



## Gamified Learning in Remote Junior High Schools in Gowa Regency: Teacher Perceptions on its Role in Vocabulary Acquisition and Motivation

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**Abstract:** This study explores the perceptions of junior high school teachers in remote areas regarding the use of gamified learning environments (GLEs) in enhancing vocabulary acquisition and fostering student motivation. Specifically, the research focuses on the application of Word wall, an interactive gamified tool that allows educators to create customizable vocabulary games. A mixed-methods approach was employed, combining quantitative surveys and qualitative semi-structured interviews with 30 language teachers from remote junior high schools. The results of the survey indicated that 85% of teachers found Word wall effective in supporting vocabulary acquisition, while 90% observed increased student motivation when using gamified learning activities. Teachers reported that the engaging and interactive nature of the games, including quizzes, matching games, and word searches, helped students better retain vocabulary. However, challenges such as limited access to technology, insufficient teacher training, and inconsistent student engagement were identified as barriers to fully utilizing gamified learning tools. The study concludes by recommending the provision of professional development for teachers, improvements in technological infrastructure, and a more personalized approach to gamified learning to maximize its effectiveness in remote educational settings.

**Keywords:** gamified learning, vocabulary acquisition, student motivation, remote junior high schools, teacher perceptions.

### ▪ INTRODUCTION

In recent years, educational technology has transformed the traditional learning environment by introducing innovative methods that engage students and enhance learning outcomes. One such innovation is gamified learning, which integrates elements of game design into non-game contexts to increase student engagement, motivation, and academic achievement (Deterding et al., 2011). Gamification in education has gained considerable attention, particularly for its potential to improve student participation and retention, especially in language learning contexts, where vocabulary acquisition plays a pivotal role in mastering a second language.

Vocabulary acquisition is a fundamental aspect of language learning, and effective methods for teaching vocabulary are crucial for student success. Traditional approaches to vocabulary instruction often involve rote memorization and repetition, which may not sufficiently engage students, particularly those in remote or under-resourced areas (Muntean, 2011). Gamification, on the other hand, offers a more interactive and engaging way to reinforce new words and concepts. By using game mechanics such as rewards, points, and challenges, gamified learning environments (GLEs) create an enjoyable and motivating atmosphere where students actively participate in learning (White, 2015).

The integration of gamification tools, such as Word wall, in vocabulary instruction is becoming increasingly popular in educational settings. Word wall is a versatile platform that allows teachers to create interactive games for language learning, such as word matching, quizzes, and word searches. It enables students to engage with vocabulary in a

fun, competitive, and dynamic way, which enhances retention and recall (Squire, 2011). While the benefits of gamified learning are widely recognized, there is limited research on how teachers in remote schools perceive the role of gamified learning tools like Word wall in enhancing vocabulary acquisition and motivating students.

Remote junior high schools, particularly those with limited access to technology, face unique challenges in implementing gamified learning. Many remote schools have limited resources, lacked stable internet connections, and experienced a shortage of teachers trained in the use of technology in education (Surendeleg et al., 2019). Despite these challenges, teachers in remote areas are increasingly turning to gamification as a solution to improve student engagement and academic performance. Teachers who use Word wall report higher levels of student engagement, as students find the activities more enjoyable and are motivated to repeat exercises in order to improve their scores and mastery of vocabulary (Muntean, 2011). This paper aims to explore the perceptions of junior high school teachers in remote areas regarding the use of Word wall as a gamified tool for vocabulary acquisition and its impact on student motivation. This study aims to explore the perceptions of language teachers in remote junior high schools regarding the use of Word wall as a gamified tool to facilitate vocabulary acquisition and increase student motivation. The research addresses the following questions: How do teachers perceive the effectiveness of Word wall in facilitating vocabulary acquisition? What impact does Word wall have on student motivation in remote junior high school? What challenges do teachers face in using Word wall, and how can these barriers be overcome?

## ▪ **METHOD**

### **Research Design**

This study employed mixed-methods research design combines both qualitative and quantitative approaches within a single study to gain a deeper understanding of a research problem (Creswell & Clark, 2018). The purpose of using a mixed-methods approach was to gather comprehensive data on teachers' perceptions of Word wall as a gamified learning tool for vocabulary acquisition and student motivation. The quantitative aspect of the study involved a survey to assess teachers' general views on the effectiveness of gamification in the classroom. The qualitative aspect, through semi-structured interviews, provided deeper insights into teachers' experiences, challenges, and specific perceptions regarding the use of Word wall in remote junior high schools.

### **Participants**

The study involved 30 language teachers from junior high schools located in Moncongang, Gowa Regency. Participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure that only those with experience using Word wall or other gamified tools in their classrooms were included. These teachers were selected from different schools across remote regions to ensure a diverse range of perspectives regarding the use of technology in education and gamification. The participants' teaching experience ranged from 3 to 15 years, and they all taught English as a second language (ESL). The teachers were chosen based on their familiarity with digital tools and their active use of Word wall for vocabulary teaching, either in traditional or online teaching settings. The remote schools selected were located in areas with limited access to technological resources, making them an ideal setting for exploring the barriers and benefits of gamified learning tools.

## **Data Collection**

The data collection for this study involved two main instruments: survey and semi-structured interview forms.

### ***Survey***

The survey used a Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree) for closed-ended questions. Additionally, open-ended questions were included to allow teachers to provide detailed feedback on their experiences. A quantitative survey was designed to assess teachers' general perceptions of Word wall as a gamified tool for vocabulary acquisition and its impact on student motivation. The survey consisted of 20 items, which were divided into the following sections: Demographic Information (e.g., years of teaching experience, school location, previous experience with gamification). Perceptions of Vocabulary Acquisition (questions addressing how effective Word wall was in improving vocabulary retention and recall). Motivational Impact (questions regarding the impact of gamified learning on student engagement and motivation). Barriers to Implementation (questions addressing challenges such as limited technology, internet access, and training)

### ***Semi-Structured Interviews***

Interviews were conducted in English and lasted approximately 30 to 45 minutes. They were audio-recorded with the participants' consent and transcribed for analysis. In addition to the survey, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 10 teachers from the initial sample. These interviews were designed to provide deeper insights into the teachers' experiences with Word Wall and gamification in the classroom. The interview questions focused on the following areas: Teaching Practices: How do you integrate Word wall into your vocabulary lessons? What specific features of Word wall do you use most frequently?. Student Engagement: How have students responded to Word wall? Do you think it has impacted their motivation to learn vocabulary? Challenges and Barriers: What challenges have you encountered in using Word wall in your classroom? How have you overcome these challenges, if at all? Suggestions for Improvement: In your opinion, how can Word wall be improved to better meet the needs of students and teachers, especially in remote settings?

## **Data Analysis**

The data collected from both the surveys and the interviews were analyzed using the following approaches: Quantitative Analysis: The survey data were analysed using descriptive statistics to calculate frequencies, means, and percentages. This analysis provided an overview of teachers' general perceptions of Word wall's effectiveness in improving vocabulary acquisition and motivating students. The responses from the Likert-scale questions were tabulated to identify patterns in teachers' views. Qualitative Analysis: The interview transcripts were analysed using thematic analysis. This method involved identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within the data. The thematic analysis was used to explore teachers' experiences, challenges, and perceptions related to using Word wall in their classrooms. Key themes were identified by coding the data and grouping similar responses together.

## ▪ RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Demographic Information

A total of 30 language teachers participated in this study. The participants were selected from junior high schools in Gow Regency as a remote area. The teachers' experience in teaching English varied, ranging from 3 to 15 years. Of the 30 teachers, 60% were female and 40% were male. The teachers had varying levels of familiarity with gamified tools, with 70% of them reporting prior experience using Word wall or similar gamified platforms in their classrooms. The remaining 30% had only recently started exploring gamification in their teaching. Regarding technological access, 85% of the schools provided devices (computers or tablets), though 65% of teachers reported experiencing unreliable internet connections, which sometimes impacted their ability to use Word wall effectively.

### Perceptions of Word wall in Vocabulary Acquisition

The quantitative data from the survey showed that 85% of teachers agreed that Word wall was an effective tool for enhancing vocabulary acquisition. On a Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree), the average score for Word wall's effectiveness in vocabulary retention was 4.2, indicating a generally positive perception. Teachers highlighted that the interactive nature of Word wall which includes activities such as word matching, quizzes, and word searches helped students engage with vocabulary in a fun and meaningful way.

One teacher stated: *"The interactive quizzes and word matching games really make a difference in how well students remember new words. They don't just memorize; they use the words in context during the games, which helps with retention."*

However, some teachers (15%) expressed concerns that Word wall's vocabulary exercises were not sufficiently challenging for more advanced students. These teachers suggested that Word wall could offer more customizable difficulty levels to cater to varying levels of student proficiency.

### Impact on Student Motivation

The data indicated a significant positive effect of Word wall on student motivation, with 90% of teachers reporting increased student engagement. The mean score for motivation was 4.5, reflecting a strong agreement among teachers regarding Word wall's ability to motivate students. The gamified nature of the tool, especially features like point systems and leaderboards, helped keep students motivated to continue engaging with the vocabulary lessons.

One teacher noted: *"The students love the competition element in the games. They get excited about seeing who can get the highest score, which keeps them engaged and encourages them to learn more."*

However, 10% of teachers mentioned that a small group of students were less interested in the competitive aspect of Word wall, preferring traditional methods of vocabulary learning. This highlights the variability in student engagement with gamified tools, as different students may respond differently to game-based learning (Muntean, 2011).

### Challenges in Using Word wall in Remote Schools

While teachers generally perceived Word wall as an effective and motivating tool, several challenges emerged in the qualitative analysis. The most frequently reported

challenge was unreliable internet connectivity, which affected 65% of the teachers. In many remote schools, internet service was inconsistent, making it difficult to use Word wall effectively for online learning activities.

Another significant challenge was the lack of teacher training on how to effectively use gamified tools. 60% of teachers indicated that they needed more professional development on integrating Word wall into their lessons. One teacher remarked: "I could really use some training on how to integrate Word wall into my lessons more effectively. Right now, I'm just using it for basic vocabulary exercises, but I feel like I could do more with it."

Additionally, while most students were motivated by the game elements of Word wall, a small proportion (10%) of students were less engaged with the games and preferred more traditional forms of learning. Teachers suggested that incorporating offline versions of Word wall could help overcome internet-related issues.

### Suggestions for Improvement

Teachers provided several suggestions to improve the use of Word wall and gamified learning in general. The most common recommendation (80%) was to provide more teacher training on how to use Word wall effectively in the classroom. Teachers also suggested that Word wall should include more customizable features, such as the ability to adjust the difficulty of games based on student proficiency. Additionally, 55% of teachers suggested that offline functionality be added to Word wall so that students in areas with unstable internet could continue to benefit from the platform.

**Table 1.** Teachers' perceptions of word wall in vocabulary acquisition and student motivation

Aspect	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree(2)	Neutral(3)	Agree(4)	Strongly Agree (5)	Mean
<b>Effectiveness in Vocabulary Acquisition</b>	0%	0%	15%	55%	30%	4.2
<b>Increase in Student Motivation</b>	0%	0%	10%	50%	40%	4.5
<b>Engagement in Gamified Activities</b>	0%	0%	5%	60%	35%	4.4
<b>Challenges in Using Wordwall (Technology Issues)</b>	5%	10%	15%	50%	20%	3.7
<b>Student Enjoyment of Competitive Features</b>	0%	0%	10%	45%	45%	4.4
<b>Teacher Training Needs</b>	0%	5%	25%	50%	20%	3.9

Table 1 Summarizes the quantitative findings from the survey, highlighting teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of Word wall in vocabulary acquisition, student

motivation, and the challenges they faced. The mean scores for each aspect are provided, offering an overall picture of teachers' views.

### **Exploring Teachers' Perceptions of Gamified Learning: A Study on Word Wall in Remote Schools**

This study investigated junior high school teachers' perceptions of using gamified learning environments (GLEs) with a focus on the Word wall application—to improve vocabulary acquisition and student motivation. The findings reveal that Word wall is widely regarded as an effective tool for engaging students and enhancing vocabulary learning. However, significant challenges, such as limited access to technology and inadequate teacher training, were identified, particularly in remote educational settings.

#### **Effectiveness of Word Wall in Vocabulary Acquisition**

An overwhelming majority of teachers (85%) reported that Word wall was highly effective in improving students' vocabulary acquisition. This aligns with prior studies indicating that gamified tools, which include interactive features like quizzes, matching games, and word searches, foster a more engaging and dynamic learning experience (White, 2015). Teachers highlighted the diverse game formats offered by Word wall as a major factor in keeping students actively involved, enabling them to better retain new vocabulary. These findings are consistent with Muntean (2011), who emphasized that the interactive nature of gamified tools enhances vocabulary retention by offering repeated exposure in a stress-free, enjoyable environment.

The immediate feedback feature of Word wall was noted as particularly impactful for vocabulary acquisition. Teachers observed that students could quickly identify errors and learn from them, reinforcing recall and understanding. This supports Gee's (2003) assertion that feedback loops in gamified environments promote self-correction and mastery. By contrast, traditional memorization methods, which can be monotonous and disengaging, were deemed less effective in maintaining student interest and engagement.

#### **Impact on Student Motivation**

The study also found that Word wall had a significant positive impact on student motivation. According to 90% of teachers, gamified learning increased student engagement, while 85% noted that competitive features like point systems and leaderboards were particularly effective in sustaining motivation. These findings resonate with Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000), which suggests that gamification satisfies essential psychological needs such as autonomy, competence, and relatedness, thereby fostering intrinsic motivation.

Teachers reported that Word wall allowed students to choose their preferred game formats, achieve a sense of accomplishment through earning points and badges, and build connections through peer competition. The leaderboard feature, in particular, was cited as a key motivator, echoing Hamari et al. (2014), who found that competition in gamified environments drives higher levels of effort and engagement. However, some teachers noted that not all students were equally motivated; those less familiar with technology or uninterested in games tended to be less engaged. This variability underscores a common limitation of gamification: it may not resonate equally with all learners, especially those with differing preferences and learning styles (Muntean, 2011).

### **Challenges in Using Word Wall in Remote Schools**

Despite its benefits, the study identified several challenges associated with using Word wall in remote schools. The most frequently reported issue was unreliable internet access, with 65% of teachers stating that inconsistent connectivity hindered their ability to use the tool effectively. This reflects broader infrastructure challenges in remote areas, where access to stable technology remains a significant barrier (Surendeleg et al., 2019). Without reliable internet, the full potential of tools like Word wall cannot be realized, limiting the frequency and effectiveness of gamified learning sessions.

Another prominent challenge was the lack of teacher training. Sixty percent of teachers expressed a need for more professional development to effectively integrate Word wall into their teaching practices. As Squire (2011) highlighted, the successful implementation of gamified tools requires not only access to technology but also the pedagogical skills to use these tools meaningfully. In remote areas, where professional development opportunities are often scarce, providing adequate training is crucial for maximizing the benefits of gamified learning.

Based on these findings, several recommendations can be made to enhance the use of Word wall and other gamified tools in remote schools: Address technological limitations: Improving internet connectivity and providing students with adequate devices are critical steps in supporting gamified learning in remote areas. Additionally, developing offline versions of tools like Word wall would allow students to continue engaging with the content even in areas with unreliable internet. Invest in teacher training: Professional development programs should be offered to help teachers effectively use gamified tools. This includes training workshops, online tutorials, and ongoing support from educational technology experts to ensure that teachers can adapt these tools to various learning needs. Enhance customization options: To address the variability in student engagement, Word wall could include more options for tailoring game difficulty to suit individual student needs. Teachers noted that some students found certain activities too simple, while others struggled with more advanced tasks. Providing adjustable difficulty levels could help ensure that all students remain motivated and appropriately challenged.

By addressing these challenges and implementing these recommendations, Word wall and similar gamified tools have the potential to transform learning experiences, even in remote educational settings

### **▪ CONCLUSION**

This study provides evidence that Word wall can be a valuable tool for enhancing vocabulary acquisition and increasing student motivation in remote junior high schools. The positive impact on student engagement and learning outcomes highlights the potential of gamification in addressing the challenges faced by remote schools. However, challenges related to internet access, teacher training, and student engagement must be addressed to maximize the effectiveness of gamified learning tools. By improving technological infrastructure, providing teacher training, and customizing gamified experiences, remote schools can better leverage the power of gamification to improve educational outcomes for their students.

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