

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

a. Background of the Research

The integration of digital game-based learning become a global trend in education, reshaping how students acquire new knowledge and skills. Gamification not only increases engagement but also improves retention and motivation in language classrooms (Qasim et al., 2024). Game-based learning is a shift away from the traditional educational paradigm by incorporating real-life games into the learning process to achieve educational outcomes. Many learning activities can be delivered through games across language learning games, mathematics, and culture. These language learning games use narrative and interactive activities to engage students in ways that traditional textbooks cannot. Some learning applications use a variety of languages, but English is the most commonly used because it is an international language.

In the context of English language learning, digital game-based learning provides an interactive environment that supports active student participation and meaningful learning experiences. Through game elements such as points, levels, feedback, and challenges, students are encouraged to practice language skills repeatedly without feeling pressured or bored. This approach helps learners develop vocabulary, grammar, and communication skills in a fun and supportive setting. Moreover, digital games allow students to learn at their own pace while receiving immediate feedback, which enhances understanding and long-term retention. As a result, game-based learning is considered an effective strategy for creating a student-centered learning atmosphere that fosters motivation, engagement, and improved learning outcomes in English language classrooms.

English is an important aspect of education because it acts as an international language for communication (Kurniawan, 2023). English serves

as a global language, playing an essential role in everyday communication and in gaining knowledge, access to technology, scientific research, and numerous academic resources. Proficiency in English enables students to broaden their perspectives, engage with the global community, and prepare for future opportunities in education, careers, and global partnerships.

Consequently, the instruction and acquisition of English in schools are essential in preparing students with the abilities necessary to succeed in the digital age and in an ever-connected global landscape. To achieve these objectives, effective English language instruction is required from an early stage of education. English learning in schools should not only focus on linguistic knowledge but also emphasize meaningful communication and student engagement in the learning process. Appropriate teaching strategies, learning media, and the integration of technology are crucial for helping students effectively develop their English skills. Interactive and innovative learning approaches can increase students' motivation, participation, and confidence in using English in real-life contexts. Therefore, teachers play a significant role in designing learning activities that create an enjoyable and supportive learning environment, enabling students to develop their English proficiency optimally in line with the demands of the digital era and global communication.

English is one of the basic skills needed to achieve progress in various aspects of life. Globalization has significantly increased the need for English language skills (Sawalmeh & Dey, 2023). Many countries make English the language of instruction in education. One of the key elements in teaching English is vocabulary mastery. A broad, varied vocabulary is essential for developing English communication skills (Normurodovna, 2025). Based on this definition, many countries include English as the language of instruction in their educational frameworks, recognizing its significance as a global medium for knowledge sharing and interaction. During English instruction, mastering vocabulary is one of the most essential components, since vocabulary forms the basis for all language abilities: listening, speaking,

reading, and writing. Lacking a vocabulary, students might have difficulty comprehending texts, articulating their thoughts, or engaging in meaningful communication. On the other hand, a wide and diverse vocabulary allows learners to create sentences more efficiently, understand real-world materials, and engage actively in both academic and social settings.

Therefore, vocabulary instruction should receive special attention in English language teaching, particularly at the early stages of learning. Effective vocabulary mastery enables students to comprehend lessons more easily and supports the development of other language skills simultaneously. Teachers need to employ appropriate strategies and learning media to help students acquire and retain new vocabulary in meaningful contexts. Contextualized learning activities, repetition, and active student involvement are crucial in strengthening vocabulary acquisition. By developing a strong vocabulary foundation, students can improve their confidence and competence in English, ultimately contributing to better academic achievement and effective communication in a globalized world.

Therefore, teaching English is very important at various levels of education, from elementary to high school. Vocabulary instruction should be implemented as early as possible in elementary school. Teaching vocabulary for elementary school students is different from teaching for adult levels, because students in elementary school prefer to learn using interactive media such as video, games, songs, and physical activities such as singing and dancing (Permana, 2020). Based on the definition above, teaching vocabulary to elementary school students definitely demands a distinct method compared to teaching teenagers or adults. Often, students become disinterested more rapidly when education is repetitive; teachers must implement teaching methods that are captivating, enjoyable, and suited to their growth stages. Interactive media, including videos, educational games, songs, illustrated stories, and physical activities like singing, dancing, or role-playing, effectively engage students and boost their desire to learn. Using these media makes vocabulary acquisition not only more enjoyable but also helps students

recall and use vocabulary more easily in authentic situations.

In addition, the use of interactive, age-appropriate learning media helps foster a positive learning environment that supports elementary school students' cognitive and emotional development. At this stage, students learn more effectively through concrete experiences and active involvement rather than abstract explanations. Interactive activities allow students to associate new vocabulary with visual images, actions, and real-life contexts, making learning more meaningful and memorable. Furthermore, enjoyable learning experiences can reduce students' anxiety and build their confidence in using English. Therefore, selecting appropriate teaching methods and media is essential to ensure effective vocabulary learning and foster long-term interest in English among elementary school students.

In junior high school, teaching vocabulary is important because students' vocabulary ability, which is used to understand texts, express opinions, and write ideas, is influenced by their vocabulary (Roviani et al., 2025). Early grades are the best time to develop vocabulary because of brain growth during that time (Garden, 2022). At this point, students are very open to new knowledge, and their capacity to take in, retain, and remember words is more robust than in subsequent years. Building vocabulary in the early grades enhances children's language skills and lays the foundation for reading comprehension, writing, and overall academic achievement. Thus, providing significant and engaging vocabulary instruction in the early years is vital for fostering enduring language skills and academic achievement.

Furthermore, effective vocabulary instruction at the junior high school level should be designed to support students' increasing cognitive and linguistic demands. As students encounter more complex texts and are expected to express ideas critically, a strong vocabulary enables them to comprehend information more accurately and communicate their thoughts clearly. Meaningful vocabulary-learning activities, such as contextual learning, reading-based tasks, and interactive exercises, can help students connect new words to prior knowledge. By providing consistent, engaging

vocabulary instruction from the early grades through junior high school, educators can ensure a smooth progression in language development that supports students' academic success and prepares them for higher levels of education.

Students' mastery of English in Indonesian classrooms continues to face various challenges (Jon et al., 2021). Some factors include limited access to resources, ineffective teaching skills, differences in cultural and linguistic backgrounds, and limited use of English in everyday life. Specifically, English-language learning in Indonesian elementary schools is undergoing rapid change. Furthermore, effective vocabulary instruction at the junior high school level should be designed to support students' increasing cognitive and linguistic demands. As students encounter more complex texts and are expected to express ideas critically, a strong vocabulary enables them to comprehend information more accurately and communicate their thoughts clearly. Meaningful vocabulary-learning activities, such as contextual learning, reading-based tasks, and interactive exercises, can help students connect new words to prior knowledge. By providing consistent, engaging vocabulary instruction from the early grades through junior high school, educators can ensure a smooth progression in language development that supports students' academic success and prepares them for higher levels of education.

The problem at school is that students find it difficult to memorize vocabulary; they have low vocabulary skills, and the teacher does not use engaging strategies, which makes students feel bored during English lessons (Nazhira et al., 2024). Based on the statement above, a frequent issue in schools is that students find it difficult to memorize and retain English vocabulary, thereby limiting their capacity to improve their language abilities. Students' vocabulary proficiency is also quite limited, as evidenced by challenges in grasping word meanings, using them in sentences, and retaining vocabulary across different contexts. Additionally, the teacher's instructional methods often lack variety and engagement, resulting in tedious learning

experiences. This situation leads students to quickly lose interest, feel demotivated, and show less enthusiasm for learning English, ultimately affecting their vocabulary growth and overall language abilities.

Using wordwall.net is very important for teaching vocabulary in elementary school, because technology has brought major changes to the world of education, including in English language teaching. Artificial intelligence-based applications, online learning, and other digital resources make it easier for students to learn English independently and interactively (R, 2024). English learning is no longer limited to textbooks or formal classes; it can also be accessed through online learning platforms (Huda et al., 2023). These online resources offer features such as interactive quizzes, immediate feedback, gamified learning tasks, and customizable exercises that can be tailored to meet students' unique needs. Consequently, students become increasingly motivated, independent, and involved in learning new vocabulary and language abilities. The presence of digital resources facilitates differentiated learning, allowing educators to cater to different student ability levels while promoting creativity and teamwork. Consequently, technology significantly influences the transformation of English language learning into a more adaptable, reachable, and learner-focused experience in the digital age.

For example, digital games such as Duolingo, Scrabble games, and Word Trip can be used to train and improve students' vocabulary. The research on English language teaching is very important, to find more effective teaching in improving students' vocabulary mastery, analyze the needs of different students based on their cultural and linguistic backgrounds, adapt teaching methods to meet these needs, and assess the extent to which the use of technology in teaching English can increase students' vocabulary.

Using Wordwall.net to improve students' vocabulary has been researched by several scholars. For example, (Wandari et al., 2024) research shows that using Wordwall.net may enhance a seventh-grade student's vocabulary skills. Shows a significant improvement in students' vocabulary learning when using Wordwall.net compared to traditional methods. This

discovery highlights Wordwall.net as a valuable resource for improving students' vocabulary learning outcomes.

These findings indicate that Wordwall.net provides an interactive and engaging learning environment that supports effective vocabulary acquisition. Through various game-based activities, such as matching, multiple-choice quizzes, and word arrangement tasks, students are encouraged to participate in the learning process actively. This active involvement helps reduce learning boredom and increases students' motivation to practice vocabulary repeatedly. Moreover, Wordwall.net offers immediate feedback, allowing students to recognize and correct their mistakes instantly, which contributes to better understanding and retention of new vocabulary. Therefore, Wordwall.net can be considered a beneficial digital learning tool that enhances students' vocabulary mastery, particularly when integrated into English language instruction.

Future research in this area could involve examining the long-term impacts of Wordwall.net on vocabulary acquisition, evaluating variations in engagement across different age groups or skill levels, and providing recommendations for educators on the best methods to implement Wordwall.net in their classrooms (Umar et al., 2023). The Wordwall.net website is an effective tool for teaching vocabulary to beginner-level students. (Dwiningrum et al., 2024) The word wall also aids students in acquiring vocabulary and enhances their enthusiasm for learning English, as shown by their favorable reaction to the learning experience in the treatment course, which enables them to utilize computers rather than solely relying on books traditionally used in class.

Overall, suggest that Wordwall.net not only supports vocabulary development but also creates a more engaging and motivating learning environment for students. Its digital and game-based features allow learners to interact with vocabulary in an enjoyable way, which can increase their interest and participation in English lessons. By integrating technology into vocabulary instruction, Wordwall.net helps shift learning from teacher-

centered and book-based approaches to more student-centered and interactive practices. Therefore, Wordwall.net has strong potential as an effective instructional medium for vocabulary learning, especially for beginner-level students, and warrants further exploration and implementation in diverse educational contexts.

What needs to be studied further is teaching English using game-based Artificial Intelligence. It can improve students' vocabulary skills. Students do not feel bored when learning English. Because the teachers can use this digital game to assist students in learning vocabulary through fun learning, the purpose of this research is to determine whether students prefer to learn using digital games used by teachers.

The theoretical perspective of Cleaver (Umar et al., 2023) is that a word wall is a systematically organized vocabulary development tool displayed in a classroom. Word wall is designed to help teachers create lessons quickly (Le, 2021). Word wall acts as a visual resource featuring essential vocabulary words organized in an orderly fashion, allowing students to readily access and remember new terms. This tool is beneficial not only for enhancing vocabulary retention but also for aiding students' reading and writing abilities, as they can regularly engage with the words during class activities. In addition, the use of Wordwall.net as a vocabulary development tool aligns with theories of visual learning and repeated exposure, which emphasize the importance of seeing and interacting with words frequently to strengthen memory. By presenting vocabulary in an organized and visually appealing format, Wordwall.net,net helps students make connections between words, meanings, and contexts of use. It also supports active learning, as students can refer to the displayed vocabulary while participating in speaking, reading, and writing tasks. Furthermore, Wordwall.net enables teachers to design engaging and efficient lessons, integrating vocabulary practice seamlessly into classroom activities, which ultimately contributes to improved language learning outcomes.

The problem that occurs at school (Ryan et al., 2024) is that students

have difficulty memorizing and recalling English vocabulary, which makes it hard for them to retain new words for a long period of time. Students' overall vocabulary mastery is still low, as reflected in their limited ability to understand, use, and apply vocabulary in reading, writing, listening, and speaking activities. Students' lack of interest and motivation in learning English; they often feel bored and disengaged during the learning process, which negatively affects their progress, due to the minimal use of interactive technology when learning English in the classroom. To overcome the problem, the teacher must be imaginative and innovative and use interesting teaching media for students to generate good class activities. Students' lack of interest and motivation in learning English; they often feel bored and disengaged during the learning process, which negatively affects their progress, because minimal use of interactive technology when learning English in the classroom. To overcome the problem, the teacher must be imaginative and innovative and use interesting teaching media for students to generate good class activities.

Based on previous research by Wang and Tahir (2020), by Haviza, Efendi (2024), by Agustia, Munawir, Ridwan (2024), by Alfiah, Santosa, Kusuma (2024), many studies have discussed the use of digital applications and gamification (e.g., Kahoot, Quizizz) to improve learning outcomes (Wang & Tahir, 2020), but they focus on junior high or high school students (Haviza et al., 2024), not elementary school students (Agustia et al., 2024). Research on Wordwall.net already exists, but most of it focuses on increasing student motivation or engagement, not specifically on vocabulary mastery in lower grades (Alfiah et al., 2024). There are few studies using a case study design in elementary schools in Indonesia, particularly in Cilegon, with the context of fourth-grade students.

This study investigates the application of Wordwall.net as a digital resource to enhance English language instruction, specifically focusing on vocabulary acquisition for fourth-grade elementary students. Wordwall.net is utilized in this research as an interactive tool offering engaging activities to

assist students in practicing and reinforcing new vocabulary in an enjoyable and significant manner. This research aims to determine the engagement of incorporating this application in the classroom to improve students' vocabulary mastery and motivation for learning. Additionally, the results of this research are anticipated to offer useful guidance for educators in choosing suitable digital tools and for developers in enhancing educational functionalities to more effectively address the requirements of learners and instructors.

b. Research Problems

Research problems of this study are as follows:

First, the students face difficulties in memorizing and recalling English vocabulary, which makes it hard for them to retain new words for a long period of time. Second, the students' overall vocabulary mastery is still low, as reflected in their limited ability to understand, use, and apply vocabulary in reading, writing, listening, and speaking activities. Finally, the students tend to show a lack of interest and motivation in learning English; they often feel bored and disengaged during the learning process, which negatively affects their progress, because of the minimal use of interactive technology when learning English in the classroom.

c. Research Questions

The problems described in the research problems lead to research questions:

1. How do the wordwall.nett engage students in learning English vocabulary?
2. What are enhancing and hindering factors of implementation the Wordwall.net ?

d. Purposes of the Study

Based on the statements of the problem, the purposes of this study were:

1. To know the students' engagement in learning English vocabulary through wordwall.nett.
2. To reveal enhancing and hindering factors of implementation the

Wordwall.net.

e. Contributions of the Study

1. Theoretical Contribution

This research is expected to provide a theoretical contribution by expanding the body of knowledge related to the role of technology and game-based applications in language learning. Specifically, it strengthens the theoretical framework that emphasizes how interactive and gamified digital tools can positively influence the process of acquiring and retaining vocabulary. The findings of this study may support, refine, or even challenge existing theories regarding the integration of educational games into language classrooms. Furthermore, this research contributes to the understanding that game-based learning not only increases student engagement and motivation but also fosters active participation and long-term vocabulary mastery. It broadens the theoretical perspective on how digital applications, such as Wordwall.net, can serve as effective pedagogical tools in the context of elementary education.

2. Empirical Contribution

This research provides empirical evidence regarding the engagement of Wordwall.net in improving students' vocabulary mastery at the elementary school level. The findings offer concrete data on whether the integration of Wordwall.net into English learning activities significantly enhances students' ability to understand, recall, and apply vocabulary in various contexts. In addition, the study not only evaluates the immediate impact of the application on vocabulary learning but also sheds light on students' engagement and motivation when exposed to digital game-based learning. These results can serve as a reliable reference for educators and researchers, providing a solid basis for further empirical studies that aim to explore the role of digital tools in language education, compare Wordwall.net with other similar applications, or investigate its

long-term effects on language acquisition.

3. Practical Contribution

This research is expected to make practical contributions to teachers, students, and other readers involved in the field of language education. For teachers, the findings of this study offer new insights and concrete guidance on integrating Wordwall.net effectively into English lessons, making the learning process more engaging, interactive, and aligned with students' needs. Wordwall.net also supports teachers in introducing students to modern learning technology, which is highly relevant in today's digital era, while reducing reliance on conventional, monotonous teaching strategies. For students, using Wordwall.net offers various benefits, such as making vocabulary learning more enjoyable, boosting motivation, and providing opportunities for active participation through game-based activities. The interactive features of Wordwall.net enable students to practice and reinforce their vocabulary in a fun and meaningful way, helping them achieve better mastery of English. For other readers and researchers, this study can serve as a useful reference for exploring the integration of digital applications into language learning, highlighting the potential of educational technology as an innovative tool to improve teaching and learning outcomes.