USING WORDWALL AS AN ONLINE TEACHING TOOL TO ENHANCE VOCABULARY COMPETENCE FOR 10TH GRADERS

Nguyen Thi Hong Minh*, Dang Thao Nguyen
TNU - University of Education

ARTICLE INFO

Received: 12/4/2024
Revised: 10/6/2024
Published: 10/6/2024

KEYWORDS

Vocabulary competence
Vocabulary teaching
Online teaching tool
Wordwall
10th graders

ABSTRACT

Having a good grasp of vocabulary is essential when learning English. Since students often struggle with retaining a large amount of vocabulary, teachers need to find ways to help, and using Wordwall as an online teaching tool could be an effective solution. The purpose of this study was to discover whether Wordwall website is suitable to 10th graders at a high school in Vietnam and whether implementing such tasks is effective to enhance their vocabulary competence. Adopting pre-experiemental research design with the use of quantitative method, the study involved 30 students taking part in a 7-week intervention in which each week they were required to join in 2 vocabulary lessons with the integration of Wordwall as an online teaching tool supplemental to the regular curriculum. The participants were invited to complete a vocabulary pre-test and post-test and a questionnaire for some insights about the improvement of their vocabulary competence and their opinions towards the implementation of Wordwall website. The findings of the pre-test and post-test indicated that the students' vocabulary competence had improved significantly after engaging in vocabulary lessons using Wordwall. Findings from the questionnaire also revealed that the utilization of Wordwall Website appeals to 10th graders' interests in improving their vocabulary competence and it is suitable and effective for such development. Therefore, it is recommended that Wordwall website be used more frequently in vocabulary lessons to enhance the vocabulary competence of 10th graders.

SỬ DỤNG WORDWALL NHƯ LÀ MỘT CÔNG CỤ DẠY HỌC TRỰC TUYẾN ĐỂ NÂNG CAO NĂNG LỰC SỬ DỤNG TỪ VỰNG CHO HỌC SINH LỚP 10

Nguyễn Thị Hồng Minh*, Đặng Thảo Nguyên
Trường Đại học Sư phạm - ĐH Thái Nguyên

THÔNG TIN BÀI BÁO

Ngày nhận bài: 12/4/2024
Ngày hoàn thiện: 10/6/2024
Ngày đăng: 10/6/2024

TỪ KHÓA

Năng lực sử dụng từ vựng
Dạy học từ vựng
Công cụ dạy học trực tuyến
Wordwall
Học sinh lớp 10

TÓM TẮT

Việc nắm vững từ vựng là yếu tố quan trọng trong việc học tiếng Anh. Bởi học sinh gặp khó khăn trong việc ghi nhớ số lượng lớn từ vựng, người giáo viên cần tìm ra những phương pháp để hỗ trợ người học, và sử dụng Wordwall như là một công cụ dạy học trực tuyến có thể là một giải pháp hiệu quả. Nghiên cứu này nhằm mục đích kiểm chứng sự phù hợp và hiệu quả của việc sử dụng trang web Wordwall để hỗ trợ học sinh lớp 10 tại một trường trung học ở Việt Nam trong việc cải thiện năng lực từ vựng. Sử dụng thiết kế tiền thực nghiệm và phương pháp nghiên cứu định tính, nghiên cứu này tiến hành thực nghiệm trên 30 học sinh tham gia vào 7 tuần can thiệp, trong đó mỗi tuần học sinh hoàn thành 2 bài học từ vựng có sử dụng lồng ghép Wordwall như là một công cụ dạy học trực tuyến bổ trợ cho chương trình học chính khóa. Người tham gia hoàn thành bài kiểm tra từ vựng trước và sau thực nghiệm và trả lời bảng hỏi để cung cấp những thông tin về sự tiến bộ của năng lực từ vựng và quan điểm của họ về việc sử dụng Wordwall. Kết quả của bài kiểm tra trước và sau thực nghiệm cho thấy năng lực từ vựng của các học sinh đã được cải thiện đáng kể sau khi tham gia các bài học từ vựng với Wordwall. Phản hồi từ bảng câu hỏi cũng cho thấy sử dụng Wordwall làm gia tăng hứng thú được đánh giá là phù hợp và hữu ích trong việc nâng cao năng lực từ vựng của học sinh lớp 10. Trên cơ sở đó, chúng tôi khuyến nghị nên sử dụng Wordwall thường xuyên hơn trong các bài học từ vựng để tăng cường năng lực từ vựng của học sinh lớp 10.

DOI: https://doi.org/10.34238/tnu-jst.10132

* Corresponding author. *Email: minhnth@tnue.edu.vn*

1. Introduction

In the pursuit of learning English, students are expected to proficiently acquire vocabulary, which is integral to fulfilling the learning objectives. Mastering vocabulary holds significance for learners, as expressed by Sipayung [1], who emphasizes that while grammar facilitates communication to some extent, vocabulary is indispensable; without it, communication becomes impossible. As per Sanjaya et al. [2], vocabulary stands out as the primary element of language proficiency, serving as a foundational aid in mastering English skills such as reading, listening, writing, and speaking. Learners need to grasp word meanings and utilize them accurately to effectively communicate in a foreign language.

According to Hadijah et al. [3], mastering vocabulary represents a crucial milestone in enhancing students' language proficiency. In traditional classrooms, teachers typically facilitate vocabulary acquisition through descriptive tasks or rote memorization. Direct or face-to-face instruction tends to be more interactive and engaging; nevertheless, students often encounter difficulty in organizing remembered vocabulary into coherent sentences, leading to frustration.

In the present day, teachers require additional resources to enhance students' vocabulary acquisition as well as boost their motivation in such learning. Furthermore, students need to not only memorize vocabulary but also effectively utilize it. Assessing students' vocabulary proficiency necessitates teachers' understanding of their individual learning needs. According to Hikmah [4], in the educational context, media encompasses graphic, photographic, or electronic instruments utilized for collecting, examining, and generating visual or auditory data during the teaching and learning process. Hadijah et al. [3] also highlight that contemporary students possess distinct requirements compared to previous generations. Hence, teachers must exercise caution in selecting appropriate learning media to cater to these diverse needs. The adoption of online tools in English language classrooms has experienced a significant increase in usage, aligning with the growing intersection of technology and language learning, a trend that gained prominence in the early 21st century [5] .

In the realm of language education, the integration of technology has significantly impacted English Language Teaching (ELT) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Wordwall, a versatile online platform, exemplifies this impact by offering interactive tools for language learning. According to Smith [6], educators can create engaging activities tailored to language acquisition, fostering active participation and personalized learning experiences. Wan Azli et al. [7] asserted that incorporating online games into education enhances learning and proves highly beneficial for students. Furthermore, employing Wordwall as a learning tool aided teachers in boosting students' vocabulary attainment. As claimed by Haq et al. [8], Wordwall as a digital game application positively impacted students’ vocabulary learning and students showed significant enthusiasm in their academic endeavors. Moreover, Wordwall's accessibility allows seamless integration into various teaching environments, making it a valuable asset for educators worldwide.

Incorporating Wordwall into language teaching offers significant advantages, particularly given the limitation on vocabulary learning time in class. Drawing on the findings of Jannah [9], young learners possess traits that enable them to swiftly absorb new information. However, they typically exhibit shorter attention spans and are prone to boredom during the learning process. Firstly, Wordwall provides engaging and interactive activities that efficiently utilize instructional time, maximizing vocabulary learning effectiveness within lesson constraints. Secondly, students are highly engaged with technology-enhanced tools like Wordwall, benefiting from its interactive nature and visually appealing design. This fosters active participation and retention, leveraging students' enthusiasm for technology to enhance their overall learning experience. Integrating Wordwall thus optimizes instructional time and enhances student engagement and learning outcomes. Therefore, this study wants to find out more about that.

Working as a supervisor and a student-teacher in Thai Nguyen Specialized High School in a practicum period, the researchers have noticed that 10th-graders, who are navigating the cusp of adolescence, require instructional approaches that resonate with their evolving cognitive and emotional development. The conventional methods of vocabulary instruction may inadequately captivate their interest and may appear disconnected from their real-world experiences and interests. As a result, these students may exhibit a lack of engagement, which can impede their progress in vocabulary acquisition. Recognizing the intrinsic diversity in learning styles and preferences among 10th-grade students, this study aimed to investigate whether the Wordwall website can cater to these variations, and enhance the students' vocabulary performance. The current study entitled "Using wordwall as an online teaching tool to enhance vocabulary competence for 10th graders" was, therefore, conducted in Informatics Grade 10 at Thai Nguyen Specialized High School in hopes of contributing to arousing students' interests, boosting their motivation and improving their vocabulary competence. The study has sought to answer two following research questions (i) To what extent does Wordwall Website improve the participants' vocabulary competence? and (ii) What is the participants' response to the implementation of Wordwall website in learning vocabulary? by implementing Wordwall as an online teaching tool supplement to students' regular English curriculum. The platform allowed integrated vocabulary lessons and a series of vocabulary exercises designed on the basis of the English 10 Textbook used in that school.

2. Research methods

2.1. Participants

A group of 30 students in grade 10 from a Vietnamese high school volunteered as research participants, who attended vocabulary lessons using Wordwall and provided their feedback on the utilization of such teaching tool upon the completion of the study. Those learners have all studied English for more than 5 years, yet their proficiency level is estimated at A2 in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.

2.2. Research Methods

The pre – experimental method was employed to investigate whether the use Wordwall as an online teaching tool was effective for the development of 10th graders' vocabulary competence. The pre – experimental design involved quantitative analysis, enabling the researchers to apply statistical tools to assess outcomes with precision and evident improvement of students' vocabulary performance after the intervention.

In the beginning, a pre-test was given to participants in order to obtain information about their initial lexical level. The post-test was administered at the end of the 7-week intervention to determine whether the students' vocabulary competence have improved or not after Wordwall were implemented in English vocabulary lessons for 10th graders in the second term in the academic year 2023-2024. Students' pre- and post-test scores were gathered and analyzed in order to compare the mean scores in the two tests and determine the impact of Wordwall on the lexical performance of 10th graders.

In addition, a close-ended questionnaire of 10 question items was employed to gather feedback from 30 students regarding the application of Wordwall in teaching vocabulary. The questionnaires were designed based on Likert-type questions with five response choices: strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, and strongly agree, and was distributed after 7-week treatment intended to explore the students' responses toward Wordwall after the treatment. Students' mean scores of responses for each item on the questionnaire were calculated and allocated to five levels of agreement, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. *Scoring range of Likert-scale of the survey* [10]

Mean level	Level of agreement
4.50 - 5.00	Strongly agree
3.50 - 4.49	Agree
2.50 - 3.49	Neutral
1.50 - 2.49	Disagree
1.00 - 1.49	Strongly disagree

3. Results and discussion

3.1. Results

The comparison between the students' vocabulary test results before and after the treatment is presented to demonstrate the changes in students' vocabulary competence following the study period. There were notable differences in the accuracy of students' answers following their participation in vocabulary lessons utilizing Wordwall; more specifically, in the pre-test, students had 14 correct answers on average while in the post-test, the average number of correct answers was 23, which means a rise of 30% of the number of accurate responses.

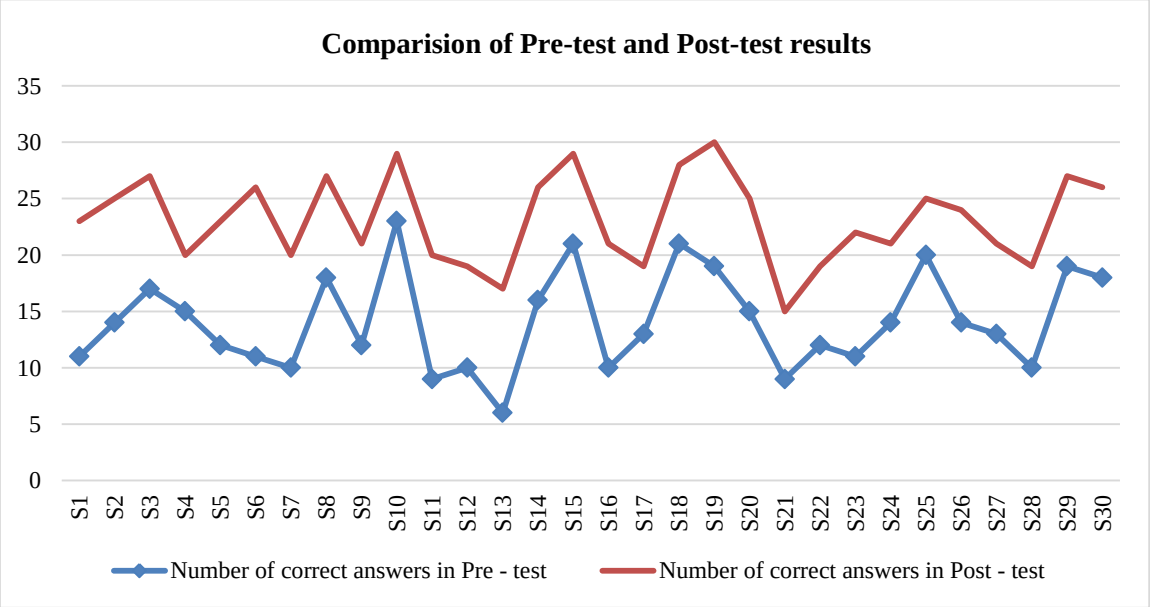

Figure 1. *Comparison of Pre-test and Post-test results*

Figure 1 provides more specific data of students' achievement in vocabulary before and after 7-week intervention. Overall, there was a significant change in students' vocabulary test scores upon the completion of the treatment. Before using Wordwall, the students exhibited a vocabulary competence level that was deemed below average, indicated by an average of 14 correct answers out of 30 questions. To provide further detail, 12 students scored above the average on the pre-test, whereas the remaining students achieved below-average results. After 7 weeks of intervention, students' lexical proficiency surpassed the average level, demonstrated by an average of 23 correct answers. To elaborate, all students achieved correct answers exceeding 15 out of the total 30 questions. It noticed that there was a student gaining 100% of correct answers. This result answered the first research question which was aim to investigate the effectiveness of Wordwall in improving students' vocabulary competence.

Students' responses to the effectiveness of using Wordwall in learning vocabulary were captured in the questionnaire as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. *Findings from closed-ended questionnaire after the intervention*

Statement	Mean	Level of agreement
1. Using Wordwall web in vocabulary lesson helps me to improve vocabulary by topic.	4.16	Agree
2. Using Wordwall web in vocabulary lesson can raise excitement in class.	4.90	Strongly agree
3. Using Wordwall web in vocabulary lesson helps lessons to work more effectively.	4.4	Agree
4. Using Wordwall web in vocabulary lesson helps me to pronounce English more correctly.	4.0	Agree
5. Using Wordwall web in vocabulary lesson helps me to understand meaning of the words more deeply.	3.93	Agree
6. Using Wordwall web in vocabulary lesson helps me to remember longer the vocabulary by topic.	4.87	Strongly agree
7. Using Wordwall web in vocabulary lesson helps me to remember the spelling of the words.	3.96	Agree
8. Using Wordwall web in vocabulary lessons helps me to use more words in speaking by topic.	2.93	Neither/ Nor agree
9. Using Wordwall web in vocabulary lessons helps me to use words in appropriate contexts.	3.3	Neither/ Nor agree
10. Using Wordwall web in vocabulary lessons helps me to pay more attention to the lesson.	4.86	Strongly agree

The data suggests that students generally find the use of Wordwall website in vocabulary lessons to be beneficial. They strongly agreed that this online teaching tool raised excitement in class (4.90) and helped them remember vocabulary by topic for a longer duration (4.87). The mean score of 4.86 reveals students' strong agreement with the statement that Wordwall enhanced their focus on the lessons. Moreover, students agreed that Wordwall improved their vocabulary by topic (4.16), making lessons more effective (4.4), aiding in correct English pronunciation (4.0), and helped them understand the meaning of words more deeply (3.93). They also agreed that it assists their remembering of the spelling of words (3.96). However, students expressed neither agreement nor disagreement regarding the efficacy of Wordwall in helping them use more words in speaking by topic (2.93) and employ words in appropriate contexts (3.3).

3.2. Discussion

The following discussion is made based on the vocabulary test results as well as the questionnaire findings.

The vocabulary pre-test results suggest that 10th-grade students at the local high school face challenges in their understanding of words and expressions. It is clear that 10th-grade students face challenges in understanding words, emphasizing the need for prioritizing vocabulary development. This difficulty could hinder their overall English language skills and limit their ability to improve. Additionally, students' poor vocabulary skills might lead to difficulties comprehending textbook content, including task instructions and language concepts. Consequently, their academic performance could be badly influenced, impacting their future employment opportunities. Therefore, it is essential to enhance their vocabulary proficiency at this stage, which can contribute to overall language development.

The gain scores in the post-test indicated that incorporating Wordwall in vocabulary lessons improved students' vocabulary competence. This corroborates with the outcomes of the experimental study implemented by Sahin and Namli [11] on a gamification application supported by CD-based educational software. Furthermore, the progress of the learners' vocabulary competence confirmed the findings of Ersoy and Boyacı [12] which stated that web-based gamification assisted English language instruction with higher levels of achievement over time when compared to conventional instruction.

Moreover, the questionnaire revealed that the utilization of Wordwall could raise excitement in class and increase students' attention to the lesson thanks to Wordwall's interactive nature,

visual appeal, gamification elements, customization options, immediate feedback, and accessibility. Such findings were in parallel with Syed Shujaat Ali et. al.'s [13] research, in which the author discovered that students' English learning motivation was enhanced by the integration of games into the curriculum. Similarly, the present study's discoveries on participants' positive feedback of Wordwall website resonate with Cahyani's [14] research, which employed a gamification approach on a web-based platform in that the system's components had a positive impact on the motivation of most participants.

The analysis of vocabulary test results and questionnaire responses reveals important implications for language instruction, and there should be various factors to consider when implementing Wordwall into vocabulary lessons in order to maximize the benefits of the materials to students' vocabulary competence.

There are many types of vocabulary tasks introduced in Wordwall website, in which some are not common tasks for 10th graders. Therefore, providing clear instructions for vocabulary activities is needed to enhance student comprehension and engagement. Students should have a clear understanding of the purpose and objectives of the Wordwall activities, which will optimize their learning experience.

Furthermore, it is recommended that teachers carefully select words and phrases that are relevant to the curriculum and align with the thematic focus or grade level. This ensures that the vocabulary is meaningful and applicable to students' learning. Moreover, visual support by accompanying words on the Wordwall with pictures or illustrations can aid comprehension, especially for early English language learners.

Even though students today are becoming more accustomed to online learning and digital resources, guidelines for tackling exercises on Wordwall should be delivered to students to ensure a thorough understanding of what is expected for completion. In addition, vocabulary strengthening techniques should be implemented to aid students in understanding the content and accomplishing the exercises. For example, students should engage with the textual content in its entirety to explicitly and implicitly comprehend it, or utilize visual cues to support their predictions of the content as well as to respond to the questions.

4. Conclusion

The findings of the study revealed that using Wordwall website were effective in boosting 10th graders' lexical resource, which is congruent with those of previous studies; subsequently, it would be appropriate to recommend the implementation of Wordwall website as a useful tool for improving vocabulary competence for second language learners. Moreover, the findings of this study may have profound educational implications. It could inform curriculum development and instructional strategies, catalyzing the integration of technology into language education. This could herald a transformative shift in how vocabulary is taught and learned, with a focus on customization and engagement to meet the diverse learning needs of students. Additionally, successful use of Wordwall requires clear instructions and relevant vocabulary selection as well as guidelines for online learning and vocabulary strengthening techniques in order to support student comprehension and completion of exercises. Overall, addressing vocabulary challenges, leveraging technology, and providing effective support are vital for language instruction and student proficiency. For further study, it is vital to implement Wordwall web more frequently in vocabulary lessons that incorporate all language skills (reading, listening, writing and speaking), which is undoubtedly more beneficial to the enhancement of students' English proficiency.

REFERENCES

[1] R. W. Sipayung, "The Effect of Wordwall Strategy on Students' Vocabulary Achievement at SMP Negeri 5 Pematangsiantar in the Academic Year 2018/2019," *Budapest International Research and Critics Institute (BIRCI-Journal)*, vol. 1, no. 3, pp. 251-263, 2018.

[2] I. G. H. Sanjaya, N. L. P. E. S. Dewi, and A. A. G. Y. Paramartha, "An Investigation of Teaching Aids Used by English Teachers in Teaching Vocabulary for Young Learners," *Journal of Educational Study*, vol. 2, no. 1, pp. 26-34, 2022.

[3] Hadijah, B. W. Pratolo, and Rondiyah, "Interactice game "Kahoot!" as the media of students'vocabulary assessment," *Journal on English as a Foreign Language (JEFL)*, vol. 10, no. 1, pp. 87-105, 2020.

[4] D. Hikmah, "Media For Language Teaching and Learning in Digital Era," *International Journal of English Education and Linguistics (IJoEEL)*, vol. 1, no. 2, pp. 36-41, 2019.

[5] M. Atlun, "The integration of technology into foreign language teaching," *International Journal on New Trends in Education and Their Implications*, vol. 6, no. 1, pp. 22-27, 2021.

[6] E. N. Smith, C. Romero, B. Donovan, R. Herter, D. Paunesku, G. L. Cohen, and J. J. Gross, "Emotion theories and adolescent well-being: Results of an online intervention. Emotion," *APA PsycNet*, vol. 18, no. 6, pp. 781-788, 2018.

[7] W. U. A. W. Azli, P. M. Shah, and M. Mohamad, "Perception on the Usage of Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) in English as a Second Language (ESL) Learning among Vocational College Students," *Creative Education*, vol. 9, no. 1, pp. 84-98, 2018.

[8] F. Y. A. Haq, Syihanuddin, M. Abdurahman, and R. Supriadi, "Wordall: a Digital Game Application to Increase the Interest of Rabbaanii Junior High school student in Learning Arabic Vocabulary," *Proceedding International Conference on Arabic Language and Literature*, vol. 19, no. 4, pp. 1-11, 2021.

[9] M. Jannah and S. Syafryadin, "EFL Students' Perspectives on the Use of Wordwall.net as vocabulary learning media," *ELT Forum: Journal of English Language Teaching*, vol. 11, no. 2, pp. 115-124, 2022.

[10] E. Sözen and U. Güven, "The Effect of Online Assessments on Students' Attitudes Towards Undergraduate-Level Geography Courses," *International Education Studies*, vol. 12, no. 10, pp. 1-8, 2019.

[11] M. C. Sahin and N. A. A. Namli, "Gamification and effects on students' science lesson achievement," *International Journal on New Trends in Education and Their Applications*, vol. 7, no. 1, pp. 41-47, 2016.

[12] B. G. Ersoy and S. D. B. Boyaci, "Devising Gamification for Vocabulary Development and Motivation: An Experimental, Mixed-Model Study," *International Technology and Education Journal*, vol. 5, no. 1, pp. 32-49, 2021.

[13] S. S. Ali, M. W. Ali, and T. Amin, "Enhancing Adult Learners' Motivation for Learning English Grammar through Language Games," *Research Journal of Social Sciences & Economics Review*, vol. 1, no. 3, pp.143-150, 2020.

[14] A. Cahyani, "Gamification Approach to Enhance Students Engagement in Studying Language course," *MATEC Web of Conferences*, 2016, pp. 1-6.