the students were asked to present the result of the group discussion in front of the classroom. Finally, the researcher and students analyzed and evaluated the students' work to get appropriate feedback.

b. Meeting 2

In the second meeting, the researcher gave a different text to the students. In this meeting, the text was about Pantai Jakat Beach. The same treatment as meeting 1 was applied to the students. In the last 20 minutes, the students were asked to do the posttest to check their vocabulary improvement. In addition, the vocabulary test administered in pre-cycle, cycle 1, and cycle 2 were similar.

Cycle 2

In this section, some improvements were made as a result of the first cycle's reflection. In cycle I, Wordwall.net media was delivered in the time the students work in group discussion before doing the printed worksheet. However, in cycle 2, the students' worksheets through Wordwall.net media were given after the students presented their group work in front of the classroom. This change had been made due to the time allocation issue that occurred in the previous cycle.

a. Meeting 1

In this meeting, the students were taught how to write a personal recount text. The treatment changed in this meeting as follows: First, the researcher asked the students some guidance questions about the topic to be learned on the day. Second, the problem that needs to be solved was presented by the researcher. Third, the researcher organized the students to learn by dividing them into heterogeneous groups to work on the printed tasks given. Fourth, the researcher

facilitated self-directed learning by encouraging the students to acquire the necessary knowledge related to the worksheets given; showing videos, and facilitating every group to ask questions to help them in finding the solutions to the problem. Fifth, the students were asked to present the result of the group discussion in front of the classroom. After that, the groups were asked to work on the tasks given through Wordwall.net. Finally, the researcher and students analyzed and evaluated the students' work to get appropriate feedback.

b. Meeting 2

In this meeting, the same treatment as in meeting 1 was applied to the students. In the last 20 minutes, the students were asked to do the posttest to check their vocabulary improvement.

3. Observing

To gather information and determine how effectively the wordwall media may aid students in memorization of the vocabulary, which was the research's objective, the observation of students' new vocabulary mastering was undertaken. In this stage, researchers collected data related to the implementation of actions using a variety of instruments. The first was the observation checklist that was filled out by the observer. The second was the field notes filled by the teacher. Those two instruments were used to gain the data related to the student's participation. The third instrument was the result of vocabulary tests conducted by students at the end of each cycle. It aimed to obtain data on the student's vocabulary mastery.

4. Reflecting

In this step, students' improvement of vocabulary mastery in cycle 1 was analyzed to measure the rate of success of the use of Wordwall.net media. Through this reflection, the researcher identified the factors that make the method less successful. After that, the researcher rearranged a new plan to be executed in the classroom. The results of this reflection were taken into consideration to arrange the plan for the next cycle.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

Before conducting the research, the researchers observed the class to find out the actual situation of the classroom and students' abilities. By doing interviews with the English teacher and the students and observing the teaching and learning process, some problems were found as follows: 1) Female students are more passive which may be due to their low learning motivation, fear of making mistakes, not confidence, and not understanding; 2) Students are less active due to a lack of understanding of vocabulary, namely due to a lack of input vocabulary in content, lack of exposure, and lack of fun media to learn English; and 3) based on students pre-cycle test results, there were only 6 students out of 30 students whose scores above the Minimum Mastery Criterion (KKM) of English course which is 70. It can be inferred that there were only 23% students who passed the test.

This section presents the results of the pre-cycle, cycle 1, and cycle 2, and the classroom observation results. The observation checklist was adopted from Mulyani and Haji (2022) and the result of the classroom observations was as the following table:

Table 1. The Result Analyses of Students' Activities Observation

No	Aspect Observed	Cycle 1			Cycle 2		
		Category			Category		
		Good (3)	Fair (2)	Less (1)	Good (3)	Fair (2)	Less (1)
1	Students are responsive to the teacher's instructions regarding the teacher's explanation of the problem and what students should prepare.	√			√		
2	Students observe the problems that have been presented on the Students' Worksheets.	√			√		
3	Students express opinions and ask questions about the material to be studied.	√			√		
4	Students work together in group discussions.		√		√		
5	Students solve the problems given and are confident to present their work.		√		√		
6	Students observe presentations from		√			√	

No	Aspect Observed	Cycle 1			Cycle 2		
		Category			Category		
		Good (3)	Fair (2)	Less (1)	Good (3)	Fair (2)	Less (1)
	other groups.						
7	Students express their opinions and respond to their friends' presentations.		√			√	
Total Score		17			19		
%		80.95%			90.47%		

From the table above, the students' activities in learning English vocabulary improved by 9.52% from cycle 1 to cycle 2. The observer mostly chose good and fair to assess the students' activities while learning through using Wordwall.net as the media. Based on the teacher's observation checklists and notes, it was found that the students' activeness was improved. It could be seen from the result of the observational checklist and field note. There were improvements in students' interest, interaction, participation, and contribution by using Wordwall.net media. In addition, the improvements in pedagogy such as classroom management, material delivery, and classroom interaction were also improved. Oppositely, from Table 1, it can be seen that both in cycles 1 and 2, students were fair enough in observing and giving their feedback to the other groups' presentations. To sum up, the indicator of the success of this research had been achieved. Thus, the researchers stopped the implementation of the research in cycle 2.

In addition, the results of students' vocabulary tests from pre-cycle, cycle 1, and cycle 2 are shown in table 2 and 3:

Table 2. Students' results on the vocabulary test

Minimum Mastery Criterion (KKM)	Pre-Cycle		Cycle I		Cycle II	
	Number of students	Percentage	Number of students	Percentage	Number of students	Percentage
> 70	4	13.33%	12	40%	21	70%
< 70	26	86.67%	18	60 %	9	30%
Total	30	100%	30	100%	30	100%

Table 3. The mean score of Students' results on the vocabulary test

The Mean of Students' Scores		
Pre-Cycle	Cycle I	Cycle II
49.83	62	70.5

The data were analyzed based on the Minimum Mastery Criterion (KKM) of the English course at SMPN 7 of Bengkulu City which is 70. If a student's score is above 70, it means the students pass the test, meanwhile, if the student's score is under 70, it means the student fails the test. Furthermore, the research is stopped if the students' score results meet the criteria of success which is 70. In conclusion, based on Tables 2 dan 3, this research was stopped in cycle 2 regarding the students' scores having reached the KKM and the percentage of students who passed the KKM was 70%.

Based on the vocabulary tests which were administered to 30 students of grade VIII.E, in the pre-cycle test, there were only 4 students (13.33%) who passed the test and it can be seen from Table 3 that the overall mean score of students in the pre-cycle (49.83) was very low under the KKM. After the students were given the treatment in cycle 1, there were 12 students (40%) who passed the test with an overall mean score of 62. It means that there was an improvement of as much as 26.67%. Meanwhile, in cycle 2, there were 21 students (70%) who passed the vocabulary test with a mean score of 70.5. It means that there was an improvement of as much as 30%. Therefore, it can be concluded that the students' overall scores from pre-cycle, cycle 1, and cycle 2 had improved by as much as 56.67%.

From Table 3, it can be seen that in cycle 1, the students had not reached the KKM yet. Therefore, based on the observation and reflection, some improvements were made to be implemented in cycle 2. In cycle 2, the students' vocabulary scores had reached the KKM which a mean score was 70.5. This number was not far above the KKM, but if this post-test result compared to the pre-cycle result, it can be seen that the students' vocabulary test scores had quite improved.

Discussion

The research result obtained from the students' activities observation and students' vocabulary test results indicated that wordwall.net is effective to improve junior high school students' vocabulary mastery. The student's vocabulary tests had quite improved through the cycles administered. This result could be insightful in how beneficial wordwall.net is to help English teachers in

teaching vocabulary. These research results are similar to several related research from abroad and within Indonesia. Fatimah (2020) and Magasvaran et al. (2022) found that Wordwall had a positive impact in improving students' vocabulary mastery of primary and secondary schools students.

On the contrary, Çil (2021) conducted research at the elementary level of a public secondary school in Turkey and found that wordall.net did not signal a significant difference in the student's vocabulary mastery improvement. Çil also confirmed the reasons for the inexistence of significance; 1) a short time treatment, 2) the students' motivation to learn English was already high, and 3) some vocabulary chosen to be taught was already familiar. On the other hand, research carried out by Rosydiyah (2022) surprisingly found that Wordwall online games significantly influence students' grammar quality. Regardless of the research results that have been presented, many of these studies found that there were positive differences from the implementation of worwall.net in teaching English. Not only occurred in students' vocabulary, but the improvement also occurred in students' grammar knowledge. In addition, wordwall.net is effective to teach vocabulary probably caused by three reasons obtained from classroom observation; 1) It promotes an enjoyable learning atmosphere; 2) It promotes active classroom engagements, and 3) It meets the students' interests.

First, wordwall.net potentially promotes an enjoyable learning atmosphere. In the preliminary research, the students were found passive because of some reasons such as low learning motivation, fear of making mistakes, not confidence, and not understanding the materials. Regarding this problem, creating an enjoyable atmosphere through playing games can be the solution. Wordwall is a fun medium to melt the classroom atmosphere to be more enjoyable. A game is defined as a fun, interesting, and frequently difficult activity that involves playing and typically interacting with others (Wright et al. as cited in Asranida & Melansari, 2019). Derakhshan (2015) added that games are beneficial for vocabulary acquisition since they enhance students' word memorization capabilities, encourage student engagement, expand their linguistic abilities, and raise enthusiasm.

In addition, the enjoyable learning environments will make the students at ease in acquiring new vocabulary. There is something called incidental learning which one example is done through an enjoyable process, for instance through playing a game. New vocabulary gotten unconsciously through incidental learning will last longer than those who do not. Intentionally learning vocabulary in a conventional way like memorizing a list of new words sinks faster into oblivion (Alizadeh, 2016). Furthermore, by using wordwall.net as the media to teach English vocabulary, without awareness, the students get new vocabulary while playing the game. In accordance, Swari (2023) stated, gamification in the educational process is thought to boost student enthusiasm for studying and indirectly help students acquire language more effectively.

Second, wordwall.net promotes active classroom activities. In the implementation of this research, the researchers integrated the use of wordwall.net media with a problem-based teaching model in which in the process, the students were put at the center of the learning process. The students' worksheets were done in groups. Moreover, the students were asked to work in groups to decrease their anxious feelings of afraid of making mistakes. On the other hand, for some students, doing tasks individually has such pressure. That is why the researcher conveyed wordwall.net in group work. This strategy seemed to work in class VIII.E since the observation results proved the students tended to be more active in cycle to cycle. As stated by Richards (2006), group learning is conducted to engage the students in communication and interaction. As the students feel enjoy learning, they will be more motivated to learn.

Accordingly, Murray as cited in Faradila et al. (2022) stated that teachers can do some strategies to motivate the students in EFL learning and one example is by creating a fun and comfortable learning atmosphere. Playing the educational game in group form can lead the students to have a sense of competition in which they are eager to win the game. This activity leads to livening up the passive class atmosphere. By doing this activity in group form, the competition was not run individually but in the group as an activity to be done cooperatively. The sense of winning gives students motivation to learn new vocabulary as much as possible.

Furthermore, the use of wordwall.net as an online learning platform gave the students chance to overcome boredom during learning to be more active and motivated.

Third, the word wall meets the students' interests. Teaching and learning in this 21st century need to be integrated with ICT (Information, Communication, Technology) to develop students' digital literacy. In this century, digital technology and language teaching have been widely integrated to meet the student's needs and interests, because it can help to enhance both content and the teaching process (Alqahtani, 2019). Junior high school students who are teenagers are those who act like to interact with and use technology (Murray in Alqahtani, 2019). So by using wordwall.net as a digital platform to teach vocabulary, it attracts the students' interest to involve and engage actively in the learning process. Fatimah (2020) found that Wordwall media produced students' interest in learning English, especially during online learning. That is the reason why wordwall.net media match to the student's needs and interests.

Additionally, the teacher can utilize and optimize the use of wordwall.net in teaching vocabulary by adapting to the students' characteristics and abilities. In other words, technology can be a very beneficial tool if the users use it wisely. Technology can support learning environments well (Swari, 2023). To conclude, wordwall.net can be beneficial media for teachers and students to boost the teaching and learning process effectively, especially in improving vocabulary mastery.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Regarding the importance of vocabulary acquisition, the teacher has an important role to engage the students in the process of acquiring new vocabulary. In addition, wordwall.net can be considered an effective media to improve students' vocabulary mastery, especially the students of grades VIII-E at SMPN 7 Kota Bengkulu. This result was proven by the student's scores on the vocabulary test which increased from the three vocabulary tests given in the pre-cycle, cycle 1, and cycle 2. The results of this research can give some insights into the

effectiveness of using wordwall.net to enhance students' vocabulary. From the observation checklist, it was shown that the students could actively participate in the teaching and learning activities comprised of wordwall.net as the media. Students' active participation leads them to build motivation and enthusiasm for learning to generate an active classroom atmosphere. To conclude, wordwall.net can be a potential medium to teach English vocabulary effectively.

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