

Implementation of Game-Based Learning (Word Wall) to develop English language mastery for Elementary Students

Syifana Alifah Muazarah*, Melfany Syifa Adeline, Meysa Aulia Putri

Pendidikan Guru Sekolah Dasar, Institut Keguruan Dan Ilmu Pendidikan Siliwangi

Address: Jl. Terusan Jenderal Sudirman No.3, Baros, Kec. Cimahi Tengah, Cimahi City, West Java, Indonesia, 40521

*Corresponding author : Muazarahsyifana@gmail.com

Abstract: This study aims to apply game-based learning using the Word Wall method in developing the English language skills of fourth-grade students at SDN Nusa Indah 01. The background of this study focuses on the importance of English language skills in the era of globalization, where foreign language skills are one of the keys to competing in the world of education and work. The research methods used include open-ended and closed-ended questionnaires for students and teachers, in-depth interviews, and observations or field notes. The questionnaires were designed to measure the effectiveness of the learning process and the responses of students and teachers to the applied method. The research results indicate that the use of Word Wall as a game-based learning medium successfully increased students' interest and motivation in learning English. Additionally, in-depth interviews revealed that teachers also felt the positive impact of this method in the learning process. The conclusion of this research is that game-based learning is effective in improving students' English language skills, as well as providing an enjoyable and interactive learning experience. The implementation of the Word Wall method also contributed to strengthening students' vocabulary retention. Through visual and kinesthetic engagement, students were more likely to remember new words, use them in context, and demonstrate improved pronunciation. Classroom observations indicated that students became more confident in expressing themselves in English, especially during interactive activities such as group games, matching words, and storytelling using the vocabulary displayed on the Word Wall. This method provided repeated exposure to target vocabulary in a meaningful and engaging way.

Keywords: Elementary Education; English Language Learning; Game-Based Learning; Student Motivation; Word Wall.

1. BACKGROUND

In the current era of globalization, English language proficiency is a very important skill to master from an early age. English not only acts as an international communication tool, but also becomes one of the main requirements to be able to compete in the world of education and the world of work. Therefore, mastery of English at the primary school level is an important foundation for the development of learners' competencies in the future. However, in practice, English learning at the primary school level often faces various challenges. Many students find it difficult to understand the material, lack motivation, or even find English lessons boring. This demands innovation in learning methods that can make the learning process more interesting, interactive, and in accordance with the characteristics of elementary school-age students.

One approach that can be used to overcome these problems is game-based learning, which has been proven to increase student engagement and motivation in the learning process. In this context, the Word Wall method is one of the potential media to be used in teaching

English vocabulary. Word Wall is a visual technique that displays important words on the classroom wall, which indirectly reinforces students' memory through repeated exposure and active interaction. This study was conducted to implement and evaluate the effectiveness of the Word Wall method in improving the English language skills of fourth grade students at SDN Nusa Indah 01. Through a qualitative and quantitative approach with the use of questionnaires, interviews, and observations, this study seeks to understand how this method affects learning interest, active participation, as well as teachers' perceptions of the applied learning innovation. It is hoped that the results of this study can make a real contribution to the development of more enjoyable and effective English teaching methods in the environment.

2. THEORETICAL STUDY

Education has a very crucial role in shaping the future of a nation by providing the necessary knowledge and skills to the younger generation. This is becoming increasingly important, especially in the context of mastering English, which is recognized as a very important international language in the current era of globalization (Ruhaliah, 2020; Susanti, 2023). Mastery of English not only opens access to global information, but also increases the competitiveness of individuals in an increasingly competitive job market. However, despite the importance of English language mastery, there are still significant challenges in implementing Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) at the primary school level. Some of these challenges include a lack of understanding among teachers on how to integrate ESD theory and practice, as well as limitations in learning materials that are comprehensive and appropriate to students' needs (Nousheen, 2020; Fekih, 2021; Aprima & Sari, 2022).

In this context, game-based learning, particularly the Word Wall method, emerges as an innovative solution that can increase student motivation and engagement. This method creates a fun and interactive learning atmosphere, which is expected to accelerate students' vocabulary acquisition and English language skills (Mermamolina, 2023; Zhurakovskaya, 2020). Game-based learning not only makes students more active, but also helps them to more easily understand and remember the material taught. By using the Word Wall method, students can interact directly with new vocabulary in a fun context, which in turn can improve information retention.

The implementation of an independent curriculum provides an opportunity for teachers to customize their learning strategies according to the needs and characteristics of students. In this case, the Word Wall method is one of the most relevant approaches to support this goal (Primasti, 2021; Nurdiansyah, 2023). With an independent curriculum, teachers have the

flexibility to design more creative and innovative learning activities, which can attract students' interest and increase their involvement in the learning process. This research has great significance, as it aims to examine the effectiveness of game-based learning implementation in improving English language acquisition among grade 4 SDN students.

In addition, this research is expected to make a real contribution to the development of learning strategies that are more effective and relevant to the needs of the times, as well as improving the limitations that have been found in previous research related to teaching materials and educational resource management (Cipnal Muchlip, 2022; Ruhaliah, 2020; Susanti, 2023). Thus, this research not only seeks to answer the practical challenges faced in English language learning, but also supports the achievement of fair and equitable sustainable education goals in Indonesia.

Through this research, it is hoped that a learning model can be found that is not only effective in improving students' English language skills, but can also be widely implemented in various elementary schools. Thus, this research has the potential to have a significant positive impact on the quality of education in Indonesia, especially in the mastery of English among students. This research will also provide recommendations for educators and policy makers in designing better curriculum and learning strategies, so as to meet the needs of students in the ever-evolving era of globalization.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

A. Research Design & Participants

Research Design

This research uses a mixed methods approach that uses qualitative methods. The qualitative approach is applied to deeply explore the experiences, perceptions, and obstacles faced by teachers and students during the implementation of game-based learning (Word Wall). As well as to measure the level of effectiveness and practicality of the learning method through numerical data collection from questionnaires and observation sheets.

This research design is descriptive and evaluative, aiming to find out how the game-based learning process runs, how the response of students and teachers, as well as the obstacles that arise, so as to provide a comprehensive picture of the effectiveness of the learning strategy used.

Participants

The participants of this research consisted of two main groups, namely learners and teachers:

Learners: Fourth grade students of SDN Nusa Indah 01 who participated in English learning based on Word Wall game. This group was chosen because they were the main subjects of the learning implementation, so as to measure the direct impact of the method on their understanding and motivation to learn.

Teaching Teachers: The English teacher who implemented the Word Wall method in the class. This teacher is the key informant who provides perspective on the implementation process as well as the constraints faced during the learning process.

Instruments and Indicators

Research Instruments

To collect valid and comprehensive data, this study used several complementary instruments:

- a) Teaching Module: Used as a guideline for the implementation of game-based learning adapted to the curriculum for grade IV SD. 1.
- b) Observation Sheet: Used by researchers or observers to record and evaluate the course of the learning process, including student activeness, participation, and the suitability of the learning stages with the plan. Observations are conducted systematically to obtain quantitative and qualitative data.
- c) Questionnaire: Available in the form of closed and open questions given to teachers as well as students. Closed-ended questionnaires were used to obtain quantitative data relating to perceptions and level of acceptance of the learning method. The open-ended questionnaire aims to obtain more in-depth opinions and suggestions.
- d) In-depth Interview: Semi-structured interviews were conducted with selected teachers and students to explore more details about their learning experience, motivation, and obstacles faced during the learning process.
- e) Field Notes: Additional documentation in the form of non-formal observations and researcher reflections during the implementation of learning.

Research Indicators

Indicators are parameters used to measure the success and effectiveness of the learning method, including:

- a. Increased Student Motivation: Measured by how much students show enthusiasm and interest during game-based learning.

- b. Student Activeness and Engagement: Measured by the level of student participation in games and group discussions.
- c. Improved English Language Proficiency: Measured by students' ability to recognize, name, and express various food and beverage flavors in English.
- d. Implementation Constraints: Technical, psychological, or methodological constraints that teachers and students encounter during the learning process.
- e. Student Feedback: Students' perceptions of the learning experience, level of enjoyment, and motivation to learn using this game-based method.

4. DISCUSSION RESULTS

A. The application of the Word Wall game-based learning method affects students' understanding of English language materials



Figure 1. Toy-based Learning Framework.

The implementation of the Word Wall game-based learning method significantly impacted students' understanding of English materials. Based on the analysis of students' responses and class data, it was found that most students reported no longer experiencing difficulties when taking English lessons. This suggests that the interactive nature of the Word Wall technique helps bridge the gap in prior understanding that may exist in traditional learning methods. Only 30% of students still faced challenges, which suggests that while the method is effective for most students, it may require adaptation or additional support for some students with different learning needs or lower exposure to the subject matter.

The structure of Word Wall as a game-based visual vocabulary strategy seems to align with how young students internalize new language concepts. The technique provides repeated and contextualized exposure to vocabulary through play and interaction, which supports language acquisition theories that emphasize multisensory engagement and repetition for long-

term retention. The approach also shifts the focus from passive learning to active learning, requiring students to directly participate in word recognition, categorization and pronunciation, which reinforces comprehension more effectively than lecture-based teaching. This dynamic engagement reduces cognitive overload by breaking down information into digestible and memorable formats, helping students process meaning in context rather than relying on rote memorization.

According to Yuniasti et al (2024) who highlighted that interactive game-based strategies significantly improved comprehension among elementary school students. A clear increase in the percentage of correct vocabulary responses (70%) after the game session showed that students were not only more engaged but also better able to apply vocabulary in context. These results support the cognitive theory of multimedia learning, which states that learning will be more effective if information is presented through an active and engaging experience involving both verbal and visual elements. The Word Wall method, by combining linguistic input with visual and kinesthetic activities, facilitates a deeper understanding of English materials, especially among learners with visual and tactile learning styles.

Although some students still experience difficulties, this fact opens up opportunities for improvement rather than diminishing the effectiveness of the method. Different instructions can be integrated into the Word Wall game, which offers different levels of vocabulary or scaffolding activities based on students' abilities. Teachers can also modify steps or add additional exercises to ensure all students get adequate support. While the application of the Word Wall method has proven successful in improving students' comprehension of English, it also demonstrates the importance of a responsive and flexible pedagogy to handle the diversity of learning profiles within the classroom.

B. The Word Wall method affects students' motivation and interest in learning English

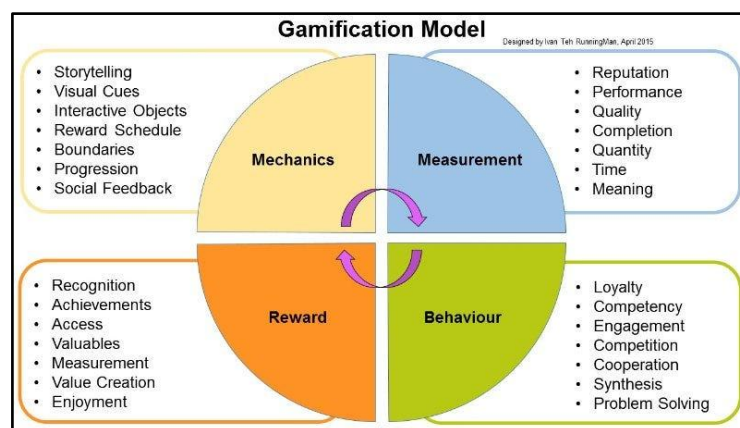


Figure 2. Gamification Model.

Data collected during the study showed a substantial positive influence of the Word Wall method on students' motivation and interest in learning English. With 85% of students reporting that they felt more motivated and 90% expressing enjoyment of the activity, it is clear that the game-based learning strategy effectively transformed the classroom environment into a space of curiosity, participation and engagement. These findings not only reflect observable enthusiasm, but also align with the affective domain of Bloom's Taxonomy, which emphasizes that students' emotional responses significantly affect their learning outcomes. When students feel pleasure and excitement in the learning process, they are more likely to internalize the material and develop a positive attitude towards the subject.

The shift from traditional instruction to a game-based format also capitalizes on students' intrinsic motivation. Unlike extrinsic motivation, which relies on external rewards or pressure, intrinsic motivation is driven by internal satisfaction, students learn because they find the activity satisfying. The Word Wall game by design, incorporates elements of challenge, collaboration and fun, creating a learning experience that feels like play, not obligation. This aligns with Deci and Ryan's Self-Determination Theory, which states that motivation increases when students experience autonomy, competence and relatedness. The collaborative nature of Word Wall encourages peer interaction (relatedness), success in completing tasks promotes a sense of competence, and the fun, exploratory format provides a sense of autonomy over one's learning path.

The observed increase in participation, i.e. 75% of students actively engaged in the class indicates that students are not only willing but also eager to take part in learning tasks. This is in contrast to the more passive behavior often associated with textbook-driven instruction. Students don't just absorb information, they use it in context, repeat it in dialog, and play with it in ways that make learning memorable. This type of engagement is a key indicator of motivation. According to Jannah (2025) who argues that enjoyable and meaningful interaction with language can significantly increase students' motivation, especially in the early stages of language acquisition.

Although motivation levels are generally high, the sustainability of this motivation needs to be considered. The novelty of the game may initially boost students' enthusiasm, but to maintain that level of excitement over time, continuous innovation and adaptation is required. Teachers need to regularly rotate game types, update vocabulary content, and ensure that learning objectives remain clear and measurable. If supported by strong pedagogical planning, the Word Wall method can continue to spark motivation, reinforcing sustained interest in English learning beyond classroom activities. The method transforms students from

passive recipients of knowledge to active users of the language, a change that is essential for long-term mastery and love of the subject.

C. Challenges faced by teachers and students in implementing game-based learning using Word Wall method

Despite the very positive results associated with the implementation of the Word Wall method, some challenges were identified during the study, especially from the teachers' and students' perspectives. These challenges mainly centered on time constraints, technological limitations, and the readiness of teachers and students to adapt to the new learning format. While the method was generally well received with 80% of teachers endorsing its effectiveness, many educators voiced concerns about the amount of time and effort required to prepare materials, manage classroom dynamics during games, and align activities with existing curriculum objectives. This reflects a recurring theme in pedagogical innovation, which is the tension between creativity and practicality.

One of the most frequently mentioned constraints by teachers is preparation time. Designing an effective Word Wall game requires more than just a vocabulary list, it also requires careful integration of curriculum standards, scaffolding strategies and student learning profiles. Teachers need to prepare physical or digital word cards, create interactive prompts, and anticipate potential misconceptions. For many educators working with large class sizes and limited planning periods, this level of preparation can be a barrier to consistent implementation. Without institutional support or collaborative planning time, individual teachers can feel isolated in trying to sustain these methods independently. According to Sutiswo et al (2024) who argue that curriculum innovation must be accompanied by systemic support and professional development.

The shift from the students' perspective from traditional learning to game-based learning can also present adaptation challenges. While most students respond positively, about 30% still struggle with comprehension or engagement. The fast-paced nature of the game may overwhelm them, especially if they lack basic vocabulary or have limited exposure to English. Others may have difficulty navigating the group dynamics or experience anxiety in a competitive setting. These variations highlight the importance of inclusive instructional design, where games accommodate different learning styles, language proficiency and social temperaments. Teachers need to moderate activities carefully, ensuring that introverted students, slower processors, or less confident speakers are not marginalized during tasks that require high energy.

Technology limitations are also a concern. While Word Wall apps add significant value to vocabulary learning, not all classrooms have adequate devices or stable internet connections to maximize the use of such tools. This digital divide poses a threat to the equitable implementation of modern teaching methods, especially in schools with limited infrastructure. This confirms the need for contextual adaptation, where digital components are supplemented or replaced with analog alternatives such as printed cards or whiteboards, to ensure all students benefit regardless of the school's technological capacity.

The implementation of the Word Wall method faces several practical and contextual challenges that must be overcome to maximize its effectiveness. These include the need for structured teacher training, adequate preparation time, technological infrastructure, and inclusive and flexible game design. Despite these hurdles, the overall success of the method, reflected in the high levels of student engagement, motivation and understanding, suggests that with careful planning and institutional support, these challenges can be overcome. As schools move towards a more interactive and student-centered learning paradigm, overcoming these barriers becomes essential to realizing the full potential of innovative strategies such as Word Wall in improving language education.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

A. Conclusions

Based on the results of the research conducted at SDN Nusa Indah 01, it can be concluded that the implementation of game-based learning using the Word Wall method significantly improved the English language skills of fourth grade students. This method successfully increased students' motivation and engagement in the learning process, with 85% of students feeling more motivated and 90% enjoying the interactive learning activities. In addition, data analysis showed that 75% of students actively participated in the games and discussions and 70% successfully answered questions related to the material correctly. Despite some challenges, such as preparation time and the need for further teacher training, the results show that the Word Wall method is an effective and relevant approach to improving students' English language skills. This research also makes an important contribution to the development of more innovative and contemporary learning strategies, which support the achievement of sustainable education goals in Indonesia. Thus, this game-based learning method can be widely implemented in various primary schools to improve the quality of education and English language skills among students.

B. Suggestions

Based on the results of this study, it is suggested that the implementation of game-based learning using the Word Wall method can be further developed and integrated into English language learning at the elementary school level. This method is proven to be effective in increasing students' motivation, understanding and engagement in learning English. To optimize its impact, it requires support from educational institutions and school managers in the form of teacher training, adequate learning resources, and flexible curriculum design. Teachers are also encouraged to adapt this method according to students' diverse learning needs through differentiated teaching, to ensure that every student benefits from this approach. Further research is recommended to explore the long-term effects of Word Wall and its applicability at different educational levels or with different language skills such as writing and speaking.

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