APPLYING WORDWALL TO ENHANCE ENGLISH VOCABULARY RETENTION OF GRADE 3 STUDENTS AT BAN MAI PRIMARY SCHOOL

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Abstract: *This study investigates the effectiveness of Wordwall as a supplematary tool for enhancing young learners' vocabulary retention. The study was conducted with one class at grade 3 in Ban Mai primary school in Ha Noi in eight weeks in the frame work of a classroom action research, focusing on their ability to learn and retain new English words with the adoption of Wordwall games. A pre-test and post-test design were implemented to measure the students' vocabulary improvement, supported by student questionnaires to find out their attitude towards the use of of Wordwall-based learning activities. The findings indicate a significant increase in students' vocabulary retention, with the average post-test score improving from 5.0 to 6.4 and 87.5 % of them got positive gain (>0) in the post-test. More than 90 % of students reported high engagement and motivation towards Wordwall activities. The study concludes that Wordwall serves as a useful and motivating tool for teaching vocabulary, supporting young learners' language development. The findings emphasize the value of incorporating game-based digital resources into early language education to improve vocabulary learning and enrich students' overall learning experiences.*

Keywords: *Attitude; enhance; primary students; vocabulary retention; wordwall games*

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1. INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary is a core component of language, essential for effective communication, intellectual development, and proficiency in understanding, speaking, reading, and writing (Anderson, 1976; DeCarrico, 2001). Teaching vocabulary is essential for EFL learners. Wilkins (1972, p.111) emphasized that while grammar allows limited communication, vocabulary is indispensable since nothing can be conveyed without it. Since vocabulary acquisition is fundamental to language learning, teachers should support students not only in recognizing new words but also in reusing them across varied contexts and through multiple techniques to ensure long-term retention. Vocabulary retention is one of the concerns for teachers to teach young learner especially at elementary level whose characteristics are normally curious, active, and imaginative, with short attention spans and they tend to enjoy learning through play and hands-on experience, concrete activities rather than abstract concepts.

Among the numerous vocabulary teaching methods, incorporating interactive games has become increasingly favored by foreign language instructors. This study set out to explore the question: "To what extent do Wordwall tool enhance Grade 3 school students' English vocabulary retention?". In addition, this study also aims to figure out the students' attitude towards the application of Wordwall in vocabulary lesson. Due to time constraints and limitations related to teaching schedules and administrative factors, the research concentrated specifically on students' retention of vocabulary for grade 3 learners.

2. CONTENT

2.1. Literature review

2.1.1. Definition of vocabulary retention

Richards & Schmidt (2002, p.457) defined vocabulary retention as "the ability to recall or remember things after an interval of time. Retention, in learning and memory, refers to the ability to maintain information over time so it can be recalled when needed (Wixted & Ebbesen, 1991). Retention of vocabulary is crucial for EFL learners. Effective retention is influenced by both external and internal factors. Instructional elements such as focused attention, motivation, timely feedback, and sufficient practice can strengthen or weaken memory (Dempster, 1996).

2.1.2. Definition of games

Salen and Zimmerman (2004) define games as systems in which players engage in artificial conflict, governed by rules and leading to measurable outcomes, emphasizing the key components of players, rules, outcomes, and conflict. Koster (2004) adds that games are interactive experiences designed to create enjoyment and engagement through clear objectives and feedback. Similarly, Juul (2010) highlights rules as essential, as they shape the possibility space of games and guide meaningful player choices.

Numerous studies have been implemented to explore the effect of games on learning. Hwang, Lai, and Wang (2015) note that these digital resources can enhance motivation, increase participation, and improve academic performance. Other research also supports the positive impact of game-based learning, for instance, Yunda et al. (2023) found that communicative games significantly improved eighth graders' speaking skills, particularly vocabulary and pronunciation, while Maulidina (2022) reported that using games in EFL classrooms increased adult learners' motivation to learn English. Together, these studies highlight the effectiveness of digital and game-based tools in promoting engagement and improving language learning outcomes.

2.1.3. Definition of Wordwall

Wordwall was originally created in 2008 by a UK secondary school English teacher, initially launched as a tool packaged with interactive whiteboards. It was gradually developed to became an official website, Wordwall.net in 2016 when it became more popular to a number of audience beyond high-tech classrooms. One of the dominant key features was the 'switch' template, which lets users to swap the only content into different interactive activities. Therefore, it could be applied to teach young learners whose short-term concentration is common to avoid their boredom and distraction.

As a game-based application, it allows teachers to generate educational tools from ready-made templates by simply entering their content, which Wordwall transforms into interactive tasks. The platform helps save preparation time, enhance online learning, reduce reliance on paper worksheets, support student-paced learning, and track progress (Novianti, 2023). Research also highlights its pedagogical benefits, noting that Wordwall increases motivation and engagement, reduces boredom, provides repeated exposure to vocabulary (Umar et al., 2023), and offers immediate feedback that supports learner autonomy and improves vocabulary retention (Safitri et al., 2022).

2.1.4. Definition of attitude

Attitudes are commonly described as evaluative mechanisms that help individuals classify people, objects, events, activities, or ideas as positive or negative. Wenden (1991) identifies three components of attitudes: the cognitive element, which involves beliefs and thoughts shaping one's perception; the affective element, which includes emotions and feelings such as liking or disliking; and the behavioral element, which reflects observable actions or responses.

Previous studies have explored learners' attitudes toward language learning tools. Wang and Smith (2013) found that positive attitudes toward mobile-assisted language learning enhance engagement and perceived effectiveness, while Stockwell (2010) emphasized that attitudes toward computer-assisted tools are key to their successful use. Jarvis and Achilleos (2013) further noted that attitudes toward digital platforms depend on factors such as accessibility, interactivity, and perceived language improvement. These findings highlight the importance of positive attitudes for effective adoption of learning tools. In Vietnam, Trinh and Tran (2022) reported that both teachers

and students view Digital Games (DGs) as highly beneficial for vocabulary instruction when used properly, as they boost digital literacy, engagement, motivation, and long-term vocabulary retention.

2.1.5. Previous studies

Wordwall has been widely studied to prove that it is an effective tool for enhancing vocabulary learning in diverse EFL contexts. Research by Irmayani and Sari (2025), Oña et al. (2024), Kaldarova (2025), and Oktarini et al. (2025) showed that the Wordwall technique supports vocabulary mastery and engagement among learners. Similarly, Alfares (2025) highlighted the platform's role in promoting meaningful, learner-centered environments that enhance vocabulary acquisition and retention. In addition, Rohmatin (2023) demonstrated improved vocabulary skills in topics like descriptive texts and pronouns through Wordwall-based educational games. In summary, these studies highlight Wordwall's strong potential to enhance vocabulary acquisition, engagement, and motivation across various age groups and learning settings.

In Vietnam, research has demonstrated that the digital educational tool Wordwall is effectively used across various educational levels to enhance learning, particularly in vocabulary acquisition, learner autonomy, and engagement. Studies indicate that Wordwall's interactive templates allow teachers to differentiate instruction to meet diverse student needs, contributing to more positive learning outcomes. For example, Chuyen et al. (2025) found that integrating Wordwall into university curricula improved vocabulary retention and fostered positive student attitudes, while Do and Huynh (2024) reported that EFL students valued the platform for actively memorizing new vocabulary. Similarly, Nhu and Ngan (2025) observed that non-English major university students using Wordwall outperformed peers relying on traditional methods, with increased engagement and motivation. Nguyen (2025) further highlighted that Wordwall supports learner autonomy, enabling students to make purposeful choices in content and activities, which enhanced both motivation and learning outcomes. Overall, these findings underscore Wordwall's potential as a versatile, engaging, and effective tool for enhancing language learning in Vietnam.

Although these research employed various methodologies, the findings have consistently showed that Wordwall effectively enhances students' vocabulary learning and is positively received by learners. However, most studies have focused on secondary and higher education, leaving limited evidence on its impact with primary students. The present study aims to address this gap by exploring the effective use of Wordwall in teaching English to younger learners.

2.2. RESEARCH METHOD

2.2.1. Research design

Various authors have proposed different models of action research, each offering distinct advantages and limitations. This study adopts the Classroom Action Research (CAR) approach. According to Wallace (2006), "Classroom Action Research is a form of classroom-based inquiry conducted by teachers to address problems or seek solutions to context-specific issues." In this research, the MacIsaac (1995) action research framework was selected, as it aligned well with the researcher's study context and supports the collection of the most accurate and relevant results. the model consists of two cycles; however, due to time constraints, only the first cycle was implemented. Each cycle in the action research process includes four stages: planning, action, observation, and reflection.

In the planning phase, the detailed eight-week lesson plans and prepared Wordwall activities were designed. These activities supported vocabulary introduction, practice, and review, aligning with the course book and the pre-A1 Starters wordlist. In the action phase, the eight-week lessons which integrated Wordwall activities to support vocabulary retention were implemented in classroom. A pre-test was administered to assess students' prior knowledge, after that the teacher followed the planned instructional steps. Wordwall links were also shared with students for additional practice at home. The observation was conducted at the same time of the teaching process as the teacher noted and documented students' reactions to using Wordwall. Observations focused on how the games affected performance and engagement, providing data for later analysis. In the final phase, collected data was analyzed by utilized multiple methods to interpret the findings and assess Wordwall's impact on vocabulary acquisition. The resulting insights supported clear