

USING WORD-WALL TO IMPROVE 11TH-GRADE EFL STUDENTS' VOCABULARY RETENTION IN A HIGH SCHOOL IN THAI NGUYEN

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the effectiveness of the Wordwall platform in enhancing vocabulary retention among 11th-grade students learning English as a foreign language at Gang Thiep High School, Thai Nguyen City, Vietnam. Employing a quantitative quasi-experimental design, the research involved 46 students over a 7-week intervention period during the spring of 2025. Pre-tests and post-tests were used to evaluate baseline vocabulary retention and future advancements, while questionnaires record students' views towards Wordwall-based learning. After employing the Wordwall platform, the student's vocabulary size markedly improved, as seen by the pre-test and post-test results. The post-questionnaire further demonstrated the positive participant assessments of this platform. The researcher proposed recommendations for educators, learners, and institutions derived from the study's findings. Moreover, recommendations for further investigation were offered.

Keywords: Vocabulary Retention, Wordwall Platform, High School Students.

1. INTRODUCTION

Rationale

The study focuses on enhancing English vocabulary acquisition for 11th-grade students at a Vietnamese high school during the second term of the academic year. Vocabulary is acknowledged as the fundamental element for enhancing hearing, speaking, reading, and writing competencies in English language acquisition, as evidenced by research conducted by Sanjaya et al. (2022) and Hadijah et al. (2020). Traditional vocabulary instruction approaches, including rote memorizing and descriptive tasks, sometimes appear tedious and useless, lacking the ability to assist pupils in organizing and using words effectively. This difficulty is especially evident for 11th graders, who are experiencing the psychological and emotional shifts of adolescence, leading to disengagement from learning methods perceived as irrelevant to their interests and needs.

This study looks into how Wordwall is used. Wordwall is an interactive online tool that uses fun games to help students remember words and get excited about learning. Studies by Smith (2018) and Haq et al. (2021) show that Wordwall lets teachers make fun, personalized activities that meet the needs of each student. This encourages active and eager participation. Wordwall uses technology to make learning more efficient, keep students more interested, and improve academic results. This is because many students today have short attention spans and are easily distracted. The study looks into how Wordwall can be customized to fit the different learning styles of 11th graders, making learning new words easier, more effective, and more relevant to their everyday lives.

Aims and Objectives of the Research

This study seeks to determine how well the Wordwall platform improves vocabulary retention among 11th graders studying English as a second language. This study aims to close the gap in efficient vocabulary retention procedures by Wordwall, a digital application that blends gamified exercises with interactive learning approaches.

Research Questions

- a) What is the baseline vocabulary retention level of 11th graders?
- b) To what extent does the use of Wordwall improve students' vocabulary retention?
- c) What are students' attitudes toward vocabulary learning with Wordwall?

Scope of the Research

The study was conducted with 46 11th-grade students at Gang Thiep High School, Thai Nguyen City, during Spring 2025. Participants were enrolled in regular English classes aligned with the *Global Success 11* textbook.

Significance of the Research

The findings offer students an engaging method to expand their vocabulary, provide teachers with an innovative tool to enhance EFL instruction, and contribute to the growing body of research on game-based learning. This study underscores the potential of Wordwall to improve vocabulary retention, informing future educational strategies.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Vocabulary

Vocabulary is a critical component of language acquisition, facilitating the development of core language skills (Nation, 2013). Vocabulary retention, defined as the ability to recall words over time (Richards & Schmidt, 2002), depends on effective teaching methods, learner motivation, and meaningful practice. Challenges in retention often arise from limited engagement and insufficient exposure (Decarrico, 2001). Game-based learning offers a solution by fostering active participation and repeated interaction with new words (Nation, 2000).

Wordwall

Wordwall is an online platform that enables teachers to create interactive quizzes, games, and flashcards tailored to educational goals (Smith, 2018). Its gamified features, such as crosswords, word searches, and matching activities, enhance student engagement and concentration. Accessible at <https://wordwall.net>, Wordwall supports customizable, colorful interfaces that make vocabulary learning enjoyable and effective. Research highlights its ability to improve retention through repetition and interactivity (Haq et al., 2021), making it a promising tool for EFL classrooms.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study combined quantitative methods with a quasi-experimental one-group pre-test/post-test design over seven weeks. Participants included forty-six 11th-grade students at Gang Thiep High School. A pre-test (20 multiple-choice and filling gap questions, 30 minutes) assessed initial vocabulary levels, followed by six weeks of Wordwall-based activities (e.g., quizzes, flashcards)

integrated into weekly lessons. A post-test of identical format evaluated retention gains, while pre- and post-questionnaires (10 items, 3-point Likert scale) gauged attitudes. The researcher monitored all sessions to ensure integrity, collecting and analyzing data to compare pre- and post-intervention outcomes.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The study's findings, which were compiled using pre- and post-questionnaires as well as pre- and post-tests, are listed below.

Pre-Questionnaire and Post-Questionnaire Results

The results of pre-questionnaire

The students' favorable dispositions regarding vocabulary retention reflect their comprehension of its significance in effective communication and their enthusiasm for participating in language-related endeavors. This incentive is essential for their readiness to dedicate time and effort to vocabulary acquisition, resulting in an increase in their vocabulary size. Educators can utilize this by introducing interactive and engaging exercises, such as Wordwall, to enhance vocabulary retention. This method increases student involvement, fosters active learning, and improves the overall efficacy of foreign language teaching.

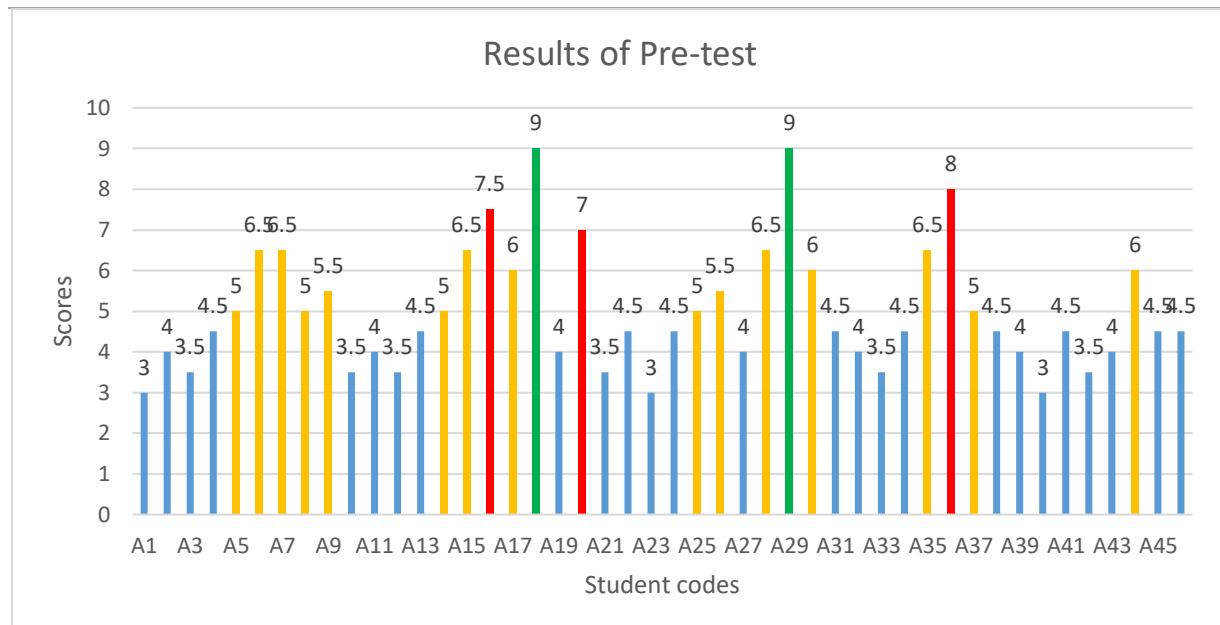
Nevertheless the study indicated that children encounter obstacles in language acquisition, such as difficulty in recalling vocabulary definitions, experiencing stress throughout the learning process, and grappling with intricate shifts in word class. The findings indicate that students' difficulties in vocabulary acquisition arise from a deficiency in motivation, inadequate practice, and restricted language memory ability. Effective interventions are essential to aid pupils in enhancing their vocabulary retention and overcoming these difficulties.

The results of post-questionnaire

Following six weeks of utilizing Wordwall for learning vocabulary, students' perceptions on vocabulary retention have markedly transformed. The majority of pupils deemed it intriguing and captivating, signifying a significant enhancement in their drive and excitement. Wordwall successfully engaged students and enhanced their active engagement, resulting in less inattentiveness. This intervention has improved vocabulary memory, focus, engagement, pronunciation, spelling practice, alterations in word class, and diminished anxiety. These data underscore Wordwall's efficacy in enhancing pupils' vocabulary retention.

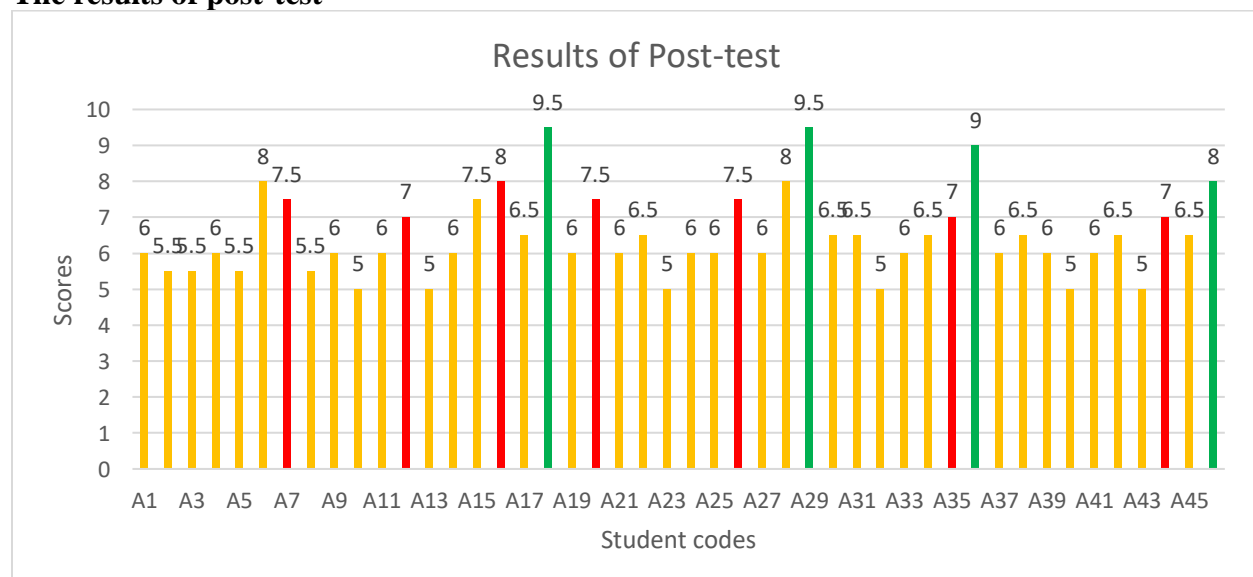
Pre-Test and Post-Test Results

The results of pre-test



As shown above, prior to using Wordwall to acquire vocabulary, the students' grades were generally lower than 5, as indicated by the 5 point average. More specifically, approximately fourteen students fared above-average on the pre-test, whereas the remaining pupils all performed below-average. The fact that some students fared above average suggests that they may have had a larger vocabulary even before utilizing Wordwall. Individual hobbies, prior language exposure, or personal study habits could all play a role in this. On the other hand, the majority of children performed below average, indicating that they required additional support and supervision in expanding their vocabulary size. On the other hand, the majority of pupils scored below average, indicating that they required additional support and supervision in expanding their vocabulary abilities.

The results of post-test



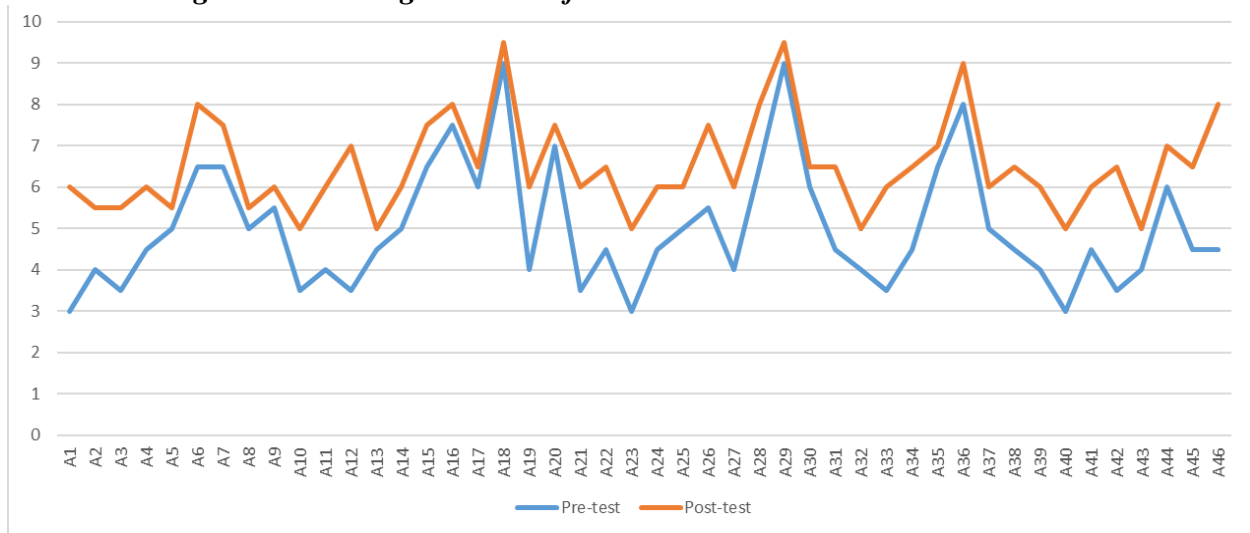
The chart indicates that after using Wordwall to learn vocabulary, students' vocabulary levels were often above 5. As seen by the average of 6.5, the majority of pupils received a score of at least 5. After using Wordwall, the average score climbed by 1.5, showing a considerable gain in students' vocabulary. This suggests that Wordwall's interactive and engaging nature effectively helped students increase their vocabulary size and was successful in bridging the gap between students' initial vocabulary levels, as even those who scored below average on the pre-test were able to make significant progress.

Comparison of Pre- and Post-Test Results

After using Wordwall to study vocabulary, there were some variances in the correctness of the responses provided by the students. The following table illustrates how important these discrepancies are.

Period	Average number of correct sentences
Before	5
After	6.5
Deviation	1.5

Table 1. Changes in the average number of correct sentences

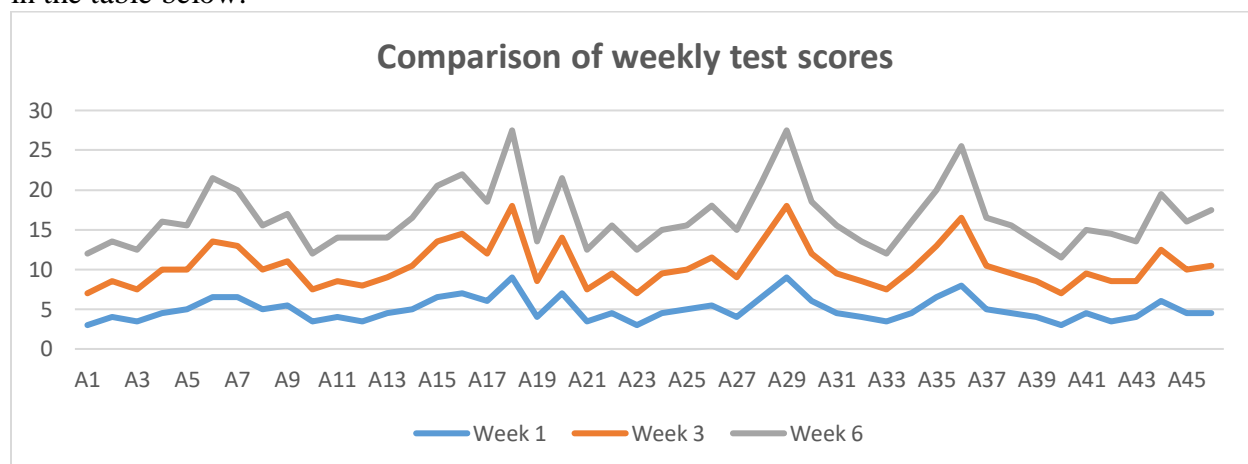


The pre-test results were clearly poorer than the post-test findings. This suggests that a large proportion of students who used Wordwall to learn vocabulary have greatly improved their vocabulary recall. The results in the table above demonstrate that the average number of correct sentences by pupils has increased dramatically. Students scored an average of 5 points on the pre-test, but 6.5 points on the post-test.

Furthermore, the intervention helped students maintain their vocabulary. The proportion of correct sentences rose on average. In other words, the kids' vocabulary skills improved dramatically. As a result, using Wordwall enhanced student performance.

Findings from Weekly Practice

The average number of right sentences that students produced each week during practice is shown in the table below.



The consistent increase in the percentage of accurate replies over weeks 1, 3, and 6 further supports the notion that Wordwall had a positive impact on students' vocabulary retention. It implies that students were able to recall and provide correct answers more frequently as they continued to engage with the learning tool.

5. CONCLUSION

Wordwall significantly enhanced vocabulary retention among 11th-grade EFL students, with marked improvements in test scores and positive attitudes toward learning. Its gamified approach made vocabulary acquisition enjoyable and effective. Recommendations include expanding participant numbers and exploring Wordwall's impact on other language skills (e.g., grammar, pronunciation) in future studies.

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