

EXPLORING THE USE OF WORDWALL GAMES IN LEARNING SPEAKING

Susilawati¹, Anisa Alawiyyah², Handi Pabriana³

^{1,2,3}English Education Program, STKIP Bina Mutiara Sukabumi

1ncisusilawati75@gmail.com, 2nisaalawi@gmail.com,

3handypabriana109@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Kecemasan berbicara (*speaking anxiety*) telah menjadi permasalahan yang penting di kalangan siswa sekolah dasar yang belajar bahasa Inggris karena dapat menghambat partisipasi dan perkembangan kemampuan berbicara mereka secara signifikan. Banyak siswa usia dini enggan mengekspresikan diri secara lisan karena takut melakukan kesalahan, khawatir terhadap penilaian negatif, dan memiliki rasa percaya diri yang rendah. Akibatnya, siswa sering menghindari aktivitas berbicara sehingga mengurangi kesempatan berharga untuk berlatih bahasa Inggris dan mengembangkan kompetensi komunikatif. Oleh karena itu, mengatasi kecemasan berbicara sangat penting untuk membantu siswa berpartisipasi dengan lebih percaya diri dan efektif dalam pembelajaran bahasa Inggris. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi penggunaan permainan Wordwall dalam pembelajaran berbicara, mengkaji bagaimana Wordwall membantu mengurangi kecemasan berbicara siswa, serta menyelidiki respons siswa terhadap penggunaannya dalam kegiatan berbicara. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain studi kasus. Penelitian dilaksanakan pada siswa kelas III sekolah dasar dari bulan Maret hingga April 2026. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi kelas, wawancara semi-terstruktur, dan dokumentasi. Data dianalisis menggunakan model Miles dan Huberman yang meliputi reduksi data, penyajian data, serta penarikan dan verifikasi kesimpulan untuk memastikan kredibilitas temuan penelitian. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa penerapan permainan Wordwall menciptakan lingkungan belajar yang interaktif, menyenangkan, dan mendukung sehingga mendorong siswa untuk berpartisipasi secara aktif dalam kegiatan berbicara. Siswa menjadi lebih antusias, percaya diri, dan bersedia berbicara dalam bahasa Inggris selama interaksi di kelas. Aktivitas interaktif juga membantu siswa meningkatkan kosakata, pelafalan, dan kelancaran berbicara mereka. Selain itu, Wordwall mampu mengurangi kecemasan berbicara siswa dengan menciptakan suasana belajar yang lebih santai dan nyaman sehingga siswa tidak terlalu takut melakukan kesalahan. Siswa memberikan respons positif terhadap penggunaan Wordwall karena pembelajaran melalui permainan meningkatkan motivasi, keterlibatan, dan kepercayaan diri mereka dalam menggunakan bahasa Inggris untuk berkomunikasi.

Kata Kunci: Berbicara Kecemasan; Permainan Wordwall; Keterampilan berbicara; Pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris

ABSTRACT

Speaking anxiety has become a critical issue among elementary school students learning English, as it can significantly hinder their participation and speaking development. Many young learners are reluctant to express themselves orally due to fear of making mistakes, negative evaluation, and low self-confidence, which reduces their opportunities to practice English and develop communicative competence. Therefore, this study aimed to explore the use of Wordwall Games in teaching speaking, examine how Wordwall helps reduce students' speaking anxiety, and investigate students' responses toward its use in speaking activities. This study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design. The research was conducted with third-grade students at Sukamulya Elementary School from March to April 2026. Data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and documentation, and were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model, which consists of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification to ensure the credibility of the findings. The findings revealed that the implementation of Wordwall Games created an interactive, enjoyable, and supportive learning environment that encouraged students to participate actively in speaking activities. Students became more enthusiastic, confident, and willing to speak English during classroom interactions, and the interactive activities helped them improve their vocabulary, pronunciation, and speaking fluency. Furthermore, Wordwall reduced students' speaking anxiety by creating a more relaxed and comfortable learning atmosphere in which students felt less afraid of making mistakes. Students expressed positive responses toward the use of Wordwall because learning through games increased their motivation, engagement, and confidence in using English for communication.

Keywords: Speaking Anxiety, Wordwall Games, Speaking Skills, English Language Learning.

A. Introduction

Speaking is one of the most crucial skills in learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL), especially in the Indonesian context where English is not used as a primary means of daily communication. In many classrooms, students remain silent, anxious, and hesitant to participate in speaking activities despite years of learning English, and their reluctance to speak is often

influenced by limited daily English use, fear of making mistakes, and limited opportunities for interaction. These conditions confirm that the gap between grammatical knowledge and communicative ability remains a major issue in Indonesian EFL classrooms.

This condition is commonly known as the silent classroom phenomenon, a situation in which students tend to be passive, less active, and often silent during the

learning process, even though some of them already possess a fairly good understanding of grammar. This phenomenon can be explained through several prominent theories in second language acquisition. The Affective Filter Hypothesis emphasizes that emotional factors such as anxiety, fear of making mistakes, and low self-confidence can hinder language acquisition; the Interaction Hypothesis highlights that language acquisition occurs more effectively through interaction; and the Output Hypothesis underlines the importance of language production in developing communicative competence. When students remain passive and silent, they lose valuable opportunities to develop their speaking skills.

Based on preliminary observations at Sukamulya Elementary School, it was found that English learning is still dominated by textbooks as the primary source, with very limited oral language practice, minimal variety of interactive learning media, and predominantly one-way, teacher-centered classroom interaction. As a result, students showed low motivation and tended to remain passive rather than actively

participate in speaking activities. Several problems can therefore be identified: elementary students exhibit relatively high levels of speaking anxiety; the classroom environment does not sufficiently support active involvement in speaking; the use of learning media remains limited; and game-based media such as Wordwall have not been optimally used as a tool to reduce students' anxiety and increase their confidence in speaking.

Based on this background, the problems of this research are formulated as follows: (1) How is Wordwall used to teach speaking to third-grade students at Sukamulya Elementary School? and (2) How can the use of Wordwall help students reduce anxiety in speaking English? In line with these problems, this study aims to describe the use of Wordwall in teaching speaking skills to third-grade students, to analyze how the use of Wordwall can reduce students' anxiety in speaking English, and to determine students' responses to the use of Wordwall in speaking activities.

This research is expected to offer valuable contributions to various stakeholders. For students, it is expected to help improve their

confidence in speaking English through a more engaging and enjoyable learning experience. For teachers, it offers an alternative and more innovative strategy for teaching speaking. For schools, the findings can serve as a consideration in developing more creative and effective English teaching methods.

B. Research Method

This research employed a qualitative approach using a case study design. The case study design was selected because this research aimed to explore and understand in depth the use of Wordwall in improving students' speaking confidence within its real classroom context. A case study is an empirical method that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and its context are not clearly evident, and it enables researchers to develop an in-depth understanding of a case within a bounded system.

The research was conducted at SDN Sukamulya, an elementary school that provides English instruction and implements interactive

learning strategies to support students' language development, over a period of two months, from March to April 2026. In this qualitative case study, the researcher acted as the key instrument, being directly involved in determining the focus, collecting data, analyzing, and interpreting the findings through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and documentation.

The population of this research consisted of all third-grade students of SDN Sukamulya in the 2025/2026 academic year, totaling 12 students. Using a purposive sampling technique, five third-grade students who were directly involved in the implementation of Wordwall Games were selected as the sample, based on their active enrollment, indications of low speaking confidence during preliminary observation, and consistent presence throughout the observation and interview sessions. The English/classroom teacher was also involved as a supporting key informant to strengthen the credibility of the data.

Data were collected through classroom observation, semi-structured interviews, and

documentation, and were analyzed using the interactive model proposed by Miles and Huberman, which consists of three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Data reduction was carried out by selecting, focusing, and simplifying data relevant to the research objectives; data display was presented in narrative form to facilitate the identification of patterns and relationships; and conclusion drawing was conducted to derive meaning from the data that had been systematically analyzed, so that the findings could be presented systematically, validly, and in a scientifically accountable manner.

C. Research Findings and Discussion

1. Research Findings

a. The Use of Wordwall in Teaching Speaking

The implementation of Wordwall in teaching speaking to third-grade students was conducted through several stages: opening activity, main activity, and closing activity. At the beginning of the lesson, the teacher greeted the students and asked simple daily questions in English to

build a positive classroom atmosphere and prepare students for speaking. The teacher then introduced vocabulary related to the lesson topic (e.g., professions) and modeled pronunciation before students engaged with the Wordwall game displayed on the smartboard.

During the main activity, students identified pictures, pronounced vocabulary, and answered simple oral questions related to the topic. Most students showed enthusiasm and confidence when speaking in front of their classmates because the activity was perceived as a game rather than a formal test. Throughout the activity, the teacher continuously guided students by correcting pronunciation, clarifying unfamiliar vocabulary, and providing positive feedback instead of direct criticism, which helped students feel more confident and less afraid of making mistakes. The lesson was closed with a vocabulary review and feedback session, in which the teacher praised students who were brave enough to speak and encouraged others to keep practicing.

b. Reducing Students' Speaking Anxiety through Wordwall

Thematic analysis of the observation, interview, and documentation data revealed four major themes explaining how Wordwall helped reduce students' speaking anxiety, as summarized in Table 1.

Table 1
Themes on How Wordwall Reduces
Students' Speaking Anxiety

Theme	Description	Supporting Codes
Wordwall Creates an Enjoyable Learning Atmosphere	Colorful visuals, animations, and game-based tasks attracted students' attention and made speaking activities more engaging than conventional lessons.	Enjoyable learning, motivation, interactive learning
Wordwall Increases Students' Comfort in Speaking English	Students who were previously hesitant became more willing to answer questions and practice speaking because the activity felt like playing a game.	Comfortable speaking, vocabulary support
Wordwall Reduces Fear of Making Mistakes	Students' attention shifted from worrying about errors to completing game tasks, supported by the teacher's gentle correction and encouragement.	Reduced fear of mistakes, teacher support
Wordwall Encourages Active	Students actively answered questions,	Increased participation, confidence

Participation	volunteered, and interacted with the teacher, viewing the activities as enjoyable challenges.	development
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Overall, the findings indicate that Wordwall helped reduce students' speaking anxiety by providing a supportive, interactive, and engaging learning environment that encouraged students to participate more confidently in English speaking activities, while also improving their vocabulary, pronunciation, and speaking fluency.

2. Discussion

According to Brown (2004), teaching speaking should provide learners with opportunities to use language meaningfully through interaction, practice, and communication. The present findings show that Wordwall functioned as an interactive learning medium that facilitated such opportunities: students were required to identify pictures, match vocabulary, answer questions, and respond orally to tasks displayed on the smartboard, actively engaging in the learning process rather than passively receiving information from the teacher. This is consistent with Harmer (2007), who

states that effective speaking instruction should provide learners with meaningful opportunities to use language in interactive situations, and with Prensky's (2001) theory of Game-Based Learning, which emphasizes that game-like features can increase learners' motivation, engagement, and participation.

The findings also confirm the importance of vocabulary preparation and teacher guidance. Introducing vocabulary before speaking activities provided the linguistic support students needed to participate more confidently, in line with Brown's (2004) view that vocabulary knowledge is an essential component of speaking proficiency. Meanwhile, the teacher's continuous guidance, modeling, and gentle correction can be explained through Vygotsky's (1978) concept of scaffolding, which suggests that learners achieve better performance when supported by a more knowledgeable individual. These findings are consistent with Harmer (2007), who emphasizes that teachers play an essential role in facilitating speaking activities through guidance, encouragement, and constructive feedback.

With regard to the reduction of speaking anxiety, the enjoyable learning atmosphere created by Wordwall can be explained through Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) Flow Theory, which suggests that individuals experience lower levels of anxiety when fully engaged in enjoyable and meaningful activities. As students focused on completing the game tasks rather than worrying about their performance, they became more relaxed and willing to participate. Similarly, Dörnyei (2005) argues that language anxiety decreases when learners feel psychologically comfortable and are not afraid of negative evaluation; in the present study, positive teacher feedback and a low-pressure, game-based format helped students feel safe to take risks and speak despite occasional mistakes. Taken together, these findings suggest that Wordwall reduced students' speaking anxiety through four interconnected mechanisms: creating an enjoyable atmosphere, increasing comfort in speaking, reducing fear of making mistakes, and encouraging active participation, thereby supporting speaking development among young EFL learners

D. Conclusion

Based on the findings and discussion, it can be concluded that the use of Wordwall in teaching speaking to third-grade students at Sukamulya Elementary School was implemented through several stages, including opening activities, vocabulary introduction, game-based speaking practice, teacher guidance, and lesson review. Wordwall provided students with opportunities to practice speaking through interactive activities and created an enjoyable and engaging learning environment that encouraged active participation.

Furthermore, Wordwall helped reduce students' speaking anxiety by creating a relaxed, enjoyable, and supportive learning atmosphere. Students who initially showed nervousness, hesitation, and low confidence became more enthusiastic and willing to participate in oral communication, supported by the game-based features of Wordwall and positive teacher feedback. Students also responded positively to the use of Wordwall, reporting that it improved their vocabulary, pronunciation, and speaking

confidence while making learning more enjoyable and less stressful.

Based on these conclusions, English teachers are encouraged to integrate Wordwall into speaking instruction, accompanied by sufficient vocabulary preparation, clear instructions, and continuous positive feedback. Students are encouraged to make use of digital game-based media such as Wordwall and to view mistakes as a natural part of the language-learning process. As this study was limited to a small number of third-grade students within a relatively short research period, future researchers are encouraged to examine the use of Wordwall in different educational contexts, grade levels, and language skills, using larger participant groups and longer implementation periods to obtain more comprehensive findings.

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