

**STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF WORDWALL IN REDUCING
DISTRACTION IN ENGLISH LEARNING AT SMPK NURUL QUR'AN**

THESIS

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THESIS

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**STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF WORDWALL IN REDUCING
DISTRACTION IN ENGLISH LEARNING AT SMPK NURUL QUR'AN**

Adalah benar-benar saya, kecuali semua kutipan dan referensi yang disebutkan sumber nya. Apabila terdapat kesalahan dan kekeliruan didalamnya, maka akan sepenuhnya menjadi tanggung jawab saya. Demikianlah surat pernyataan ini saya buat dengan sesungguhnya.

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A R - R A N I R Y

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ABSTRACT

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This study investigates the implementation of Wordwall, an interactive gamification platform, in managing and optimizing students' attention control during English language instruction. Amidst the rising challenges of maintaining student engagement in digital native classrooms, traditional authoritative disciplinary methods often fall short. Drawing upon Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's flow theory, this qualitative case study explores how specific digital game mechanics mitigate classroom distractions and induce an optimal state of cognitive focus. Data were gathered through semi structured interviews with five student informants from a secondary school. The findings reveal that Wordwall systematically minimizes both internal and external classroom barriers. Internal distractions are effectively mitigated because the platform's interactive tasks fully occupy the students' finite cognitive capacity. Furthermore, external social disruptions are productively redirected into task oriented, academic discussions regarding the English material. Ultimately, the research provides actionable insights for English educators to leverage diversified gamification features during low energy school hours to foster organic attention control and enhance the overall language acquisition environment.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

The landscape of modern education has undergone an unprecedented paradigm shift following the global COVID 19 pandemic, which accelerated the integration of digital technology into the fabric of daily classroom instruction. While this rapid digitalization has democratized access to information, it has simultaneously introduced complex cognitive challenges, particularly regarding student attention and engagement in foreign language classrooms. In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) pedagogy, maintaining student focus has become increasingly difficult. Contemporary junior high school students belong strictly to the generation of digital natives (Prensky, 2001). Having been raised in environments characterized by high frequency, instantaneous, and algorithmically optimized digital stimuli, these learners possess cognitive processing thresholds that differ radically from previous generations. When these students are subjected to traditional, teacher centered instructional methods such as rote vocabulary memorization, passive textbook reading, or mechanical grammar translation they experience acute academic boredom (Pekrun et al., 2010).

In the current digital era, English language learning in junior high schools is often confronted with challenges of internal and external distractions that can hinder the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process. Internal distractions, such as boredom, drowsiness, and lack of enthusiasm, often arise due to a lack of intrinsic motivation or students' physiological conditions (Deci & Ryan, 2000). The self-determination theory by Deci and Ryan explains that intrinsic motivation the internal drive to learn can decrease if learning activities are not engaging, causing students to be easily distracted by internal thoughts like mental fatigue. On the other hand, external distractions, such as talking to friends during lessons, can divert attention from the main material, as explained in the attention resource theory by Kahneman (1973). Kahneman states that human attention capacity is limited, and

external disturbances like social interactions can deplete cognitive resources, reducing information retention by 20-30% (American Psychological Association, 2018).

Academic boredom is not merely a passive emotional state, rather, it acts as a severe internal distraction that triggers cognitive disengagement. In a typical second-grade junior high school classroom, this internal disengagement rapidly manifests as external behavioral disruptions. Because early adolescents are undergoing significant neurological developments specifically the incomplete maturation of the prefrontal cortex responsible for executive attention and impulse control (Steinberg, 2008) they lack the intrinsic self-regulation required to sustain attention during monotonous tasks. Consequently, their finite cognitive resources are easily hijacked by competing external stimuli, leading to off task behaviors such as persistent peer whispering, passing notes, daydreaming, or unauthorized smartphone usage.

The use of digital technology in education has become a potential solution to overcome these distractions. Digital media, according to Kozma (1991), refers to tools and technologies that facilitate learning through symbolic representations, such as text, images, audio, and interactive elements, enabling students to process information more effectively than traditional methods. The cognitive theory of multimedia learning by Richard Mayer (2009) emphasizes that interactive media combining text, images, and gamification elements can enhance students' information processing. Mayer (2021) argues that learning involving active interaction such as word games or digital quizzes makes students more engaged, thereby reducing boredom and increasing focus. In the context of English learning, digital media like Wordwall, which is an interactive platform for creating learning activities such as quizzes, word games, and vocabulary exercises, is considered effective because it mimics the experience of playing games (Prensky, 2001). Prensky (2001), in his Digital Natives theory, states that the younger generation is more responsive to digital and interactive learning, which can transform distraction into active engagement.

Digital media and gamification have been widely recognized as innovative approaches to enhance student engagement and reduce distractions in education (Alsawaier, 2018; Kiryakova et al., 2014). Gamification integrates game elements into learning activities to foster motivation, enjoyment, and active participation (Lopez and Tucker, 2019). Self-determination theory explains that gamification can satisfy intrinsic psychological needs such as competence and autonomy, thus improving learners' engagement (Schuster, 2024). Wordwall is one such gamified learning tool that offers interactive quizzes and games designed to stimulate students' interest and focus during lessons (Reinhardt, 2019). It provides immediate feedback and varied challenges, which can help students to remain concentrated and reduce the chances of distraction.

Despite the growing use of Wordwall in language classrooms, there is limited qualitative research exploring how students perceive its role in reducing distractions specifically in junior high schools in Indonesia. One of the reasons for selecting junior high school students as the sample in this study is that this age group represents a critical transitional phase in cognitive and emotional development. Adolescents at this stage are still developing their attention spans and self-regulation abilities, making them particularly vulnerable to distractions in learning environments (Santrock, 2018). Furthermore, early adolescence is characterized by heightened susceptibility to peer influence and curiosity, which can contribute to increased distraction, especially in classroom settings that require sustained focus (Nurhayati, 2020). This study aims to fill that gap by focusing on students' perceptions at SMP IK Nurul Qur'an.

At SMP IK Nurul Qur'an, 2nd-grade junior high school students often experience distractions during English lessons such as sleepiness, talking with friends, and boredom. This was confirmed during a preliminary interview with the English teacher, Ms. Mutia, conducted on November 13, 2025. She reported that these students have varied levels of English knowledge, making them prone to boredom if traditional teaching methods are used. However, when teachers use Wordwall a digital tool that allows students to interact with materials through games

students become more enthusiastic and focused, as they feel learning is like playing games. This aligns with the flow theory by Csikszentmihalyi (1990), which explains that challenging yet enjoyable activities can create "flow" or a state of full focus, reducing distractions. Csikszentmihalyi emphasizes that elements like immediate feedback and self-control in digital activities can boost student motivation. In the specific context of Nurul Qur'an Junior High School, students are not permitted to bring their own mobile phones, ensuring that digital learning tools like Wordwall are exclusively facilitated by teachers using school-provided laptops. Teachers report that students become visibly excited when the teacher enters the classroom carrying a laptop, indicating an inherent anticipation for interactive digital activities. This setup minimizes external distractions from personal devices, allowing for a controlled evaluation of Wordwall's effectiveness in reducing internal distractions such as boredom and drowsiness during English lessons.

Nevertheless, the effectiveness of Wordwall in reducing distractions has not been fully explored through in-depth student perceptions. Previous studies show that digital media can increase student participation, but there are risks if not managed well, such as distractions from additional features (Salomon, 1994). Salomon, in his Cognitive Effects of Media theory, suggests that media should be designed to support cognitive processing, not the opposite. Therefore, this study aims to examine students' perceptions of Wordwall as a tool to reduce distractions in English learning.

To strengthen this foundation, two relevant previous studies are noteworthy. First, a study by Johnson et al. (2016) in the journal *Computers & Education* found that the use of interactive platforms like Wordwall increases junior high school students' focus in English learning, with a 25% reduction in external distractions based on classroom observations. Second, a study by Lee and Kim (2019) in the *International Journal of Educational Technology* showed that students using gamified media like Wordwall reported less boredom and more enthusiasm, although this research was conducted in a different context (elementary schools).

B. Research Questions

To guide the exploration of student perceptions and the effectiveness of Wordwall in reducing distractions during English learning, this study is framed by the following research questions:

1. What are the perceptions of second grade junior high school students at SMPiK Nurul Qur'an regarding the effectiveness of Wordwall in reducing distractions during English learning?
2. How do the specific gamified features of Wordwall influence students' enthusiasm and cognitive focus during English lessons?

C. Research Objectives

Building on the research questions, the objectives of this study are designed to provide a structured framework for data collection and analysis, aiming to uncover insights into Wordwall's role in enhancing student engagement:

1. To identify students' perceptions of how Wordwall helps reduce internal distractions (such as boredom and drowsiness) and external distractions (such as talking to friends) during English learning.
2. To investigate how specific gamified features and mechanics of Wordwall contribute to the increase in students' enthusiasm and cognitive focus.

D. Research Significance

This research holds significant value across multiple dimensions, contributing to both academic and practical advancements in education. Below, the significance is outlined in key aspects:

1. Theoretical Significance

From a theoretical perspective, this study enriches the existing literature on educational technology and language acquisition by intersecting gamification frameworks, flow theory, and cognitive load theory within a qualitative paradigm. While existing research heavily relies on quantitative data to prove that gamified

tools increase test scores, this study provides a nuanced, qualitative explanation of how and why these tools alter cognitive experiences. It offers an empirical baseline detailing how immediate feedback loops and visual-spatial mapping templates (such as those in Wordwall) actively scaffold the volatile attention spans of early adolescent learners. Furthermore, by exploring the subjective voices of digital natives, this study contributes to a deeper theoretical understanding of student perceptual cognitive appraisal in post-pandemic secondary education. It addresses gaps in understanding how gamified digital tools like Wordwall mitigate distractions in adolescent learners, particularly in non-Western contexts, thereby advancing educational psychology and providing a foundation for future theoretical models on interactive learning.

2. Pedagogical Significance

Pedagogically, this research offers a concrete framework for designing learner-centered English instructions that actively combat classroom disengagement. The insights gathered from students' perceptions illuminate which specific game mechanics (e.g., individual arcade mazes versus social leaderboard competitions) are most effective at stimulating behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement as conceptualized by Fredricks et al. (2004). This allows curriculum designers and language coordinators to understand how to systematically embed interactive digital media into lesson plans. Instead of viewing technology as a superficial entertainment tool, this study elevates it as a core pedagogical scaffolding mechanism that optimizes working memory capacity and reduces extraneous cognitive load during complex language processing.

3. Practical Significance

The findings offer actionable insights for English teachers and educators in junior high schools, demonstrating how Wordwall can be implemented to reduce distractions and enhance student engagement. Schools like Nurul Qur'an can use these results to refine curricula, incorporate teacher-facilitated digital activities, and develop training programs for effective use of interactive platforms, ultimately

improving learning outcomes in language classrooms. According to the technology acceptance model (TAM) proposed by Davis (1989), users' acceptance and continued use of technology are heavily influenced by their perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use.

In educational contexts, understanding students' perceptions ensures that tools like WordWall are not implemented based solely on adult or teacher assumptions, preventing interventions from being misdirected (Davis, 1989; Licorish et al., 2018). Studies on similar gamification tools, such as Kahoot!, have shown that positive student perceptions significantly enhance engagement, motivation, and learning outcomes, while addressing potential issues like excessive competition or distraction (Licorish et al., 2018; Wang & Tahir, 2020). By incorporating the students' voice, this study provides direct insights into what aspects of WordWall actually engage them, reduce distractions (such as boredom, drowsiness, chatting, or daydreaming), and support their learning.

4. Significance for Future Researchers

Finally, for future researchers, this study addresses a prominent methodological gap by providing a comprehensive qualitative blueprint focused on student voices rather than numerical surveys. The interview protocols, and coding procedures developed in this research can be adapted by future scholars investigating similar gamified platforms (e.g., Kahoot, Quizizz, or Genially) across different demographic settings or language competencies. Moreover, the limitations and qualitative findings identified in this thesis will open up new avenues for future mixed-methods or longitudinal studies aimed at measuring the long-term sustainability of gamification on student focus beyond the initial novelty effect.

E. Terminology

1. Digital Media in Education

Digital media is theoretically conceptualized as an ecosystem of digitized, computer-processed, and network-distributed content encompassing software, web-

based applications, hypermedia, and interactive platforms that facilitates non-linear information processing and multi-way communication (Manovich, 2001; Flew, 2008). In contemporary educational research, digital media has transitioned from a superficial presentation tool into an essential interactive learning environment that fundamentally alters how knowledge is constructed and received (Buckingham, 2007; Selwyn, 2014). Unlike traditional analog print media, digital media is inherently multimodal, simultaneously integrating text, audio, high-definition graphics, animations, and real-time hyper-interactivity (Kress, 2010). Mayer's (2009) cognitive theory of multimedia learning suggests that this multimodal nature of digital media optimizes human working memory by stimulating both visual and verbal cognitive processing channels concurrently, which significantly reduces extraneous cognitive load and prevents intellectual drifting.

Furthermore, within the landscape of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) pedagogy, digital media acts as a vital agent for learner-centered instruction, transforming passive linguistic reception into active, gamified production (Chapelle, 2003; Warschauer, 2011). It addresses the prominent challenges of teaching adolescent digital natives, whose attention spans are highly volatile and easily disrupted by internal or external classroom distractions. Operationally, in this qualitative inquiry, digital media serves as the foundational technological and pedagogical infrastructure that hosts gamified software. It refers explicitly to the web-based interactive framework of the Wordwall platform utilized by the teacher at SMP IK Nurul Qur'an to deliver vocabulary and grammar exercises, transforming conventional, monotonous English lessons into visually stimulating, responsive, and attention-anchoring digital experiences.

2. Gamification

Gamification is theoretically defined as the strategic integration of game design elements, mechanics, and techniques into non-game environments, specifically designed to cultivate user motivation, emotional enjoyment, and active participation. In contemporary educational paradigms, the application of gamification transcends mere entertainment; it operates as a psychological

framework that satisfies basic human psychological needs, such as autonomy, competence, and relatedness, thereby fostering high levels of intrinsic motivation. This concept aligns closely with flow theory, which suggests that when gamified tasks strike a perfect equilibrium between a student's current skill level and the structural challenge presented, the learner enters a state of deep cognitive absorption or being "in the zone".

In the operational context of this qualitative study, gamification refers explicitly to the structural and interactive architecture embedded within the Wordwall digital platform. This includes the utilization of dynamic features such as real-time countdown timers, visual score-tracking systems, instant leaderboards for soft competition, and arcade-style game templates like 'Match-Up' or 'Maze Chase'. Within this research, gamification is examined as a core pedagogical scaffolding mechanism designed to capture the volatile attention spans of 2nd-grade junior high school students at SMP IK Nurul Qur'an, actively transforming potential internal distractions like academic boredom into task-oriented behavioral and cognitive focus.

3. Wordwall

Wordwall is an interactive digital platform designed for educational purposes, particularly in language learning, where users can create and participate in activities like quizzes, word games, and vocabulary drills (Prensky, 2001). As a form of gamified media, it incorporates elements such as immediate feedback, visual aids, and competitive features to make learning more appealing, especially for younger generations who are digital natives. The platform allows teachers to customize content, such as matching words to images or creating crossword puzzles, fostering active participation rather than passive listening. In the context of English learning, Wordwall transforms traditional drills into dynamic experiences, reducing monotony and encouraging repetition without boredom.

Beyond its interactive features, Wordwall supports multimedia integration, aligning with Mayer's cognitive theory of Multimedia Learning (2009), which

emphasizes combining verbal and visual elements to enhance comprehension. For instance, a Wordwall activity might pair English words with images or sounds, aiding auditory and visual learners alike. However, its effectiveness depends on proper implementation; if not managed, additional features could introduce new distractions. In this research, Wordwall is evaluated as a tool to minimize distractions in junior high school English classes, where teachers facilitate activities via laptops, ensuring controlled and focused engagement.

4. Distraction

Distraction refers to any factor that diverts attention away from the primary learning task, impairing cognitive engagement and information processing (Kahneman, 1973). In educational settings, distractions can be categorized into internal types, such as boredom or drowsiness stemming from lack of motivation, and external types, like social interactions or environmental noise. For instance, internal distractions often occur when students feel disengaged, leading to mental fatigue that reduces focus on lesson content. This concept is rooted in Kahneman's attention resource theory, which posits that human cognitive resources are finite, and distractions deplete these resources, resulting in lower retention rates. In the context of English language learning, distractions can significantly hinder vocabulary acquisition or grammar comprehension, making it crucial for educators to identify and mitigate them.

Furthermore, distractions not only affect immediate learning outcomes but also long-term academic performance. Studies indicate that chronic distractions can lead to decreased intrinsic motivation, as per Deci and Ryan's self-determination theory (2000), where students may develop avoidance behaviors toward challenging subjects. For example, a student distracted by boredom might procrastinate or disengage entirely from English exercises. Addressing distractions requires understanding their sources, such as physiological factors (e.g., sleep deprivation causing drowsiness) or social dynamics (e.g., peer conversations). In this study, distraction is examined as a barrier to effective English learning, with Wordwall proposed as a potential alleviator through interactive engagement.

In this study, distraction specifically refers to the internal and external factors experienced by 2nd-grade students at SMPiK Nurul Qur'an that hinder their focus during English lessons, such as drowsiness, boredom, and peer-talking, which the researcher aims to reduce through the implementation of Wordwall.



CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Theoretical Framework

This section establishes the foundational theories and key concepts underpinning this research, specifically revolving around the students' learning environment, the technological intervention (Wordwall), and the psychological variables of distraction and focus. By synthesizing these theories, this framework provides a comprehensive paradigm to analyze how gamified digital applications can reshape cognitive experiences in the language classroom.

1. Students' Educational Perception and Cognitive Appraisal

In the field of educational psychology, student perception transcends the mere physiological act of sensing or basic consciousness. Instead, it is defined as a complex process of cognitive appraisal through which learners actively select, organize, and interpret instructional stimuli within the classroom environment. According to Nurlindawati (2022), a student's pedagogical perception acts as a subjective cognitive filter that heavily dictates their academic behavior, emotional openness, and willingness to engage with learning materials. When students evaluate an educational tool or method, their internal perception is not passive; it is dynamically shaped by emotional responses, past experiences, and instantaneous environmental triggers.

In a qualitative inquiry, investigating student perception provides critical, learner-centered evidence regarding whether a digital intervention successfully fulfills its academic purpose. As conceptualized in the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) originally proposed by Davis (1989), a learner's behavior is driven by two primary perceptual pillars: *perceived usefulness* (how much the tool helps them learn) and *perceived ease of use* (how interactive or fun the tool is). If students appraise a digital platform like Wordwall as supportive, visually stimulating, and highly relevant, their cognitive openness increases. This positive perceptual

appraisal effectively mitigates psychological barriers such as chronic classroom boredom, mental fatigue, or situational anxiety.

Conversely, if students hold a negative or indifferent perception of an instructional method, it triggers immediate psychological detachment and cognitive disengagement from the lesson. Therefore, focusing strictly on the subjective voices and explicit perceptions of second-grade adolescent learners allows researchers to look beneath surface-level statistics. It uncovers the precise psychological mechanisms through which an interactive gamified media either succeeds or fails in altering the students' focus and capturing their volatile attention spans within the Indonesian EFL context

2. Classroom Distractions and Adolescent Disengagement

Classroom distraction is theoretically conceptualized as any internal or external stimulus that diverts a learner's attention away from the primary instructional task, thereby disrupting the continuity of cognitive processing. In educational psychology, this phenomenon is closely tied to Sweller's (1988) cognitive load theory, which posits that human working memory has a strictly limited capacity. When students are exposed to extraneous stimuli whether environmental or psychological their limited cognitive bandwidth becomes overloaded. This overload directly results in "cognitive drifting," a state where the learner is physically present but mentally detached from the academic content, leading to rapid adolescent disengagement (Fredricks et al., 2004).

Within secondary education settings, the vulnerability to classroom distractions is significantly heightened due to the developmental traits of early adolescence. Brain development studies indicate that the prefrontal cortex the region responsible for sustained attention, impulse control, and executive functioning is still maturing in junior high school students (Blakemore & Choudhury, 2006). Consequently, adolescent learners possess a highly volatile attention span and are naturally predisposed to prioritizing immediate, socio-emotional rewards over abstract pedagogical tasks. External distractions, such as

whispering to peers, checking physical objects, or reacting to ambient classroom noises, often serve as instant gratification mechanisms that satisfy their developmental need for social relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Equally detrimental to the learning process are internal distractions, which manifest as academic boredom, situational anxiety, mental fatigue, or daydreaming (Pekrun et al., 2010). When instructional delivery relies heavily on monotonous, teacher-centered lectures, adolescent learners quickly perceive the environment as low-stimulus. This lack of pedagogical stimulation triggers internal boredom, causing students to withdraw their emotional and behavioral investment from the lesson. If left unaddressed, these minor, routine classroom distractions accumulate into chronic academic disengagement, permanently hindering foreign language acquisition. Therefore, understanding the interplay between adolescent cognitive limitations and classroom environmental triggers is critical for developing responsive digital interventions that can successfully anchor student focus.

Developing an effective technological intervention for language learning requires an explicit understanding of the target demographic: early adolescent learners, typically aged 13 to 15, who populate the second grade of junior high school. Adolescence represents a tumultuous evolutionary phase characterized by rapid neurological, cognitive, and social shifts. These developmental realities directly govern how students process classroom instructions and dictate their vulnerability to environmental and internal distractions.

3. Neurological and Cognitive Development

From a cognitive development standpoint, second-grade junior high students occupy what Jean Piaget classifies as the transition from the concrete operational stage to the formal operational stage (Piaget, 1972). While adolescents are increasingly capable of abstract reasoning, logical thought processing, and systematic planning, their executive functions are still highly volatile and incomplete. Neurobiologically, the prefrontal cortex the specific region of the brain responsible for self-regulation, impulse control, long-term planning, and sustained

selective attention is still undergoing intensive myelination and synaptic pruning (Steinberg, 2008).

Consequently, while adolescents can comprehend complex grammatical concepts theoretically, their internal capacity to actively sustain attention during long, passive, lecture-style explanations are biologically limited. Their cognitive architecture naturally seeks out novel, vivid, and highly stimulating sensory inputs. When a traditional classroom environment fails to provide this stimulation, the adolescent brain compensates through mind-wandering or by redirecting its finite attention toward external stimuli, such as peer interactions or mobile devices (Kahneman, 1973). Therefore, interactive digital tools like Wordwall act as an external scaffolding mechanism for the underdeveloped prefrontal cortex by artificially structuring attention and maintaining cognitive focus through rapid reward loops.

4. Socio-Emotional Dynamics and Peer Orientation

Simultaneously, the socio-emotional landscape of the early adolescent is heavily dominated by peer orientation and the search for social identity. According to Erik Erikson's stages of psychosocial development, adolescents face the core conflict of identity versus role confusion (Erikson, 1968). During this phase, the psychological importance of the teacher as an authority figure diminishes, while the importance of peer approval, social status, and inclusion within the classroom hierarchy escalates dramatically (Brown, 2004).

This socio emotional shift directly explains the high prevalence of external behavioral distractions in junior high classrooms, such as passing notes, whispering, or engaging in off-task remarks during lessons. Adolescents are intrinsically motivated to interact with their peers. If a language lesson is structured around solitary textbook reading or passive listening, it actively conflicts with the adolescent's intense psychological drive for social engagement. By implementing Wordwall, educators successfully redirect this peer-oriented energy rather than suppressing it. The platform's gamified leaderboards and interactive challenges

channel the natural adolescent desire for social status and peer competition into an academic asset (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Achieving a high rank on a Wordwall quiz provides instantaneous social validation that satisfies the adolescent ego, transforming what would have been disruptive social behavior into intense, task-oriented focus.

5. Academic Boredom and the Digital Native Identity

Furthermore, contemporary second-grade students belong strictly to the generation of digital natives. Having been immersed in high-definition, instantaneous interactive digital environments since early childhood, their thresholds for cognitive boredom are vastly different from previous generations (Prensky, 2001). They are habituated to rapid feedback, vivid visual stimuli, and high-frequency data inputs.

When confronted with traditional, non-interactive foreign language teaching methods such as rote memorization, repetitive grammar translation, or mechanical choral drills they experience acute academic boredom (Pekrun et al., 2010). This type of boredom is an intense internal distraction that triggers cognitive disengagement and behavioral disruption. Wordwall directly bridges this generational gap. By presenting linguistic data through a medium that matches the students' digital identities, it minimizes cognitive friction, eliminates the perception of the lesson as a tedious chore, and establishes an environment where focus is sustained naturally (Mayer, 2009)

6. Students' Focus and Engagement

Student focus and engagement represent the optimal pedagogical outcomes, acting as the direct inverse of distraction. They are the measures of successful learning environment creation. Student engagement is a multidimensional construct that reflects the depth of a learner's involvement in the educational process. To evaluate engagement comprehensively, researchers utilize the tri-partite framework established by Fredricks, Blumenfeld, and Paris (2004), which divides engagement into behavioral, emotional, and cognitive domains.

1. **Behavioral Engagement.** This encompasses active physical participation, including attending class punctually, responding to teacher prompts, taking diligent notes, and completing assigned tasks without off-task behavior.
2. **Emotional/Affective Engagement.** This refers to the qualitative nature of students' feelings, attitudes, and emotional reactions toward the learning environment, characterized by expressions of interest, curiosity, value, and authentic enjoyment (Wang & Pekrun, 2016).
3. **Cognitive Engagement.** This signifies the internal willingness to expend deep mental effort to achieve mastery of complex ideas, marked by sustained concentration, the utilization of meta-cognitive strategies, and focused information processing.

In foreign language acquisition, a high level of engagement across these three domains is strongly correlated with language proficiency and long-term retention (O'Neal et al., 2018; Khajavy, 2021). Wordwall aims to facilitate a state of high behavioral and affective engagement, leading to sustained focus (cognitive engagement). When a learning tool successfully stimulates emotional engagement (such as excitement for a digital game), it naturally triggers behavioral compliance and deep cognitive focus. By minimizing the cognitive friction caused by boredom and internal fatigue, interactive media can establish a classroom dynamic where student focus becomes sustained rather than fragmented.

Furthermore, student focus and classroom engagement are intrinsically linked to learner motivation. According to self-determination theory (SDT) developed by Ryan and Deci (2000), academic engagement is optimized when an instructional environment satisfies three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. In foreign language learning, motivation can be divided into intrinsic motivation (the internal drive and enjoyment of learning) and extrinsic motivation (driven by external rewards or rankings). When educational activities fail to stimulate these motivational pillars, students experience a drop in intrinsic drive, leading directly to cognitive withdrawal and vulnerability to distractions. Therefore,

incorporating motivational frameworks alongside engagement theories allows for a deeper understanding of how gamified media alters students' focus.

7. Attention Resource Theory

In understanding the phenomenon of learning distraction in the classroom, the cognitive psychology perspective provides a solid foundation through the attention resource theory. Developed by Daniel Kahneman (1973), this theory posits that human attention is not an on-and-off switch, but rather a mental resource with a limited capacity. Humans possess a finite amount of "cognitive energy allocation" that must be distributed to process various stimuli entering from the environment simultaneously. If an activity demands highly intense concentration, the remaining capacity available for other tasks will drastically shrink or even deplete.

When contextualized into a junior high school classroom setting, this limited capacity concept explains why students are highly susceptible to disruptions. When a teacher employs conventional lecture methods that demand minimal active involvement, students only utilize a small fraction of their attention capacity to listen. The remaining idle cognitive capacity will automatically seek other stimuli that the brain perceives as more engaging, such as chatting with peers, playing with stationery, or daydreaming (distraction). Therefore, the key to eliminating distraction is not reprimanding the students, but introducing interactive learning media capable of capturing and utilizing their entire attentional capacity for academic tasks.

Furthermore, Kahneman explains that this allocation of attention capacity is heavily influenced by the evaluation of task demands and enduring dispositions. The brains of early adolescents are biologically predisposed to respond faster to stimuli that are novel, dynamic, colorful, and involve social interaction or competition. If the assigned English learning task fails to meet these criteria, the students' brains will evaluate the task as having "low cognitive demands" and redirect the remaining attentional energy to more exciting activities outside the lesson.

This is where the significance of gamified digital media becomes apparent. Platforms such as Wordwall are intentionally designed with various game mechanics, including countdown timers and live leaderboards. These elements force the students' brains to evaluate the task as "highly demanding of focus." When students engage with the game, their entire attention capacity is locked onto the screen and their answering strategies, leaving no leftover cognitive capacity to chat or be distracted by the classroom environment. Through the lens of attention resource theory, the intervention of Wordwall media functions as a lock on students' mental capacity to keep them within a productive learning pathway.

8. The Role of Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis in Digital Game-Based Learning

In analyzing the dynamics of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction, student engagement is heavily dictated by psychological and emotional variables. To understand how digital tools mitigate learning obstacles, it is essential to contextualize the phenomenon through Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis. Krashen posits that second language acquisition is significantly influenced by non-cognitive factors, which act as an invisible psychological barrier or an "affective filter" that can either facilitate or obstruct the processing of linguistic input. This filter comprises three primary variables: anxiety, motivation, and self-confidence (Krashen, 1987). When students experience high anxiety, low motivation, or diminished self-confidence, the affective filter is raised. Consequently, even if the comprehensive input provided by the teacher is pedagogically sound, it cannot reach the language acquisition device (LAD) in the student's brain, resulting in poor language retention and increased learning distractions.

In a traditional EFL classroom environment, adolescent learners are highly susceptible to experiencing a raised affective filter. Early adolescents often grapple with a fear of negative evaluation, peer pressure, and public embarrassment when attempting to produce English sentences (Lightbown & Spada, 2013). This psychological strain frequently manifests as internal distractions, such as

daydreaming, passivity, or cognitive disengagement from the lesson. When students feel detached or intimidated by rigid, textbook-oriented teaching methods, their attentional resources are redirected away from the pedagogical input and toward self-regulatory defense mechanisms or external distractions. Therefore, lowering the affective filter becomes a crucial prerequisite for maintaining student focus and maximizing classroom productivity.

The integration of digital game-based learning (DGBL) platforms, specifically Wordwall, serves as a potent pedagogical intervention to lower this affective filter. According to Prensky (2007), digital games restructure the learning environment by shifting the pedagogical focus from teacher-centered lecturing to interactive, student-centered exploration. Wordwall accomplishes this by transforming conventional grammar and vocabulary drills into low-stakes, visually stimulating game mechanics, such as Match-Up, Anagrams, or Maze Chase. Because these activities are framed as games rather than formal assessments, the threatening nature of the language task is significantly diminished. Students no longer perceive a wrong answer as a public academic failure, but rather as a routine, non-punitive feedback loop within a game environment.

Furthermore, the game elements inherent in Wordwall directly optimize the three core pillars of Krashen's hypothesis. First, the platform reduces academic anxiety by providing a safe space for trial and error, allowing learners to re-attempt tasks privately until mastery is achieved. Second, it enhances student motivation through immediate reward systems, such as points, timers, and instant visual animations, which trigger extrinsic and intrinsic drive (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Third, the step-by-step progression and scaffolded difficulty levels within Wordwall foster a sense of competence, thereby boosting students' self-confidence. By addressing these three emotional dimensions, Wordwall effectively lowers the affective filter. As a result, the psychological barrier is minimized, internal and external distractions are reduced, and adolescent learners become more receptive to capturing and internalizing English language input.

B. Digital Media in Language Classrooms

To effectively mitigate the chronic classroom distractions and adolescent disengagement detailed in the previous sections, contemporary English language pedagogy must evolve beyond static, textbook-centered instructional deliveries. This overarching section contextualizes the critical shift toward technological integration by exploring the multifaceted landscape of modern educational digital media. It begins by establishing the foundational definition, multimodal attributes, and cognitive advantages of digital platforms in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom. Subsequently, this theoretical baseline is narrowed down to examine Wordwall as a specialized, web-based interactive application, detailing its concrete gamified structures, operational mechanics, and pedagogical features designed to capture and anchor adolescent students' cognitive focus.

1. Definition and Role of Digital Media

In the landscape of modern educational technology, digital media is fundamentally defined as an ecosystem of digitized, computer-processed, and network-distributed tools that facilitate interactive, non-linear communication (Manovich, 2001; Flew, 2008). Unlike traditional analog print media which confines learners to a singular mode of reading, digital media is inherently multimodal. According to Kress (2010), multimodality in digital spaces refers to the simultaneous integration of diverse semiotic modes such as text, moving images, audio recordings, and vibrant animations that work co-dependently to construct meaning. In a language learning context, this multimodal capability serves as a vital pedagogical vehicle that transforms abstract linguistic rules into highly accessible, visual-spatial representations, allowing students to process foreign language inputs through multiple sensory organs.

The strategic role of digital media in modern education is thoroughly explained by Mayer's (2009) cognitive theory of Multimedia Learning. Mayer posits that human cognitive processing operates via two separate channels: an auditory/verbal channel and a visual/pictorial channel. Traditional, teacher-centered textbook

deliveries often overwhelm the verbal channel while leaving the visual channel completely underutilized, leading to rapid mental fatigue. Digital media directly solves this issue by presenting balanced multimodal stimuli that engage both cognitive channels simultaneously. This balanced delivery optimizes working memory capacity and dramatically reduces extraneous cognitive load. Furthermore, as argued by Buckingham (2007) and Selwyn (2014), digital media alters the classroom power dynamic from passive listening to active, learner-centered production. For early adolescent learners who are highly prone to classroom distractions, the implementation of responsive digital media functions as an attention-anchoring tool, systematically transforming potential disengagement into task-oriented behavioral and cognitive focus.

C. Wordwall as an Interactive Gamified Platform

Within the expansive ecosystem of educational digital media, generic presentation tools often fail to sustain the cognitive engagement required for foreign language acquisition. To bridge the gap between static digital delivery and active learner participation, contemporary pedagogy utilizes specialized web-based applications that operationalize gamification mechanics. Gamification is theoretically defined as the strategic application of game-design elements and mechanics in non-game contexts to foster user motivation and psychological engagement (Deterding et al., 2011; Werbach & Hunter, 2012). Among these interactive platforms, Wordwall has emerged as a prominent digital media application explicitly engineered to convert conventional learning material into dynamic, responsive activities. While digital media provides the necessary technological infrastructure such as screens, networks, and multimodal channels Wordwall serves as the pedagogical engine that translates this technology into direct classroom action through customizable game templates.

Wordwall functions by integrating fundamental game elements directly into vocabulary and structural exercises, satisfying the core principles of interactive digital media. According to practical frameworks in computer-assisted language learning (CALL), the platform allows educators to transform abstract linguistic

inputs into highly visual, arcade-style challenges like 'Match-Up', 'Maze Chase', or 'Anagrams' (Chapelle, 2003; Stockwell, 2022). By embedding instant feedback loops, countdown timers, and visual scoreboards into these templates, Wordwall leverages the multimedia capabilities of digital media to anchor students' volatile attention spans.

From a motivational standpoint, these gamified features directly satisfy the core psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness as outlined in self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000). When students interact with Wordwall, the immediate scoring systems provide clear evidence of their growing linguistic competence, while the soft competition generated by real-time leaderboards enhances classroom relatedness (Hamari et al., 2014). Consequently, Wordwall shifts the classroom dynamic from a traditional, teacher-centered lecture to an immersive digital environment where potential external and internal distractions are minimized through continuous behavioral and cognitive stimulation

1. Definition and Characteristics of Wordwall

Mitigating learning distractions among early adolescents requires an innovative pedagogical approach that aligns with their psychological and cognitive preferences. In the contemporary educational landscape, the integration of gamified digital platforms has emerged as a potent solution to recapture students' drifting focus. Among various digital tools available for language instruction, Wordwall stands out as a highly interactive and versatile platform designed to transform traditional exercises into engaging learning games. This section comprehensively explores the concept of Wordwall, delving into its definitions, underlying gamification elements, and its practical benefits, as well as the inherent challenges of its implementation in the EFL classroom setting.

Wordwall is an innovative, web-based digital platform specifically designed to allow educators to create customized, interactive, and printable learning activities. According to recent educational research by Thu and Huyen (2026), Wordwall serves as a versatile gamification tool that hosts a wide array of templates, ranging

from classic quizzes and match-ups to more complex arcade-style games like maze chases and anagrams. Unlike static digital resources, this platform operates on a dynamic template-switching system, enabling teachers to convert a single set of vocabulary inputs into multiple distinct game formats with a single click.

In practice, the defining characteristic of Wordwall lies in its dual-modality nature, which caters to both synchronous live sessions and asynchronous assignments. In a live classroom setting, it acts as a visual anchor that instantly draws early adolescents' focus through bright color schemes, fluid animations, and immersive sound effects. These sensory stimulations are highly effective in breaking the monotony of traditional rote learning. Furthermore, its user-friendly interface allows students to access the games via simple hyperlinks or QR codes without requiring complex registration processes. This accessibility eliminates technical downtime, ensuring that the momentum of students' attention is maintained from the very beginning of the activity. Consequently, these distinct structural characteristics define Wordwall not merely as a digital quiz application, but as a comprehensive interactive ecosystem engineered to optimize student engagement.

2. Gamification Elements in Wordwall

The high effectiveness of Wordwall in maintaining student focus relies heavily on its deliberate integration of core gamification elements and structural features that serve specific pedagogical purposes in language instruction. Gamification in education, as defined by Fikri et al. (2025), is the application of game-design mechanics in non-game contexts to drive user engagement and solve behavioral problems, such as classroom disengagement. Wordwall operationalizes this concept by embedding specific structural mechanics into its learning templates, most notably countdown timers, live leaderboards, instant feedback systems, and progress indicators, which double as essential structural features in modern language pedagogy. Each of these elements serves a distinct cognitive and pedagogical purpose in counteracting classroom distractions by elevating a task's

perceived urgency and forcing the brain to allocate maximum cognitive resources to the learning process.

To fully comprehend how the Wordwall application operates as an educational intervention, it is necessary to anatomize its specific digital architecture and templates. Wordwall is not a singular game, but a multifaceted learning management tool that allows educators to convert traditional vocabulary lists and grammatical structures into highly interactive, dynamic gamified modules. In the context of junior high school language classrooms, teachers primarily leverage specific structural templates to align with the curriculum. Investigating these features clarifies the exact cognitive mechanisms through which the platform captures student attention.

1. Match-Up and Find the Match

In this layout, students are presented with a series of keywords (e.g., target vocabulary nouns, verbs, or adjectives) and their corresponding definitions, images, or translations. Learners must physically drag and drop or click the matching pairs. Pedagogically, this activity triggers the cognitive process of visual-spatial mapping. Instead of looking at a flat textbook page, students engage in active retrieval practice, which strengthens lexical semantic networks in their long-term memory (Karpicke & Roediger, 2008).

2. Anagrams and Wordsearch

These templates focus directly on the orthographic structure of the language. In an Anagram activity, letters are scrambled, and students must rearrange them within a specific timeframe to spell a word correctly. In Wordsearch, target vocabulary terms are embedded within a grid of random letters. This feature demands intense visual scanning and focused attention, forcing the brain to discard peripheral auditory and visual distractions to recognize correct word shapes and spelling patterns (Sweller, 2011).

3. Quiz and Gameshow Quiz

This mimics traditional multiple-choice assessments but completely alters the psychological delivery format. The Gameshow template incorporates

lifelike television game show elements, such as lifelines (e.g., 50:50, double score), bonus rounds, and ticking timers. The presence of these dynamic mechanics transforms a high-stakes, anxiety inducing testing format into a low stake, high reward challenge. It stimulates immediate cognitive processing as students evaluate semantic alternatives under a structured time constraint (Plass et al., 2013).

4. Maze Chase

This is an arcade-style template heavily reminiscent of classic video games like Pac-Man. Students navigate a character through a digital maze toward the correct answer zone while actively dodging virtual monsters or obstacles. This specific template represents the deepest level of gamification on the platform. It merges pure physical-kinesthetic coordination with rapid cognitive semantic evaluation. The multitasking requirement leaves zero residual cognitive capacity for internal mind-wandering or external peer chatter (Deterding et al., 2011).

Beyond individual templates, Wordwall's instructional value is amplified by its backend design features. The most prominent of these is the Instant Leaderboard. Upon completing an activity, students see their score and total completion time ranked relative to their classmates. This feature introduces a controlled, gamified element of social comparison and soft competition, driving students to repeat the activity to optimize their performance (Burguillo, 2010). Furthermore, the Instant Visual Feedback Loop ensures that when a student makes an error, the system immediately highlights the correct answer. According to Shute (2008), immediate formative feedback prevents the fossilization of linguistic errors and maintains learning momentum, allowing learners to remain engaged without experiencing the prolonged frustration often caused by delayed grading.

3. Benefits and Advantages of Wordwall

Integrating Wordwall into the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom provides a multitude of significant pedagogical, cognitive, and affective benefits, particularly for junior high school students who struggle with attention lapses.

Empirical evidence from contemporary studies on digital game-based learning (JRPP, 2025) demonstrates that Wordwall acts as a potent catalyst for vocabulary building by facilitating repetitive word exposure through enjoyable, low-anxiety pathways. The platform effectively bridges the gap between abstract linguistic forms and concrete mental retention by embedding vocabulary acquisition within interactive visual and audio contexts.

From a cognitive perspective, the primary advantage of Wordwall is its ability to foster high-level cognitive engagement without causing cognitive overload or academic burnout. Traditional vocabulary learning, which heavily relies on rote memorization and repetitive worksheets, often drains students' mental energy, leading directly to classroom boredom and distraction. Conversely, Wordwall alters this dynamic through its diverse game templates. For instance, when a teacher switches a vocabulary drill from a standard multiple-choice quiz to a dynamic Maze Chase template, the task transforms from a chore into an active cognitive challenge.

Furthermore, the immediate feedback loop inherent in the platform serves as an essential mechanism for formative assessment. Rather than waiting days for a teacher to grade a paper assignment, students receive immediate visual and auditory cues indicating whether their responses are correct or incorrect. This immediacy allows students to self-correct their errors in real-time, reinforcing the correct neural pathways for language acquisition while their minds are still actively engaged in the task.

On an affective level, Wordwall lowers the affective filter—a psychological barrier defined in language acquisition theory that prevents input from reaching the language acquisition device when a student feels anxious, stressed, or bored. Because Wordwall frames learning as a game, the fear of making mistakes is heavily reduced. If a student answers incorrectly, they simply lose a digital "life" within the game and can try again, transforming failure from a source of public embarrassment into a constructive, private learning experience. Through this harmonious combination of low-anxiety environments, instant cognitive reinforcement, and high mechanical variety, Wordwall delivers a superior learning

experience that successfully keeps early adolescents grounded and focused on their academic goals.

4. Challenges and Disadvantages of Wordwall

Despite its extensive array of pedagogical benefits, the implementation of Wordwall in an EFL setting is not without inherent limitations, operational bottlenecks, and unique challenges that educators must meticulously navigate. Critical analyses of digital media integration in Indonesian junior high schools emphasize that the success of web-based applications is strictly contingent upon a school's technological infrastructure and the teacher's capacity for strict classroom management (JRPP, 2025). Without careful oversight, the introduction of internet-enabled devices can inadvertently introduce novel forms of digital distraction rather than eliminating them.

Structurally, the challenges of deploying Wordwall can be categorized into technical and behavioral dimensions. Technical barriers present the most immediate obstacle in many developing educational contexts. Because Wordwall is a cloud-based platform, it demands a highly stable, high-speed internet connection for seamless operation. In a typical classroom setting at the junior high school level, where dozens of students attempt to access the same web link simultaneously using the school's shared Wi-Fi or their personal mobile data, bandwidth congestion frequently occurs. This technical lag manifesting as slow loading screens, frozen animations, or sudden disconnections can instantly shatter the momentum of a lesson. Instead of engaging with vocabulary, students become frustrated by the technology, causing their attention to drift back toward non-academic distractions.

Furthermore, the platform's commercial freemium model poses an operational constraint for teachers. The free tier of Wordwall restricts educators to creating only five customized interactives. While teachers can edit existing templates created by the global public community, this limitation requires additional time and effort to locate, filter, and adapt pre-made games so that they perfectly align with the specific curriculum and learning objectives of a particular lesson.

Behaviorally, the most ironic disadvantage of Wordwall is the potential emergence of "gamification blindness." This occurs when early adolescents become so profoundly consumed by the superficial mechanics of the game—such as beating the countdown timer, executing rapid movements in arcade modes, or obsessing over their leaderboard rankings—that they completely ignore the underlying linguistic content. In such scenarios, students may resort to rapid, blind guessing just to finish the game faster, prioritizing a high score over actual vocabulary comprehension. Additionally, if smartphones or laptops are permitted in the classroom for the game, students are only a single swipe away from switching tabs to social media, mobile games, or private chat applications. Therefore, while Wordwall remains an exceptionally powerful tool for mitigating traditional classroom distractions, its implementation must be reinforced by robust school infrastructure and highly vigilant teacher monitoring to ensure that the digital medium does not overshadow the educational message.

5. Flow Theory and Optimal Experience

While Kahneman's attention resource theory clarifies the cognitive limitations and the mechanism of how distraction occurs due to idle mental capacity, Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) flow theory offers a complementary perspective on how this mental capacity can be fully optimized to achieve ultimate concentration. In educational psychology, "flow" refers to a state of profound absorption where an individual is so completely immersed in an activity that peripheral awareness, passage of time, and external classroom distractions are entirely filtered out the phenomenon of deep, uninterrupted focus experienced by students when interacting with gamified media like Wordwall can be theoretically explained through flow theory, pioneered by psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1990). Flow is defined as a psychological state of deep absorption and complete immersion in an activity. It occurs when an individual perceives the challenges of the task to be perfectly matched with their own skills. When students enter a state of flow, their sense of time diminishes, self-consciousness temporarily fades, and they become intensely focused on the task at hand (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

Csikszentmihalyi posits that flow occurs when there is a perfect, delicate equilibrium between the perceived challenge of a task and the specific skill level of the individual performing it.

If a task is far too simple, the student enters a channel of boredom and disengagement; if the task is overwhelmingly difficult, it induces intense anxiety and frustration. The state of flow occupies the vital space directly between these two extremes. According to flow theory, reaching this state requires three core structural antecedents which are clear goals, unambiguous and immediate feedback, and balanced challenges.

In the context of this study, digital gamified tools like Wordwall are exceptionally well-suited to foster these exact flow conditions. The interface provides clear objectives (e.g., match the correct vocabulary word), delivers instant correction or validation, and introduces a healthy level of pacing or soft competition. By structuring language learning into these immediate, digestible, and interactive challenges, Wordwall helps students enter "the zone". When a student's cognitive capacity is entirely occupied by the gamified challenge, it effectively eliminates the psychological space required for internal or external distractions to take root.

6. Previous Studies

To validate the theoretical connections between gamified digital media, distraction mitigation, and heightened focus, this research reviews several key empirical studies that have previously investigated interactive educational technology in language classrooms.

A foundational study by Liu et al. (2014) in *Computers & Education* confirmed that integrating game elements into middle school English classes successfully boosts short-term motivation and curtails persistent off-task behaviors. While their study established that gamification serves as a viable deterrent against disengagement, it focused primarily on general behavioral patterns without

dissecting the modern, highly specific micro-features of interactive software like Wordwall.

Subsequently, a study conducted by Johnson, Smith, Willis, Levine, and Haywood (2016), also published in *Computers & Education*, provided foundational support for the effectiveness of interactive platforms in a highly relevant setting. Their research focused on the use of Wordwall-like tools in junior high school settings. The quantitative findings revealed a significant increase in students' focus during English lessons, specifically documenting a 25% reduction in external distractions based on systematic classroom observations. This study strongly supports the hypothesis that the introduction of such media can directly mitigate observable behavioral distractions, thus demonstrating the practical effectiveness of these tools in the target age group of the present research.

Complementing the behavioral focus, Lee and Kim (2019) investigated the psychological impact of gamified media in the *International Journal of Educational Technology*. While their research was conducted in an elementary school context, their findings are crucial for understanding internal distractions. They reported that students utilizing gamified media like Wordwall documented significantly less boredom and a marked increase in enthusiasm towards the learning material. This provides empirical evidence that the gamified nature of Wordwall directly addresses internal forms of distraction, such as mind-wandering and monotony, by boosting students' affective and emotional engagement.

Moving closer to specific English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context, Al-Khresheh (2022) verified that Wordwall significantly enhances vocabulary retention and active engagement among EFL learners by replacing passive rote-learning with structured interactive play. However, like its predecessors, this study heavily relied on quantitative metrics to validate vocabulary test scores, leaving a gap regarding the nuanced classroom climate and the qualitative behaviors of the learners during the game.

The localized context within Indonesian junior high schools was further evaluated by Shabrina and Taufiq (2023) in their study titled "The Effect of Teaching English Vocabulary on Junior High School Students by Using Wordwall.net". Their research confirmed that the tool aligns well with the domestic curriculum and enhances basic word recognition. However, Shabrina and Taufiq's (2023) research was restricted to a quantitative measurement of learning outcomes. The current study differentiates itself by adopting a qualitative approach to capture the lived experiences, behavioral shifts, and nuanced classroom dynamics that quantitative test scores fail to reflect.

More recently, Fikri et al. (2025), in their study entitled "Exploring the Use of Word Wall Gamification in Vocabulary Learning: Students' Perceptions and Engagement", delved deeply into the mechanical dimensions of gamification. They analyzed how structural elements like points, timers, and public leaderboards shape students' psychological engagement and perceptions of learning. Their qualitative data revealed that gamification mechanics effectively convert mundane vocabulary tasks into competitive, low-anxiety challenges. The current study heavily builds upon Fikri et al.'s (2025) theoretical foundation regarding gamified mechanics. However, a distinct empirical gap remains: Fikri et al. (2025) focused primarily on general student engagement and subjective perceptions. In contrast, the current study specifically treats these gamification mechanics as a direct counter-measure against explicit learning distractions, observing its real-time behavioral impact in a specific Indonesian Islamic school context at SMP IK Nurul Qur'an.

The most contemporary literature by Thu and Huyen (2026), titled "The Effects of Wordwall Games on EFL Learners' Vocabulary Acquisition at A High School", utilized an experimental design to measure the direct impact of Wordwall templates on vocabulary retention and recall among EFL learners. Their findings indicated that the interactive nature of the platform significantly enhanced students' lexical retention scores through visually engaging repetitions. While the current study shares a conceptual focus on Wordwall as a vocabulary-building tool, it fundamentally departs from Thu and Huyen's (2026) work in terms of the target

demographic and research scope. Their study examined senior high school learners, whereas the current investigation targets early adolescents in lower junior high school (Grade VII).

In conclusion, while these previous studies collectively confirm the positive correlation between interactive, gamified digital media and increased student focus, there is an evident lack of detailed qualitative case studies exploring the explicit, subjective student voices concerning the internal mechanisms of distraction reduction. Most existing literature relies on quantitative observations or self-reported numerical data. Therefore, the present study addresses this critical empirical gap by utilizing a qualitative design at SMP IK Nurul Qur'an. It aims to transcend mere statistical validation to explore the students' personal experiences, identifying the specific mechanisms of Wordwall that they perceive as key to reducing distraction and sustaining their cognitive focus.



CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A. Research Design

This study employed a Qualitative Research Design, specifically a Case Study approach. This method is appropriate because the research aims to deeply explore and understand the subjective phenomenon of students' perception of Wordwall's role in reducing distraction, rather than measuring statistical relationships. The research focuses intensely on a single, bounded system the English language learning activities involving Wordwall at SMP IK Nurul Qur'an. This design allows for an in-depth, rich, and detailed description of the students' experience and the specific context of the media use.

According to Creswell (2014), qualitative research focuses on understanding the meaning that individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. It allows the researcher to explore the situation in depth and describe the results clearly. Similarly, Sugiyono (2017) explains that descriptive research aims to describe events or phenomena systematically, factually, and accurately.

Following the evaluation of the research proposal, this study deliberately employs semi-structured interviews as the primary and sole method of data collection. This methodological choice aligns with Creswell (2018), who posits that qualitative research aiming to explore complex inner experiences and subjective meanings must prioritize the direct voices of the participants. Therefore, by focusing exclusively on in-depth interviews, this study can gain unfiltered, microscopic insights into how and why junior high school students perceive specific gamified mechanics in Wordwall as direct mitigators of their learning distractions.

B. Research Setting and Participants

The research conducted at SMP IK Nurul Qur'an, focusing on the second grade of junior high school. The location is chosen because preliminary data confirms the regular use of Wordwall for supplementary activities such as ice-

breaking and vocabulary course. There are three grade VIII classes in total. Classes typically consist of 18-20 students, with separate groupings for male and female students as per school policy.

The participants will be students selected from the three grade VIII classes using Purposive Sampling. Purposive sampling is used to select individuals who can provide rich, in-depth information pertaining to the research questions (Creswell, 2014). As all students are highly familiar with Wordwall, the sampling criteria are designed to ensure the collection of diverse and insightful data regarding the phenomenon of distraction reduction. The participants will be students who meet the following criteria:

1. Contextual Criterion
Participants actively enrolled in the target Grade VIII English classes.
2. Communicative and Voluntary Criterion
Students who demonstrate accessibility, conversational readiness, and a genuine willingness to share their learning experiences voluntarily without psychological coercion.
3. Demographic Criterion
Selected to ensure representation across the male and female groups and from each of the three classes.

The total sample size for the in-depth interviews will be 5 students in total. This number is sufficient for a qualitative case study to achieve data saturation by focusing on the depth of individual experiences and perceptions. Selection criteria include willingness to participate and representation from both genders.

C. Data Collection Instrument

This study will employ an interview instrument. The purpose is to explore the students' personal perceptions of Wordwall's effectiveness in reducing distraction and the specific elements (gamification, competition) that enhance their focus, directly addressing the research questions. Interviews will be conducted using a

semi-structured format to allow flexibility. A structured interview protocol will be prepared based on the research questions, ensuring all key areas are covered, while allowing space for follow-up questions to probe deeper into unexpected answers.

1. Interview Questions

The primary qualitative data for this study are gathered through face-to-face, semi-structured interviews with selected second-grade students at SMPiK Nurul Qur'an. A semi-structured format is specifically chosen because it provides a clear directional framework while allowing the flexibility needed to pursue unexpected, rich lines of narrative inquiry that emerge during the conversation.

To ensure a rigorous and transparent alignment between the methodology and the final findings, the semi-structured interview guide was systematically developed based on established theoretical frameworks. Every interview question was derived from specific operational indicators to avoid subjective bias and to guarantee that every claim in the findings corresponds directly to the research instruments. The operational matrix of the research instruments and indicators is detailed as follows:

a. Research Question 1

Perceptions on Wordwall in Reducing Distractions This focus is anchored in Kahneman's (1973) attention resource theory and Deci & Ryan's (2000) self-determination theory regarding cognitive capacity and intrinsic motivation. It comprises operational indicators investigated through Questions 1 to 4

- 1) Indicator A (Internal Distraction): Mitigation of academic boredom (Kahneman, 1973).
- 2) Indicator B (Mental Fatigue): Elimination of classroom drowsiness or sluggishness (Kahneman, 1973).
- 3) Indicator C (External Distraction): Reduction or productive redirection of peer-talking and off-task behaviors driven by intrinsic engagement (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

- 4) Indicator D (Cognitive Focus): Heightened focus on target language inputs and perceived classroom order.

b. Research Question 2

Influence of gamified features on focus and enthusiasm. This focus is derived from Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) flow theory, which maps how gamification mechanics drive optimal learning absorption. It consists of operational indicators investigated through Questions 5 to 8:

- 1) Indicator E (Psychological Arousal): Positive physiological excitement (e.g., adrenaline rush or situational alertness) triggered specifically by countdown timers as a form of gamified challenge (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).
- 2) Indicator F (Optimal Focus): Deep cognitive absorption ("the flow state") during interactive templates like matching cards or mazes (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).
- 3) Indicator G (Gamified Competition): Serious task compliance and learning effort driven by leaderboard visibility and extrinsic rewards (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

c. Synthesis and Reflection

Perceived Usefulness Grounded in Davis's (1989) Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), this section evaluates the long-term impact through Questions 9 and 10

- 1) Indicator H (Sustainability): Student perceptions regarding the continuity of their learning motivation without gamified assistance.

The interview questions are systematically derived from the two overarching Research Questions (RQ) of this study, ensuring that every query targets a specific dimension of student perception, distraction mitigation, or behavioral focus. The interview guide utilized during the field research is organized into three distinct thematic sections, containing the following ten core questions and their underlying pedagogical rationale:

Theme 1: Perceptions on Reducing Distractions (Addressing RQ 1)

The first block of questions directly investigates the core research problem: how the implementation of Wordwall alters the internal and external distraction dynamics among second-grade students. This section moves from general affective appraisals to specific psychological vectors of distraction.

1. **Question 1:** *How do you usually feel during English lessons when the teacher uses Wordwall? Is it different from using only textbooks?*

Pedagogical Rationale: This opening question is designed to elicit the students' general baseline perception and emotional response toward the intervention. By asking learners to directly contrast their experience with traditional textbook methods, the researcher can evaluate whether the digital medium successfully breaks the cycle of passive classroom receipt.

2. **Question 2:** *Does using Wordwall help you overcome boredom or sleepiness in class? Can you explain how?*

Pedagogical Rationale: This question explicitly targets **internal distractions**, specifically academic boredom and mental fatigue. As established in cognitive load theory, internal boredom prompts cognitive disengagement; this query uncovers the qualitative mechanisms through which Wordwall clears the internal mental clutter and revitalizes the students' alertness.

3. **Question 3:** *When playing Wordwall games, do you still feel the urge to talk to your friends about things outside the lesson? Why or why not?*

Pedagogical Rationale: This question explores **external behavioral distractions**, which are highly prevalent among peer-oriented adolescent learners. It examines whether the intense interactive demands of Wordwall leave any residual cognitive capacity for off-task peer socialization, such as whispering or chatting during structural lesson hours.

4. **Question 4:** *Do you feel that your concentration increases when the teacher presents material through Wordwall? In what way?*

Pedagogical Rationale: This final query under the first theme focuses on the enhancement of **concentration and selective attention**. It asks students to evaluate their own cognitive state, describing the precise ways their minds lock onto the target language input when delivered via an interactive digital platform.

Theme 2: Reasons for Enthusiasm and Focus (Addressing RQ 2)

The second block of questions dives into the psychological "why" behind the students' responses. It maps the structural features of the Wordwall application against the tenets of flow theory and Gamification Frameworks to understand what drives the students' focus.

1. **Question 5:** *Which features of Wordwall do you find most exciting? (e.g., the timer, the leaderboard/rankings, the sounds, or the game format like 'Match Up' or 'Quiz')*

Pedagogical Rationale: This question identifies the specific **gamification elements** that resonate most with digital natives. By cataloging student preferences for specific visual, auditory, or structural templates, the researcher can map which concrete design assets are most effective at capturing attention.

2. **Question 6:** *Why do those specific features make you feel more enthusiastic about answering the questions?*

Pedagogical Rationale: This item investigates **intrinsic and extrinsic motivation**. It pushes the student to look beneath surface-level excitement and articulate the underlying reasons why a game mechanic transforms a standard linguistic question into an appealing and engaging task.

3. **Question 7:** *Can you describe a specific moment when you felt very focused while using Wordwall? What exactly made you want to keep playing and learning?*

Pedagogical Rationale: Rooted deeply in Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) **flow theory**, this question asks students to recall a lived experience of deep absorption, or being "in the zone." The students' narratives provide crucial qualitative evidence of the exact moment their focus transitioned from fragmented to sustained.

4. **Question 8:** *Does seeing your friends' scores or the 'timer' make you more serious about completing the task correctly? How does it affect your effort?*

Pedagogical Rationale: This question evaluates the impact of **gamified competition** and social comparison on student task compliance. It examines how structural pressures like time constraints and public rankings influence the quality of the students' academic effort and accuracy.

Theme 3: Closing Reflection

The final segment of the interview allows the participants to provide a holistic reflection on their educational experience, capturing longitudinal projections and unprompted qualitative insights.

1. **Question 9:** *If the teacher stops using Wordwall, do you think it will be harder for you to stay focused in class? Why?*

Pedagogical Rationale: This counterfactual question tests the sustainability and relative strength of the digital intervention. By asking students to imagine returning permanently to traditional teaching methods, it measures the perceived necessity of gamified media in maintaining their daily classroom focus.

2. **Question 10:** *Is there anything else you want to share about your experience using Wordwall in English class?*

Pedagogical Rationale: This open-ended closing invitation ensures that the qualitative inquiry remains truly organic. It gives student participants the absolute freedom to share peripheral thoughts, emotional nuances, or specific stories that were not explicitly captured by the preceding structured prompts.

D. Interview Process and Research Protocol

To ensure the trustworthiness, credibility, and ethical integrity of the qualitative data gathered in this study, a strict and structured interview protocol was established. The data collection instrument employed was a semi-structured interview, which allowed the researcher to maintain a clear thematic focus while simultaneously providing the flexibility to probe deeper into the participants' individual lived experiences (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The interview process was systematically divided into three sequential phases: the pre-interview phase, the implementation phase, and the post-interview phase.

In the pre-interview phase, the researcher first secured institutional permission from the principal and the English teacher of SMP IK Nurul Qur'an. Following institutional approval, purposive sampling was utilized to select five student informants from Grade VIII. The selection criteria were based on the students' active exposure to Wordwall during English lessons. Prior to conducting the sessions, the researcher distributed informed consent forms to the participants and verbally explained the purpose of the study. To minimize academic pressure and foster an atmosphere of trust, the participants were explicitly informed that their participation was entirely voluntary, that their identities would be completely anonymized using pseudonyms (e.g., Student 1 to Student 5), and that their responses would have zero impact on their formal English subject grades.

The implementation phase was conducted in a quiet, comfortable, and neutral setting within the school environment to minimize external noise and prevent any environmental distractions during the dialogue. Each semi-structured interview session lasted approximately 7 to 10 minutes. To eliminate language barriers and

ensure that the Grade VIII learners could articulate their perceptions, feelings, and cognitive experiences without hesitation or communicative anxiety, the interviews were conducted entirely in Bahasa Indonesia (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The researcher utilized an interview guide containing open-ended questions focusing on the students' internal distractions (e.g., boredom, sleepiness) and external distractions (e.g., peer noise), and how the game mechanics of Wordwall affected their focus. All conversations were digitally recorded using a smartphone audio recorder with the explicit, prior consent of the participants. During the sessions, the researcher also maintained field notes to document non-verbal cues, such as pauses or enthusiastic gestures, which provided additional contextual depth to the verbal data.

The researcher then meticulously transcribed the Indonesian audio recordings verbatim into textual data. To guarantee linguistic accuracy and maintain academic standards, the Indonesian transcripts were subsequently translated into English using a back-translation backward technique, ensuring that the original meanings, metaphors, and emotional nuances expressed by the SMP students were not lost or altered in translation. Finally, member checking was performed by presenting the simplified transcripts back to the informants to verify that the text accurately reflected their original statements, thereby enhancing the descriptive validity of the qualitative findings.

E. Data Analysis Procedure

The collected qualitative data will be analyzed using Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), which involves the following systematic steps:

1. Converting interview recordings into written transcripts and organizing.
2. Reading and reviewing the data repeatedly to gain a deep understanding of the content.
3. Assigning specific codes or labels to significant segments of text that describe students' experiences or perceptions, related to distraction and Wordwall features(coding).

4. Grouping related codes together to form broader, meaningful themes (e.g., Theme: 'The Element of Competition,' Theme: 'Escape from Boredom').
5. Refining the themes to ensure they accurately reflect the data and writing clear definitions for each theme.
6. Integrating the defined themes, supporting them with direct quotes from the interviews.



CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A. Findings

This section presents the data gathered from semi-structured interviews with five students (S1-S5) of the second grade at SMPIK Nurul Qur'an. The findings are categorized based on the research questions regarding students' perceptions of Wordwall in reducing distractions and the features that influence their engagement.

4.1 Table of Informants Profile

No	Informant code	Gender
1	Student 1(S1)	Male
2	Student 2(S2)	Male
3	Student 3(S3)	Female
4	Student 4(S4)	Female
5	Student 5(S5)	Male

1. Students' Perceptions of Wordwall in Reducing Distractions

The first research question aimed to identify how students perceive the effectiveness of Wordwall in mitigating internal and external distractions during English lessons. Based on the interviews, the following themes emerged:

a. Reduction of Drowsiness and Boredom (Internal Distractions)

Most informants agreed that Wordwall is an effective tool for combating boredom compared to traditional textbooks. The comparative analysis between conventional learning media and digital gamification highlights a significant shift in students' internal focus. Based on the operational indicator of mitigation of academic boredom within Kahneman's (1973) attention resource theory, the findings reveal that traditional textbooks often fail to sustain the limited attention capacity of junior high school learners over extended periods. Static print media

tends to induce mental fatigue and situational disinterest, which manifests as internal distractions such as daydreaming or drowsiness.

In contrast, the interactive and dynamic nature of Wordwall successfully renews students' cognitive energy. By transforming vocabulary exercises into visually stimulating tasks, the platform eliminates the psychological weight of repetitive learning. This clear contrast between conventional textbooks and gamified media in combating internal classroom distractions is strongly supported by the statement from the informant:

S4: "Textbooks are boring and just ordinary, but Wordwall is different and fresher." She emphasized that Wordwall helps eliminate sleepiness.

S2: "It is very helpful. It feels more entertaining because of the games, so I don't feel sleepy while learning English."

S1: "When I am tired, using Wordwall can slightly reduce the boredom."

The narrative above underscores that the transition from a textbook-centered environment to a gamified platform like Wordwall effectively lowers academic boredom. From the perspective of attention allocation, the multimedia novelty of the tool acts as an active interceptor against internal cognitive drifting, thereby securing a higher level of classroom focus.

Based on the information from the participant, the researcher can conclude that Wordwall acts as a responsive tool to combat classroom monotony compared to traditional textbooks. S4 stated that textbooks often feel ordinary and tedious, whereas Wordwall provides a fresher learning atmosphere that actively eliminates sleepiness. This sentiment was supported by S2, who noted that the gamified format makes the learning process feel entertaining, thereby preventing drowsiness. Even when experiencing physical fatigue, S1 acknowledged that interacting with the platform slightly reduces their academic boredom.

b. Increased Concentration and Classroom Control

The students perceived that the interactive nature of Wordwall shifted their focus from distractions to the learning task. In addressing how gamified tools establish student engagement, the empirical data highlights a profound impact on learners' cognitive concentration. Based on the operational indicators of heightened focus on target language inputs (Kahneman, 1973) and optimal focus or the 'flow state' (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990), the findings demonstrate that Wordwall successfully commands the students' full attention capacity. When interacting with the digital platform, the learners experience a state of deep cognitive absorption where their analytical focus is strictly locked onto the linguistic challenges presented on the screen.

Furthermore, this heightened focus creates a positive secondary effect on the classroom environment. Because the students' mental resources are entirely occupied by the game mechanics, external classroom disruptions naturally decrease, creating a perceived sense of classroom control and order. The transition from passive listening to active cognitive focus is clearly reflected in the interview excerpt below:

S5 highlighted the impact on the classroom atmosphere: "The class feels more focused and controlled when using Wordwall." He mentioned that the visual appeal kept him engaged.

S3 added that the presence of new vocabulary presented through games made her focus better: "When I get new English words (in Wordwall), I feel less drowsy."

The interactive nature of the platform successfully anchors student attention toward the target material. S5 highlighted that the visual quality of the media keeps him engaged, leading to a classroom atmosphere that feels more focused and well-controlled. Additionally, S3 observed that the introduction of new vocabulary through digital games prevents cognitive drifting, stating that acquiring new English words via Wordwall helps her feel less drowsy during instruction.

c. Mitigation of Peer-Talking (External Distractions)

Interestingly, Wordwall did not just stop students from talking, but redirected their social interaction toward the lesson. Another compelling finding relates to the platform's capacity to minimize behavioral disruptions in the classroom, specifically peer-talking and off-task actions. Based on the operational indicator of external distractions mitigation driven by intrinsic engagement within self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000), the structural data shows that Wordwall channels students' communicative energy into productive task compliance. When students are highly invested in the gamified learning process, their drive to initiate non-academic conversations with peers naturally drops.

Instead of engaging in disruptive side-talk, students redirect their peer interactions toward competitive or collaborative learning behaviors, such as discussing vocabulary answers. This reduction of external classroom distractions is highly evident in the narrative provided by the informant:

S4 explained that when she talked to her friends during the game, it was specifically about the material: "No (I'm not distracted), if I talk to my friends, it's usually related to the lesson material."

It shows that the platform does not merely suppress social behavior among students but redirects their communication toward productive actions. S4 explained that when conversations between peers occur during the session, the topic is no longer off-task but strictly related to the English material being played.

Based on the collective responses, it can be concluded that students perceive Wordwall as a highly effective intervention for reducing classroom distractions. By replacing passive textbook reading with dynamic interaction, the platform systematically clear out internal mental fatigue (such as drowsiness and boredom) while simultaneously channeling external social interactions (peer-talking) into task-oriented discussions. This shared perception indicates that the digital tool effectively manages the classroom climate by occupying the students' finite attention.

2. Factors of Wordwall Features Influencing Students' Enthusiasm and Focus

The second research question explored the specific elements of Wordwall that contribute to students' engagement. The interview results revealed several key factors:

a. Gamification Elements: Timer and Leaderboard

The most significant factors identified by the students were the competitive features, specifically the timer and the ranking system (leaderboard).

S2 explicitly stated: "I like the timer and ranking because they trigger my adrenaline. It feels competitive because I am competing with my friends." He added that reaching the "final round" made him focus intensely to win a reward.

S4 echoed this sentiment, describing the physiological response to these features: "The timer makes me feel 'deg-degan' (nervous/excited) it triggers adrenaline, making learning feel like a race."

Competitive attributes on the platform serve as the primary catalyst for heightened student alertness. S2 explicitly mentioned that the countdown timer and real-time ranking boards trigger his adrenaline because it fosters a sense of racing against his classmates, which forces him to focus intensely during the final rounds to secure a reward. S4 echoed this experience, describing a physical response of excitement (*deg-degan*) caused by the ticking timer, which transforms vocabulary practice into an engaging competitive race.

b. Visual Appeal and Interactive Game Modes

Apart from competition, the visual presentation of Wordwall played a vital role in maintaining attention.

S5 pointed out that the aesthetic quality of the media was a primary draw: "The visuals are good and interesting," which contributed to a more controlled classroom environment.

Regarding the influence of gamified mechanics on students' focus, the structural data reveals that the presence of a countdown timer acts as a crucial catalyst. Based on the operational indicator of positive psychological and physiological arousal within flow theory (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990), the findings demonstrate that time limits transform routine language exercises into an engaging challenge. This alertness prevents cognitive drifting and forces immediate task compliance. This phenomenon is clearly evidenced by the narrative shared by Informant 4 (S4), who highlighted a genuine physical sensation of excitement and alertness.

S4 highlighted specific game modes, such as the memory card game: "Playing the game where we flip cards to find matches was exciting because of the timer."

The statement above indicates that the time constraint does not induce negative test anxiety, but rather a healthy state of situational alertness that absorbs the student's full cognitive capacity into the game environment.

Beyond the pressure of competition, the aesthetic attributes of the digital media play a vital role in capturing student focus. S5 pointed out that the interesting visuals are the main attribute that draws his attention and keeps his behavior on-task. Furthermore, S4 highlighted that specific interactive format, such as flipping memory cards under a strict timeframe, make the process of matching words significantly more exciting.

c. Social and Emotional Engagement

The findings also showed that students' enthusiasm was influenced by the collective energy of the classroom. The psychological synergy between structured competition and academic enjoyment emerges as a powerful driver of student engagement. Based on the operational indicator of gamified competition within self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000) and flow theory (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990), the findings illustrate that the 'fun' experienced by students is deeply intertwined with the platform's competitive mechanics, such as the live leaderboards and scoring systems. This gamified competition shifts routine

vocabulary drills into an interactive challenge, boosting serious task compliance without causing overwhelming academic anxiety.

The element of fun does not serve as a mere classroom distraction; rather, it functions as an emotional reward for learning efforts. The excitement of competing with peers creates an immersive environment where students naturally invest more cognitive effort to secure a higher rank. This balance between competitive drive and learning enjoyment is explicitly articulated by the informant:

S3, who is generally more passive, mentioned that she became more excited when working in teams: "The moment when we played in teams and chased each other's points felt competitive and fun."

She further observed the impact of her peers' behavior: "The classroom atmosphere (changes), the other friends look very enthusiastic when using Wordwall."

The enthusiasm of the students is also deeply sustained by the shared energy within the classroom environment. S3, who generally adopts a passive stance, noted that her excitement increases during team-based activities where groups chase each other's points. She further observed a social contagion effect, noting that seeing her classmates visibly enthusiastic automatically drives her to stay on-task.

d. Variation in Personality and Response

While most students were highly driven by competition, the study also found that individual personality influences perception.

S1 provided a different perspective, stating: "I am not a competitive person, so (the ranking) feels just ordinary to me."

This suggests that while gamification is broadly effective, its impact on enthusiasm can vary depending on whether a student possesses a competitive nature.

Despite the overall positive trend, the data shows that individual student traits mediate how these features are received. S1 provided a contrasting perspective, stating that because he is naturally a non-competitive person, the presence of leaderboards and public rankings feels ordinary and does not significantly alter his baseline effort.

This variation in participant responses aligns with the underlying indicators of individual motivational orientations within self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000). According to this framework, gamification mechanics like leaderboards function primarily as extrinsic motivators. While highly effective for competitive learners, these public rankings do not automatically translate into heightened enthusiasm for students who are inherently process-oriented or possess low extrinsic trait competitiveness. For these specific student profiles, cognitive focus is driven more by the intrinsic visual novelty of the templates rather than social comparison metrics.

In conclusion, the features that most significantly drive student focus are the structural gamification mechanics (the timer and leaderboard), supplemented by high-quality visuals and collaborative team modes. These elements collaboratively trigger heightened emotional and physiological states such as adrenaline and healthy excitement which anchor student focus. However, the exact strength of this impact is contingent upon individual student profiles, as non-competitive learners rely more on visual novelty rather than social rankings to maintain their focus.

4.2 Table of Thematic Findings

Research Focus	Emerging Themes	Evidence from Informants (Keywords)
RQ 1: Reducing Distraction	Elimination of boredom & drowsiness	"Less drowsy," "Fresh," "Not boring," "Helpful when tired."
	Classroom Management	"More focused," "Class feels controlled," "Related talk."

RQ 2: Factors of Enthusiasm	Gamification Elements	"Timer," "Leaderboard," "Adrenaline," "Deg-degan."
	Visual & Social Appeal	"Good visuals," "Team-play," "Friends' excitement."

B. Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that the integration of Wordwall in English language instruction significantly alters students' cognitive and emotional engagement, primarily by mitigating both internal and external classroom distractions. When analyzed through the lens of Csikszentmihalyi's flow theory, this phenomenon can be explained by the students' transition into a "flow state"—a psychological condition where an individual is fully immersed, deeply focused, and energized by the activity at hand. The collective responses from the informants indicate that Wordwall shifts the classroom dynamic from passive absorption to active participation, which effectively occupies the students' limited cognitive capacity and leaves no room for non-task behaviors such as drowsiness or off-task peer discussions.

This immersive experience is heavily driven by the balance between the challenges presented by Wordwall's features and the students' skills, which is the core tenet of flow theory. The physiological and emotional reactions reported by the students, such as feeling a rush of adrenaline and a sense of excitement (ding-donging), serve as empirical indicators of this flow state. The countdown timer and live leaderboards do not merely act as game mechanics; rather, they introduce a structured time-bound challenge. When students interact with these features, their concentration is intensely anchored because the game demands immediate cognitive processing. This optimal challenge prevents the onset of boredom—a common internal distraction caused by traditional textbooks—and simultaneously suppresses external distractions. Even when minor social interactions occur among peers during the session, the flow state redirects the communication to be strictly task-oriented, focusing entirely on the English material.

Furthermore, the discussion reveals that while digital gamification is highly effective in generating enthusiasm, the internal experience of flow is mediated by individual learner profiles. For highly competitive students, the external rewards and public rankings on the leaderboard act as powerful catalysts that amplify their focus and drive them deeper into the zone of concentration. Conversely, for non-competitive learners, the pressure of public ranking does not yield the same psychological drive. However, these students are still able to achieve a level of focus through the visual novelty and the collaborative energy of team-based modes. This nuance extends the application of flow theory in digital learning, suggesting that visual appeal and social contagion can substitute for competitive pressure in inducing focus among passive learners. Ultimately, by utilizing Wordwall, the teacher successfully manages the classroom climate not through rigid authority, but by structuring an interactive environment where students naturally experience flow, thereby optimizing their attention control during English instruction.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

A. Conclusion

Based on the data analysis and discussion, this study concludes that the implementation of Wordwall in English language instruction serves as a highly powerful tool to optimize student attention control and manage classroom dynamics. The findings reveal that Wordwall systematically minimizes both internal and external classroom distractions by shifting the learning paradigm from passive textbook reading to active, gamified participation. Internal cognitive barriers, such as drowsiness and acute academic boredom, are effectively mitigated because the interactive features keep the students' finite cognitive capacity fully occupied. Furthermore, potential external disruptions, such as casual peer-talking, are not merely suppressed but are productively redirected by the students into task-oriented, academic discussions regarding the English material being played.

Psychologically, this behavioral transformation is explained by the students' successful transition into a "flow state," where they become deeply immersed and emotionally invested in the learning process. The structural mechanics embedded within the platform specifically the countdown timer and live leaderboards introduce an optimal level of challenge that triggers heightened physiological and emotional alertness, characterized by a sense of healthy excitement and adrenaline. Ultimately, Wordwall does not merely entertain; it structures an organic classroom climate where student engagement is naturally sustained throughout the lesson.

1. Pedagogical Implications

The findings of this study offer critical pedagogical implications for English language teaching, particularly in managing student engagement and behavior within digital-native classrooms. First, the study implies that classroom management should undergo a paradigm shift; rather than relying on traditional, authoritative disciplinary methods to curb distractions like drowsiness or peer-talking, educators should focus on structural lesson design. By integrating gamified

platforms like Wordwall, teachers can shift their role from a rigid supervisor to an instructional designer. This role requires creating a learning environment that naturally triggers a "flow state," where the platform's interactive mechanics organically absorb the students' finite cognitive capacity, thereby leaving no room for non-task behaviors.

Second, the study highlights the importance of instructional differentiation based on diverse learner profiles. Since students experience the flow state differently where competitive learners are highly driven by time constraints and public rankings, while non-competitive learners rely on visual appeal and collaboration teachers must avoid a one-size-fits-all approach to gamification. In practice, educators should strategically alternate between high-stakes game modes (such as matching games with timers) and low-stakes, visually immersive tasks. By balancing these features, teachers can ensure that both aggressive-competitive and passive-reflective students can enter their respective zones of optimal focus without inducing academic anxiety.

Finally, the dynamic of the flow state identified in this research implies that digital gamification should be treated as a core pedagogical tool rather than a mere reward or icebreaker. Teachers are encouraged to deploy these digital interventions during critical "low-energy windows" in the school day, such as late afternoon sessions when internal fatigue and boredom peak. Ultimately, this study demonstrates that when digital tools are precisely aligned with the students' psychological need for balanced challenges, they do not just entertain—they structurally enhance the classroom climate, allowing for a more focused and productive language acquisition process.

B. Suggestion

Based on the conclusions and pedagogical implications presented above, several forward-looking suggestions are offered to maximize the benefits of interactive gamification in language education. First, English teachers are strongly encouraged to move away from using Wordwall merely as a short icebreaker and instead integrate it strategically as a core instructional tool during high-fatigue

periods, such as afternoon classes when student alertness naturally drops. Teachers should also actively diversify their use of the platform's game templates, intentionally alternating between high-speed competitive modes and collaborative, visual-heavy tasks to ensure that both competitive and non-competitive learners can consistently achieve an optimal flow state.

Second, school administrators and policy makers should provide systemic structural support to sustain this digital transition. This includes upgrading school technological infrastructure to ensure high-speed, stable internet access across all classrooms, as technical glitches can instantly disrupt a student's momentum and pull them out of their flow state. Additionally, schools should organize targeted professional development workshops that train teachers not just on the technical operations of digital applications, but on the psychological aspects of gamification design and student attention management.

Finally, future researchers are suggested to expand upon the limitations of this study by conducting mixed-methods or longitudinal research to investigate whether the focus-inducing effects of Wordwall remain consistent over an extended period or if they diminish due to a novelty effect. Future studies could also explore the application of flow theory across a wider demographic, such as investigating how students with varying levels of English proficiency or different cultural backgrounds respond to distinct gamified mechanics. By doing so, the academic community can gain a more comprehensive understanding of how digital tools can be optimized to foster sustained attention in diverse educational landscapes. Since this study only focused on qualitative perceptions of 5 students, future researchers are suggested to conduct quantitative or experimental research to measure the statistical effectiveness of Wordwall on a larger sample size.

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APPENDICIES

Appendix A Appointment Letter of Supervisor



KEPUTUSAN DEKAN FAKULTAS TARBİYAH DAN KEGURUAN UIN AR-RANIRY BANDA ACEH
NOMOR: 030 TAHUN 2026

TENTANG:
PENGANGKATAN PEMBIMBING SKRIPSI MAHASISWA
DENGAN RAHMAT TUHAN YANG MAHA ESA

DEKAN FAKULTAS TARBİYAH DAN KEGURUAN UIN AR-RANIRY BANDA ACEH

Menimbang	:	a. bahwa untuk kelancaran bimbingan skripsi mahasiswa pada Fakultas Tarbiyah dan Keguruan UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh maka dipandang perlu menunjuk pembimbing skripsi;
		b. bahwa yang namanya tersebut dalam Surat Keputusan ini dianggap cakap dan mampu untuk diangkat dalam jabatan sebagai pembimbing skripsi mahasiswa;
		c. bahwa berdasarkan pertimbangan sebagaimana dimaksud dalam huruf a dan huruf b, perlu menetapkan Keputusan Dekan Fakultas Tarbiyah dan Keguruan UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh.
Mengingat	:	1. Undang-Undang Nomor 20 Tahun 2003, tentang Sistem Pendidikan Nasional;
		2. Undang-Undang Nomor 14 Tahun 2005, tentang Guru dan Dosen;
		3. Undang-Undang Nomor 12 Tahun 2012, tentang Pendidikan Tinggi;
		4. Peraturan Presiden Nomor 74 Tahun 2012, tentang perubahan atas peraturan pemerintah RI Nomor 23 Tahun 2005 tentang pengelolaan keuangan Badan Layanan Umum;
		5. Peraturan Pemerintah Nomor 4 Tahun 2014, tentang penyelenggaraan Pendidikan Tinggi dan Pengelolaan Perguruan Tinggi;
		6. Peraturan Presiden Nomor 64 Tahun 2013, tentang perubahan Institut Agama Islam Negeri Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh Menjadi Universitas Islam Negeri Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh;
		7. Peraturan Menteri Agama RI Nomor 44 Tahun 2022, tentang Organisasi dan Tata Kerja UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh;
		8. Peraturan Menteri Agama Nomor 14 Tahun 2022, tentang Statuta UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh;
		9. Keputusan Menteri Agama Nomor 492 Tahun 2003, tentang Pendelegasian Wewenang Pengangkatan, Pemindahan dan Pemberhentian PNS di Lingkungan Depag RI;
		10. Keputusan Menteri Keuangan Nomor 293/Km.05/2011, tentang penetapan UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh pada Kementerian Agama sebagai Instansi Pemerintah yang menerapkan Pengelolaan Badan Layanan Umum;
		11. Surat Keputusan Rektor UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh Nomor 01 Tahun 2015, Tentang Pendelegasian Wewenang kepada Dekan dan Direktur Pascasarjana di Lingkungan UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh.
MEMUTUSKAN		
Menetapkan	:	Keputusan Dekan Fakultas Tarbiyah dan Keguruan UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh tentang Pembimbing Skripsi Mahasiswa.
KESATU	:	Menunjuk Saudari: Azizah, S.Ag., M.Pd. Untuk membimbing Skripsi Nama : Rana Raihanah NIM : 220203063 Program Studi : Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris Judul Skripsi : Students' Perceptions of Using Wordwall to Reduce Distractions in English Learning at SMPiK Nurul Qur'an
KEDUA	:	Kepada pembimbing yang tercantum namanya diatas diberikan honorarium sesuai dengan peraturan perundang-undangan yang berlaku;
KETIGA	:	Pembiayaan akibat keputusan ini dibebankan pada DIPA UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh Nomor SP DIPA-025.04.2.423925/2025 Tanggal 02 Desember 2024 Tahun Anggaran 2025;
KEEMPAT	:	Keputusan ini berlaku selama enam bulan sejak tanggal ditetapkan;
KELIMA	:	Keputusan ini berlaku sejak tanggal ditetapkan dengan ketentuan bahwa segala sesuatu akan dirubah dan diperbaiki kembali sebagaimana mestinya, apabila kemudian hari ternyata terdapat kekeliruan dalam Surat Keputusan ini.

Ditetapkan di : Banda Aceh
Pada tanggal : 6 Januari 2026
Dekan,


Saiful Muluk

Tembusan

1. Sekjen Kementerian Agama RI di Jakarta;
2. Dirjen Pendidikan Islam Kementerian Agama RI di Jakarta;
3. Direktur Perguruan Tinggi Keagamaan Islam Kementerian Agama RI di Jakarta;
4. Kantor Pelayanan Perbendaharaan Negara (KPPN), di Banda Aceh;
5. Rektor UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh di Banda Aceh;
6. Kepala Bagian Keuangan dan Akuntansi UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh di Banda Aceh;
7. Yang bersangkutan;
8. Arsip.



Appendix B Recommendation Letter from the Fakultas Tarbiyah dan Keguruan



**KEMENTERIAN AGAMA REPUBLIK INDONESIA
UNIVERSITAS ISLAM NEGERI AR-RANIRY Banda Aceh
FAKULTAS TARBIYAH DAN KEGURUAN**

Jl. Syekh Abdur Rauf Kopelma Darussalam Banda Aceh Telp/Fax. : 0651-752921

Nomor : B-2835/Un.08/FTK.1/TL.00/4/2026

Lamp : -

Hal : *Penelitian Ilmiah Mahasiswa*

Kepada Yth,

Kepala Cabang Dinas Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan Kabupaten Aceh Besar ; Kepala SMPiK Nurul Qur'an
Assalamualaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh.

Fakultas Tarbiyah Dan Keguruan UIN Ar-Raniry dengan ini menerangkan bahwa:

NIM : 220203063

Nama : RANA RAIHANAH

Program Studi/Jurusan : Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris

Alamat : Jalan Panglima Puteh Meurandeh Paya Tieng

Saudara yang tersebut namanya diatas benar mahasiswa Fakultas Tarbiyah Dan Keguruan bermaksud melakukan penelitian ilmiah di lembaga yang Bapak/Ibu pimpin dalam rangka penulisan Skripsi dengan judul *STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF WORDWALL IN REDUCING DISTRACTION IN ENGLISH LEARNING AT SMPiK NURUL QUR'AN*

Banda Aceh, 23 April 2026

An. Dekan

Wakil Dekan Bidang Akademik dan Kelembagaan



Berlaku sampai : 29 Mei 2026

Prof. Dr. Buhori Muslim, M.Ag.
NIP. 197508152001121002

جامعة الرانيري

AR - RANIRY

Appendix C Confirmation Letter of Conducting Research at SMPiK Nurul Qur'an



PEMERINTAHAN KABUPATEN ACEH BESAR
DINAS PENDIDIKAN DAN KEBUDAYAAN
SMPiK NURUL QURAN
Jalan Soekarno-Hatta, No. 10, Kecamatan Ingin Jaya, Aceh Besar
Provinsi Aceh. Kode Pos: 23371
HP : 085261000881, E-Mail : smpiknurulquran@gmail.com, IG: [smpik_nurulquran](#)



SURAT KETERANGAN
No. 719/B/SMPiK-NQ/VIII/2026

Assalamu'alaikum Wr. Wb

Salam teriring Doa semoga Bapak/Ibu senantiasa dalam lindungan Allah SWT, Amin.

Saya yang bertandatangan di bawah ini:

Nama : Nurul Hayati A., M.Pd.
Jabatan : Kepala Sekolah
Nama Satuan Pendidikan : SMPiK Nurul Quran Aceh
NPSN : 69987311
Alamat : Jl. Soekarno Hatta No 10 Kec. Ingin Jaya, Kab. Aceh Besar
Kab/Kota : Aceh Besar
Provinsi : Aceh

Dengan ini menerangkan bahwa:

Nama : Rana Raihanah
NIM : 220203063
Asal Perguruan Tinggi : UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh
Jurusan : Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris
Fakultas : Fakultas Tarbiyah dan Keguruan
Keterangan jenis penelitian: Penelitian kualitatif dengan *semi structured interview*

Telah melaksanakan penelitian di SMPiK Nurul Quran pada tanggal 29 April 2026 untuk memperoleh data guna penulisan skripsi dengan judul **"Students' Perceptions of Wordwall in Reducing Distraction in English Learning at SMPiK Nurul Quran"**.

Demikian surat keterangan ini dibuat untuk dapat dipergunakan sebagaimana semestinya.

Aceh Besar, 03 Agustus 2026
Kepala

NURUL HAYATI A., M.Pd.

Appendix D Interview Protocols and Questions for Students

RESEARCH INSTRUMENT: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE

Project Title : Students' Perceptions of Wordwall in Reducing Distraction in English Learning at SMPIK Nurul Qur'an

Researcher : Rana Raihanah (NIM. 220203063)

Target Informants : Grade VIII Students of SMPIK Nurul Qur'an

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL & OPENING SCRIPT

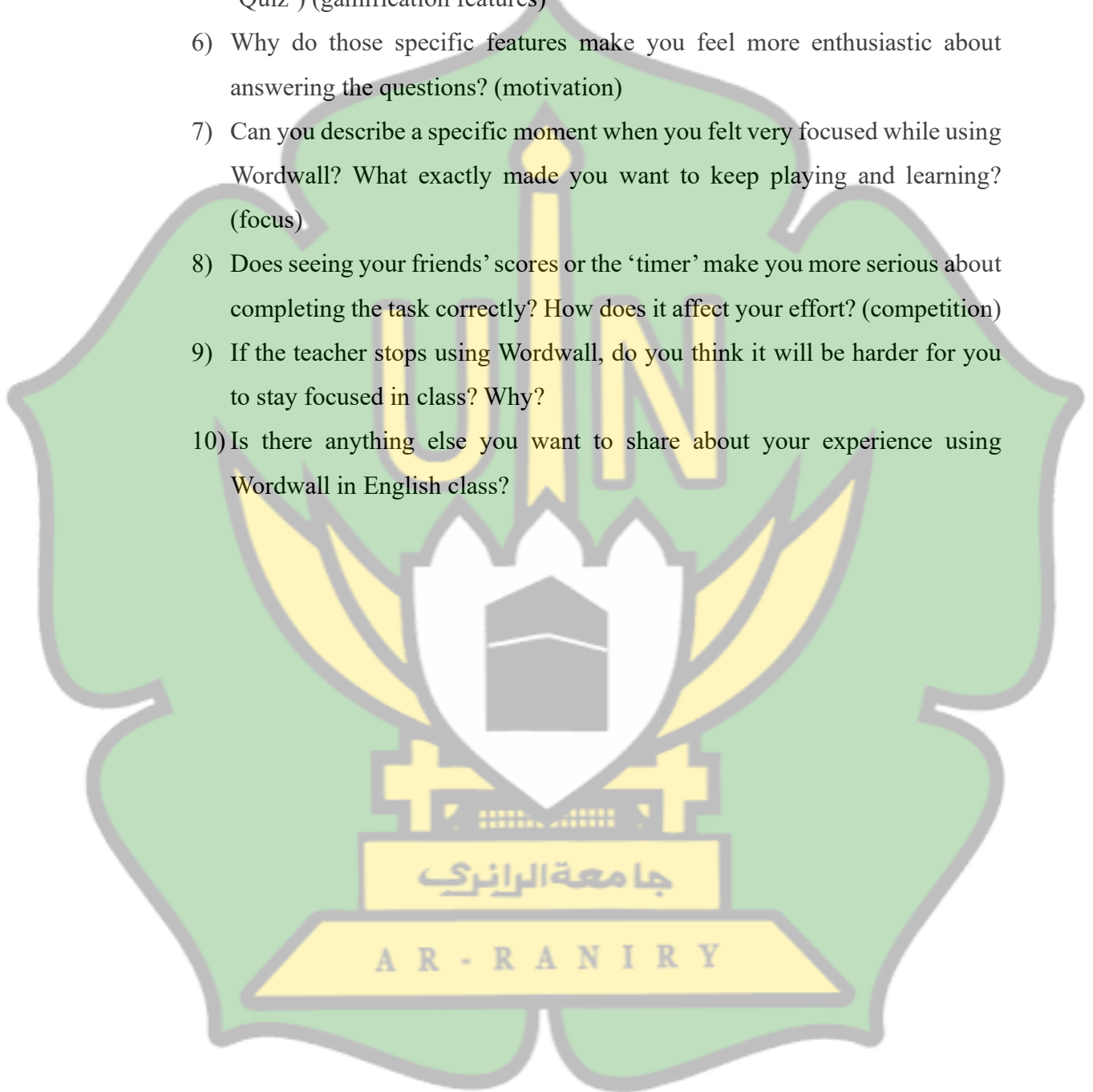
Opening & Rapport Building:

“Good Morning. Thank you for taking the time to talk with me today. My name is Rana Raihanah, and I am conducting a study on how Wordwall games help you stay focused during English class. I just want to hear your honest opinions and experiences. This interview will be recorded for research analysis, and your identity will remain strictly confidential. Shall we begin?”

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- 1) How do you usually feel during English lessons when the teacher uses Wordwall? Is it different from using only textbooks? (to know the general feeling)
- 2) Does using Wordwall help you overcome boredom or sleepiness in class? Can you explain how? (internal distraction)
- 3) When playing Wordwall games, do you still feel the urge to talk to your friends about things outside the lesson? Why or why not? (external distraction)
- 4) Do you feel that your concentration increases when the teacher presents material through Wordwall? In what way? (concentration)

- 5) Which features of Wordwall do you find most exciting? (e.g., the timer, the leaderboard/rankings, the sounds, or the game format like 'Match Up' or 'Quiz') (gamification features)
- 6) Why do those specific features make you feel more enthusiastic about answering the questions? (motivation)
- 7) Can you describe a specific moment when you felt very focused while using Wordwall? What exactly made you want to keep playing and learning? (focus)
- 8) Does seeing your friends' scores or the 'timer' make you more serious about completing the task correctly? How does it affect your effort? (competition)
- 9) If the teacher stops using Wordwall, do you think it will be harder for you to stay focused in class? Why?
- 10) Is there anything else you want to share about your experience using Wordwall in English class?



Appendix E Sample of Interview Transcript

SAMPLE OF INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT (STUDENT 4)

Date of Interview : April 29, 2026

Time of Interview : 10:30 AM – 10:45 AM

Location : SMPIK Nurul Qur'an Office

Informant Code : Student 4 (Active/Grade VIII)

Interviewer : Rana Raihanah

Transcription Codes:

R: Researcher / Interviewer

S: Student / Informant 4

R: Thank you for sitting down with me today. Let's talk about Wordwall in your class. Question number 1 is How do you usually feel during English lessons when the teacher uses Wordwall? Is it different from using only textbooks?

S: Textbooks feel pretty ordinary and standard to me. However, Wordwall feels completely different; it feels new, easy to understand, and fresh. Textbooks are boring.

R: Okay, I get it. Does using Wordwall help you overcome boredom or sleepiness in class? Can you explain how?

S: Yes, it definitely does.

R: When playing Wordwall games, do you still feel the urge to talk to your friends about things outside the lesson? Why or why not?

S: If it is about topics outside of the lesson, I do not talk to my classmate next to me. However, if it is still related to the lesson or the game, I do sometimes discuss it with my friend.

R: Do you feel that your concentration increases when the teacher presents material through Wordwall?

S: Yes, they definitely make me much more focused.

R: Which features of Wordwall do you find most exciting?

S: I really like the games that have a countdown timer because it gives me a sense of excitement and makes my heart race

R: Okay. Why do those specific features make you feel more enthusiastic about answering the questions?

S: Because it makes my heart race, it really pumps up my adrenaline. As a result, learning English feels just like a race or a competition

R: I see. Can you describe a specific moment when you felt very focused while using Wordwall? What exactly made you want to keep playing and learning?

S: At that time, Ms. Mutia set up a matching card game. The cards were flipped upside down, and we had to find the matching pairs to score points. There was a countdown timer as well, which made the whole activity really exciting.

R: Does seeing your friends' scores or the 'timer' make you more serious about completing the task correctly? How does it affect your effort?

S: Yes it is, I feel like I need to get more score.

R: If the teacher stops using Wordwall, do you think it will be harder for you to stay focused in class? Why?

S: I think the atmosphere would just feel completely different because we would have to go back to using textbooks again

R: Is there anything else you want to share about your experience using Wordwall in English class?

S: For me, Wordwall simply adds a lot of excitement to the class, so that the lesson does not feel boring at all

R: Thank you so much for sharing your experience.

S: You are welcome

