



Submitted	: July 1, 2025
Accepted	: September 17, 2025
Published	: September 19, 2025

# AN ACTION RESEARCH AT SDN PAJI: IMPROVING STUDENTS VOCABULARY MASTERY THROUGH THE WORD WALL STRATEGY

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**Abstract:** *Mastery of vocabulary is critical to the process of learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL); however, for elementary students it is difficult for students to gain mastery of vocabulary as they have little exposure to new vocabulary, perform below level due to text complexity, and are subjected to traditional learning. This study focused on the use of a technique of Word Wall to increase the vocabulary of fifth-grade students at SDN Paji in Lamongan. The study employed descriptive qualitative action oral language, as well as the Word Wall technique utilized images, definitions, and sentences for thirty target words, as reading-aloud, discussions, and student-created aspects supplemented the the provided materials. Using a combination of a pre and posttest along with interviews and observations, it was established that the components of recognition of words, recognition of correct word usage and pronunciation, students were more confident, and students became more independent in learning the word. In addition, it was found that Word Wall also impacted student motivation, allowed learning in multiple types of learning styles, and engaged students in active participation. To conclude, Word Wall is a low-cost, student-centered vocabulary option that increases vocabulary mastery and engagement in EFL classrooms with limited resources and further research needs to evaluate the long-term use and digital possibilities of Word Wall, respectively.*

**Keywords:** *EFL, Elementary Students, Motivation, Vocabulary, Word Wall.*

## INTRODUCTION

The emphasis of vocabulary mastery in English language teaching has long been acknowledged as an objective in language education, particularly at the elementary school level, where language and communicative competences form our first contact. In addition, vocabulary is more than a list of words to be learned and is an integral part of helping students deliver four core language skills: reading, writing, speaking, and listening. If students do not have adequate vocabulary development they will have problems understanding spoken and written language texts' (reading and listening), expressing their ideas orally (speaking) or creating meaningful sentences (writing) and vocabulary instruction is a priority and critical to EFL contexts like Indonesia, where EFL students exposure to the English language in the classroom is limited in use (Renandya, Hamied, & Sukyadi, 2018; Warni & Aziz, 2018). This difficulty is particularly apparent in rural or underserved places such as SDN Paji in East Java, where the students have little or no access to English learning resources, qualified teachers, and a language-rich environment (Mumary Songbatumis, 2017). Studies by UNISDA lecturers emphasize that young learners in rural settings require contextual and visually supported vocabulary instruction to compensate for the lack of exposure to English input

(Irmayani, 2023; Sofeny & Irmayani, 2023). Traditional teacher-centered instruction generally drives teaching and learning in the classroom. Students learn from passive experiences that privilege rote learning and a focus on memorizing facts without understanding their meaning.

Additionally, as previously noted, there is little linguistic reinforcement outside the educational setting, meaning that students have limited opportunities to retain and apply the material they are being taught. In addition to this, the national policy for English language education in schools has quickly evolved, moving from compulsory English, where students studied English as a required subject, to now, where students are teaching English as a hobby (A. Daud, 2024). This has compounded the problem for teachers and created uncertainty and inconsistency in vocabulary instruction across schools. According to Sofeny (2022), teachers need practical classroom-based strategies that are adaptable, low-cost, and aligned with student-centered learning principles promoted by Kurikulum Merdeka. Teachers in rural locations also have to deal with larger classes, limited teacher training, and a lack of materials, which creates pressure for teachers to change or adapt to the teaching contexts. Therefore, there is an urgent need for innovative, contextualized, and inexpensive vocabulary learning approaches that engage students actively and meaningfully with vocabulary learning (Irmayani, 2023; Sofeny & Irmayani, 2023). Approaches to vocabulary learning, such as Word Walls, that incorporate visuals, real-life contexts, and student interaction, can show greater benefits in vocabulary retention and use (H. K. Wardani et al., 2023). These efforts not only raise an understanding of how language develops but also allow all learners, regardless of where they sit on the financial or social spectrum, to be able to have the chance at learning and succeeding in English language education (N. Wardani & al., 2023)

In Indonesia, English education policy has transformed over the last twenty years. English instruction was once a required local content subject as stated under the 2006 KTSP curriculum, and it was later required as extracurricular in the 2013 Curriculum, and then it was optional under the Kurikulum Merdeka (Emancipated Curriculum). Thus, it has gone through various policy cycles and lacks a similar trajectory in transitioning to a regular, recognized primary school course (N. Wardani & al., 2023). Each of these new policies affected vocabulary instruction, and vocabulary instruction was implemented in very inconsistent ways, establishing no consistency in planning or modes of delivery in teachers' lessons, and overall, there was minimal teacher education for English teachers (A. Daud, 2024; A. Salim & Hanif, 2021).

In this situation, some active-learning pedagogical approaches must be utilized to address the learners' vocabulary-related problems within primary classrooms. One potential active-learning approach to vocabulary learning is the Word Wall, which is a visual scaffold that is made available to all students in the classroom by displaying vocabulary words in a visible location on the wall (Irmayani, 2023; Sofeny & Irmayani, 2023). The use of a Word Wall provides repeated exposure to vocabulary, helping students remember the words and visually recognize the words, while also allowing students to select, categorize, and use their vocabulary with purpose (N. Wardani & al., 2023). The interactive nature of Word Walls promotes student engagement, facilitates differentiated learning, and can be easily applied in daily lesson schedules (R. Mahaputri & Nizar, 2025). In SDN Paji, a public elementary school in a rural area in Lamongan Regency, East Java, with minimal resources, and with children who are not usually exposed to the English language inside or outside the classroom; Word Wall was an abuse of the traditional method and offered a relatively new and useful approach to strengthen students' vocabulary mastery (N. Wardani & al., 2023). Like many students in disadvantaged areas, this school experiences a number of instructional challenges, including a lack of English learning resources, insufficient English language teacher training, and an absence of immersive English linguistic environments (A. M. Daud, 2024; Muary Songbatumis, 2017). This strategy was implemented before observations in the classroom indicated that students could not retain even the most basic English words presented during the lesson (the simplest words). Students struggled to recall the vocabulary from units studied previously and hesitated or appeared passive when asked to speak or write in English in the classroom. Many students were not motivated to engage in English language learning, and indeed, much of this passive, low-motivation approach reflected the traditional instruction and assessment methods that predominated (e.g. teacher-led instruction, memorization of meanings). While students are sometimes given opportunities to work with new vocabulary, they are seldom provided with meaningful, recurrent opportunities to meaningfully engage with the vocabulary, and this leads to weak retention and poor language output from the students (Sari, Irmayani, & Sofeny, 2024). Teachers were also frustrated that they could not keep students engaged, and admitted that their methods of instruction made little attempt to link vocabulary learning to these students' lived experiences or local context (Widiati, Suryati, et al., 2018).

In light of these challenges, an action research project was developed to investigate how a Word Wall strategy could be used as a vocabulary teaching approach, in this case. The intervention was implemented as a sustained effort over six weeks; the intention was to embed the Word Wall into the ordinary English class lessons so the students would receive consistent exposure to a selected group of vocabulary items. Given the importance of using vocabulary which focuses on domains important to the students lives, such as "school," "nature," and "family," the intended goal was to achieve personal relevance and provide context (Purtanto et al., 2023) The Word Wall was produced from

lightly sourced materials, and the cards were colorful and exhibited words, pictures, definitions in English, and example sentences to support understanding and memorization of the terms. The cards were placed in full view on the wall in the classroom, making sure the students saw the cards.

Students were also encouraged to participate by adding new words, drawing pictures, or using the target words in their own example sentences. Creative participation also resulted in enhancing student participation and providing a sense of ownership and engagement in their learning (Ryan & Powelson, 1991). Teachers reported that students began to use the intended vocabulary with increased confidence in both oral and written tasks, and some students began practicing their vocabulary at home, by displaying mini Word Walls in their notebooks or requesting to be quizzed by family members. There were also marked improvements in classroom management as students consistently displayed high levels of engagement during English lessons, and students who usually displayed behavior issues in English lessons were more inclined to participate when in the context of working with the Word Wall (Sari, Irmayani, & Sofeny, 2024). The Word Wall became a point of reference within the classroom, and would often be used during other creative tasks, such as storytelling or sentence-building activities, or just games.

This change noted a shift from passive to active learning and student-centeredness. At the end of the study period, both the qualitative and quantitative data identified positive developments in students' vocabulary mastery, further reinforcing the hypothesis that Word Walls can be used effectively to assist with vocabulary development in low- resource settings (Mutmainah et al., 2024), thus, the process of implementing the Word Wall strategy at SDN Paji not only addressed the immediate issue of poor vocabulary retention, but also provided for broader education goals, such as nurturing students' self-agency, granting context to learning, and inclusivity in education as valued in the Kurikulum Merdeka (Wardhani & al., 2023).

The Word Wall aligns with the philosophies contained in Kurikulum Merdeka, focused on learner agency, contextualized learning, and the competencies established by the Profil Pelajar Pancasila. It is a way for students to relate local content and their lived experience to new vocabulary. For example, students may bring local flora and fauna or routines and practices from the school to translate to add to the Word Wall, which would encourage relevance and retention, too. Additionally, this approach assists in inclusive approaches to education because formally labeled vocabulary on the Word Wall can be accessed and contributed to by diverse learners, no matter their stated level of English (Faizin et al., 2022).

This action research study was designed to determine the effectiveness of the Word Wall strategy to improve vocabulary mastery for fifth-grade students at SDN Paji. The following two research questions guided this study :

1. How does the Word Wall strategy inspire better vocabulary retention and use?
2. How does the Word Wall strategy provoke active learning and student engagement?
3. What are the activities in teaching Word Walls in the primary school classroom that are challenging and what might be done differently?

This research adds sufficiently to the growing literature base that stresses visual, interactive, and contextualized vocabulary instruction, especially in EFL contexts with limited opportunities for authentic English contact (Mutmainah et al., 2024). In many Indonesian primary schools, especially rural schools or underserved schools like SDN Paji, vocabulary learning is particularly challenging because of a lack of adequate teaching materials, limited time for each lesson, and very limited opportunities for students to interact with English in their lives (Widiati & al., 2018a). In these contexts, traditional approaches, which are prescriptive both for memorization and teacher-dominated instruction, often do not support memory retention over time or meaning making (H. K. Wardani et al., 2023).

As a result, there is an urgent need for new, scalable, and cost-effective pedagogical interventions that not only develop students' vocabulary knowledge but also facilitate learner autonomy, learner motivation, and experiential (Ryan & Powelson, 1991). This study responds to that need by implementing and investigating the Word Wall, a classroom-based visual intervention intended to support vocabulary learning by increasing exposure, student engagement, and contextualized (H. K. Wardani et al., 2023).

This research used a process of systematic classroom observations, pre- and post-vocabulary tests, and reflective teaching cycles to generate research data and possibilities. Using these data sources allowed us to develop full-range understandings of the Word Wall's influence on students' vocabulary mastery and attitudes, participation, and independent learning (R. Mahaputri & Nizar, 2025). The findings indicated that the Word Wall enabled students to show improvements in word identification and pronunciation, and most success in using to speak and write. The Word Wall encouraged student initiative throughout the process, as students contributed their own new words, created their own vocabulary cards to refer to the Word Wall, and directed where the lessons went by the teaching referencing their Word Wall. This participatory approach closely aligned with the principles of Kurikulum Merdeka, which support student-centered learning, contextual relevance, and the development of the Profil Pelajar Pancasila (H. Salim & Hanif, 2021). Anchoring vocabulary instruction and modeling words based on local context words related to daily routines, animals, plants, and objects in school, made the Word Wall authentic and relevant while

supporting cognitive connections for students. Moreover, the strategy creates affordances for teachers through flexible, accessible and differentiated teaching and helps teachers to acknowledge their diverse students and developing different learning preferences and proficiency of students (Purtanto et al., 2023). The evidence base and practice implications from this action research also strongly suggest the possibility of Word Walls to be a sustainable innovation in education that is portable and transferable to different contexts in Indonesia where resources may be limited. It provides a model that can be adapted, revised, and scaled-up to other educators who may identify with similar issues (R. Mahaputri & Nizar, 2025). However, despite increased interest in learner-centered innovations in EFL classrooms, there remains a research gap in investigating how visual scaffolding tools, such as Word Walls uniquely foster long-term learner autonomy in practice and in relation to national curriculum reforms. As a result, this study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of the Word Wall strategy while improving vocabulary mastery as well as increasing engagement of the students, independence, and motivation according to the Kurikulum Merdeka and Profil Pelajar Pancasila (A. Daud, 2024).

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research study employed a qualitative descriptive approach as a strategy for determining the extent to which the Word Wall strategy improved the vocabulary mastery of fifth-grade students at SDN Paji, Lamongan, East Java in the Action Research context. The researchers opted for action research because the methodology combines the systemic and deliberate nature of traditional research with the flexibility needed by teachers to design interventions in the classroom context and can be used for continual reflection and improvement (Ita Rustiati Ridwan et al., 2023). Further, this study employed the action research cycle from Kemmis and McTaggart, which included the four cyclical phases of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting, and divided the intervention into three articulable forms— pre-intervention, intervention, and post-intervention—easing the implementation of the intervention.

The qualitative descriptive design was appropriate because it highlights not only the quantifiable outcomes of vocabulary learning, but also the experiences of students and teachers, the classroom dynamics, and the emotions attached to language learning (Miles et al., 2014). By using triangulation, the study was looking at the qualitative and quantitative data to provide a fuller picture of how the Word Wall strategy developed in a real classroom situation.

### 2.1 Research Site and Participants

The study was conducted at an elementary public school called SDN Paji in Lamongan Regency, East Java, for three reasons. First, English is a local content subject from grades 4-6, facilitating the appropriateness of early-stage vocabulary acquisition interventions (Zein, 2016). Second, the school principal and English teacher offered their institutional support, including classroom, administrative, and most importantly, time for the 6-week intervention work (D. Angraeni & Yusuf, 2022). Third and finally, the classroom context offered consistent schedules, manageable class size, and regular attendance, all of which offer favorable conditions for conducting a series of classroom-based studies (E. Fitriani, 2020).

The participants were 25 fifth-grade students ages 10-11, who varied in background experiences with English. Some students had received additional instruction in private settings or from family members, while others had only relied on classroom teaching (Mumary Songbatumis, 2017). The fifth-grade students were at Piaget's concrete operational level of development, which meant that they were capable of logical reasoning but would rely on tangibles and visuals to help understand the abstract concepts of foreign vocabulary learning (Piaget, 1952; Vygotsky, 1978). For this reason, fifth graders were especially suited to visual scaffolding examples such as Word Walls, which could present the vocabulary in multimodal representations such as text, images, and contextual representations to support long term memory and comprehension of new vocabulary terms.

Also, the class embodied a balanced gender distribution and heterogeneity in levels of proficiency, which provided a realistic opportunity to assess whether the Word Wall strategy would be able to accommodate differing learner needs as guided by the inclusive aims of Indonesia's Kurikulum Merdeka.

### 2.2 Research Procedure

The research process took the conventional action research cycle of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting (Ita Rustiati Ridwan et al., 2023). In order to be systematic, the process developed in a sequence of three stages :

1. Pre-Intervention Phase
  - a) A 30-item vocabulary pre-test examined students' pre-intervention knowledge. The assessment looked at terms under the themes of the "school," "nature," and "daily routines," and corresponding with the curriculum in fifth grade (Cameron, 2001; Graves, 2016).
  - b) Classroom observations examined teacher methods, characterized by a teaching-centered, textbook-driven, and low-level visual input. Observations indicated low student engagement, little vocabulary use,

and high dependency on teacher explanation (F. Handayani, 2017).

- c) Results indicated that students recognized an average of only 11 of 30 target words which confirmed our decision for more interactive, visual, and student-centered approach (Hibatullah, 2019).

## 2. Intervention Phase

- a) In six continuous weeks, 30 target words were gradually introduced using the Word Wall strategy. Each word was presented with visuals, simple definitions, and example sentences to help clarify meaning and use (S. R. Kusumaningrum et al., 2020).
- b) The students contributed to the Word Wall, where students grouped words, added drawings, and composed sample sentences. The learning tasks allowed engagement with words through games, narrative stories, group discussions, and sentences to create a vocabulary learning experience that included collaboration, creativity and oral practice (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Vygotsky, 1978).
- c) The intervention allowed students to choose words freely, allowing them to use the words autonomously; it allowed for peer learning as students worked in groups and collectively solved problems.

## 3. Post-Intervention Phase

- a) A post-test measured quantitative changes in vocabulary knowledge, while semi-structured interviews and small group discussions examined students' emotional reactions, self-efficacy, and perceptions of the Word Wall strategy.
- b) Teachers also provided feedback regarding practical instructional applications, student motivation, and observable behavioural changes.

### 2.3 Data Collection Techniques

In order to achieve methodological triangulation (Miles et al., 2014), we used three different, yet complementary, data collection techniques:

- a) Participatory observations: Conducted throughout the intervention with structured checklists and field notes to document engagement indicators, such as reading aloud, vocabulary card construction, and participation in games (Ummah, 2019).
- b) Semi-structured Interviews: Ten students were randomly selected to interview about factors such as memory retention findings, motivation, anxiety reduction, and enjoyment (Puspitasari & Cahyono, 2018).
- c) Vocabulary Tests: Pre and post-tests measured receptive (recognition) and productive (usage) vocabulary knowledge through multiple choice, match, and sentence completion formats (Cameron, 2001).

The combined evidence offers not only quantitative metrics of learning gains, but also qualitative evidence of learner attitudes, motivation, and engagement.

### 2.4 Data Analysis

The data analysis process adhered to Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña's (2014) interactive model, which consisted of:

- a) Data Reduction - coding the notes from the observations, interview transcripts, and test scores to derive patterns, including "student autonomy," "peer collaboration," and "vocabulary retention."
- b) Data Display - displaying the findings in various forms, such as tables, charts, and matrices which compared pre- and post-test score results, engagement levels, and qualitative themes.
- c) Conclusion Drawing and Verification - triangulating the data from various sources to see the patterns and member checking (manual validation) by the teacher and students (R. Wardani et al., 2023).

Descriptive statistics are presented in the forms of mean scores and percentages to support interpretive comments, so that any learning gains can be shown numerically, while still using the qualitative data.

### 2.5 Validity and Trustworthiness

- a) In order to ensure credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability (Widiati, Rohmah, et al., 2018) there are several strategies that were utilized.
- b) Triangulation was used for the observation, interviews and tests results to eliminate biasness and to provide reliability.
- c) Member Checking presented the teachers and the students with preliminary findings to validate their accuracy.
- d) Prolong engagement of six weeks allowed the researcher to build rapport and also record changes of behaviours; from one point in time to another (Renandya, Hamied, & Sukyadi, 2018).
- e) Audit Trails documented the decisions of coding, the steps of the analysis and the choice of method to be transparent (R. Mahaputri & Nizar, 2025).
- f) Descriptive Statistics provided measurable evidence to support qualitative depiction. For example, the

mean improvement from 11 the words per student, improved to 23–26 words and so on.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this research study indicate that the Word Wall strategy had a positive effect on fifth-grade students' vocabulary mastery at SDN Paji. This was supported by data collected from participatory classroom observation, pre- and post-vocabulary tests, and semi-structured interviews of the students. These forms of instruments were analyzed using a qualitative thematic analysis with methodological triangulation to add credibility and validity to the results (Graves, 2016; S. R. Kusumaningrum et al., 2020; Miles et al., 2014)

Methodological triangulation allowed for a rich and multifaceted account of how the Word Wall had an impact on students' learning. The pre- and post-test scores provided a measure of vocabulary, while the classroom observations and student interviews captured behavioral changes and learners' engagement and motivation (for example, L. Handayani, 2017; Willy A. Renandya et al., 2018). This also illustrates the qualitative descriptive paradigm with learning as a whole in authentic situated contexts (R. Mahaputri & Nizar, 2025; R. Wardani et al., 2023).

The initial pre-test demonstrated that students had a low level of vocabulary knowledge with an average of 11 out of 30 words correct. The low average findings were unsurprising as this is reflective of trends seen in EFL classrooms across Indonesia, where language learners are given limited exposure to a variety of resources, the knowledge of words, limited time for engagement, and teacher-centred learning, which can limit the acquisition of new vocabulary (A. Daud, 2024; Songbatumis, 2017; Widiati, Suryati, et al., 2018).

In the following six-week Word Wall exercise, there was a significant increase in vocabulary mastery from students in both recognition and usage. According to the pre-test at the beginning of the study, the average recognition was 11 out of 30 target words; however, in the post-test, recognition scores increased to 23-26 words, showing significant improvements in not only recognition but also use.

In the observations and interviews, students indicated they enjoyed learning more, they reported actively engaging and participating in the written and spoken activities, and they felt that by reducing their anxiety while making their learning enjoyable they increased their participation; the highest increase in vocabulary was reported by students who participated actively when using the Word Wall.

Overall, the Word Wall helped focus students' memory, motivation, and learner autonomy as well as demonstrate best practices for vocabulary learning and useful capabilities for educators. The table below provides a clear overview of the pre- and post-test scores.

**Table 1. Pre- and Post-Test Vocabulary Scores**

Measure	Pre-Test (Mean ± SD)	Post-Test (Mean ± SD)	Improvement (%)
Words correctly identified	11 ± 3	24 ± 2	+118%
Words are correctly used in context	8 ± 2	22 ± 3	+175%

*Note: Post-test results indicate significant gains in both recognition and usage of target vocabulary.*

**Figure 1. Vocabulary Gains Before and After Word Wall Intervention**

	Pre-Test	Post-Test
Recognition	11	24
Usage	8	22

Moreover, the classroom observations were the students' willingness to boost their confidence through English usage. Most students started their conversations with the words from the Word Wall. The visual support acted as a way of dealing with anxiety, and recall during speaking tasks using target vocabulary can reduce anxiety (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Vygotsky, 1978; A. K. Wardani & Prasetyo, 2023). Together, these findings suggest that the strategy enhanced not only memory but also affective and communicative skills.

Your findings are consistent with earlier Indonesian studies that examine students' vocabulary mastery gain after Word Wall intervention, yet they further extend those dimensions by looking at affective and communicative dimensions. In Using Word Wall to Improve EFL Students' Vocabulary Achievement, by Kumalaey, and published in Banyuwangi, Indonesia, the junior high school students, with the Word Wall intervention, showed increases in test scores (meaning that students had a vocabulary mastery gain), but the results also indicated that the students spent more time engaging in vocabulary-related learning in the lessons. In Supercharging Vocabulary: A Word Wall

Intervention, this time with Gilang Shahlah, the results showed students scored significantly higher on tests, but student perceptions toward word walls and vocabulary activities were positive. Both studies reported that students' recording vocabulary increases and learning a few specific numbers about how many words they learned, how much their test scores increased, and how students reported positive attitudes toward the overall vocabulary tasks. Your study also confirms those quantitative data gains, along the lines of recognizing about 11 words on the pre-test, and providing evidence that students could reference and recognize, and use 23–26 words on the post-test. However, your study further expands to look at magnitudes of confidence in speaking, in pronunciation, in spelling, and in using vocabulary contextually, areas that prior studies either superficially discussed or did not include or consider at all.

The divergence and new insight in your findings is in the reveal of the mediating roles of active participation and the affective domain in vocabulary acquisition. Previous research - notably the Effect of Using Word Wall Media in Teaching Vocabulary (MTs DDI Lonja Sigi) and Word Wall vs. Crossword Puzzle (SD Mangkunegara) - demonstrated clearly, as others have shown, that Word Wall increases the recognition and retention of vocabulary. However, they did not grapple with how learners responded affectively, including anxiety or how learners' autonomy, motivation, and confidence developed in relation to the Word Wall. In contrast, your observation data (students began English In conversations using new vocabulary from the Word Wall, anxiety was lessened due to visual cues). and interviews (things like "it stays in my head," or "I like it because I can draw it myself and write new words") show that learners did more than remember; they were empowered, more willing to speak, along with their ability to apply the meaning or new words into a context. That gives credence to theoretical claims made by theorists like Deci & Ryan (self-determination theory) and the social learning theories of Vygotsky, that affective and social considerations complicate language acquisition beyond just cognitive or memorization aspects.

Lastly, your study provides contributions in developmental and pedagogical theory, situated in primary education, that were not examined as fully in previous research. Drawing in part on Piaget's concrete operational stage, you consider Word Wall strategies to be highly beneficial for young learners who are thinking concretely but beginning to think abstractly; this helps to explain both why visual strategies, visually interactive and manipulable vocabulary supports (eg. drawing, making cards, seeing words every day) are so effective at improving not just recall but also articulation, spelling and use. In Indonesia, previous studies focused largely on older students (junior high, MTs), though some studies included younger students, often with less focus on developmental cognitive theory or detailed qualitative data relating to communicative competence (Sofeny & Irmayani, 2023; Sari et al., 2024).

Further, by triangulating quantitative pre- and post-tests, classroom observations and student interviews, you present a fuller, multi-sided perspective to who benefits; for example those who were low scorers but highly engaged, the interplay between motivation and performance, and a demonstration that the Word Wall not only enhances students' ability to recognize or recall but their productive ability ranged from the meaningful but mundane to the highly imaginative. These additions may point the way forward for future educators in creating Word Wall interventions that engage and focus on exposure and use, social environment, and attention to students' feelings as a source of vocabulary learning growth.

Qualitatively, vocabulary learning was also beyond word recall - students displayed knowledge of spelling, pronunciation, and contextual usage, as components of communicative competence (Cameron, 2001; Thornbury, 2002; Widiati, Suryati, et al., 2018; Widiati & al., 2018b)The Word Wall served as a memory tool and as a means of developing knowledge of vocabulary, and was especially useful for primary students still in the concrete operational stage of development (E. Fitriani, 2020; I. Mahaputri & Nizar, 2025; Piaget, 1952).

### **3.1 Students' Active Involvement in Learning**

The most notable result of the study was the increase in student engagement during the intervention. Students were involved not simply as recipients of learning but as partners and producers of their vocabulary learning (A. Fitriani, 2020; Graves, 2016). The gathered observations and interviews demonstrated a high level of enthusiasm from students when reading aloud, applying vocabulary cards, drawing representations for words, and writing sentences as examples. Students began interacting with the Word Wall at times outside of structured lessons. Some students would engage with this resource during recess or spontaneous breaks while transforming it into a platform for students to quiz or engage with one another. This spontaneous engagement demonstrates the Word Wall as both a tool for learning and one for student-interaction with one another (S. R. Kusumaningrum et al., 2020; Vygotsky, 1978). Different kinds of learners reported different benefits as well: visual learners liked how warm and colorful the cards were, kinesthetic learners showed evidence of enjoyment in cutting their materials and putting things together, and verbal learners favored speaking, and storytelling opportunities (Renandya, Widodo, & Richards, 2018; Warni et al., 2018).

Importantly, students would often take charge (bringing in cards from home, illustrating their own visual images, or introducing new vocabulary words from songs or books). This emergent autonomy illustrates constructivist ideals, where students assume responsibility for knowledge creation (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Vygotsky, 1978; A. K. Wardani & Prasetyo, 2023). The approach also enabled cooperative learning situations. Students worked in groups to discuss

meanings, create sentences, or arrange vocabulary thematically—building language skills in addition to cooperation, empathy, and critical thinking skills (R. Angraeni & Yusuf, 2022; A. K. Wardani & Prasetyo, 2023).

Teachers observed improved classroom discipline while conducting Word Wall activities. Students demonstrated greater learning engagement by being more focused on the task and a little less challenging, which is likely due to the novelty of the strategy and the fun interactive element (L. Handayani, 2017; S. Kusumaningrum et al., 2020). Additionally, having their words publicly displayed on the wall allowed students to show some pride and encouraged further motivation. Interview data suggested that when asked, students liked the activities and found them to be meaningful. As one student said, “I like that my word and my drawing is on the wall, it makes me happy, and it makes me want to learn more.”

### **3.2 Promoting Learning Independence and Motivation**

The Word Wall implementation in the bilingual classroom at SDN Paji not only enhanced students' vocabulary and classroom participation but also enhanced student learning autonomy and intrinsic motivation. Even in only six weeks, Students exhibited learning autonomy by actively contributing new words to the Word Wall without the teacher's prompting. Quite a few students created their own illustrated word cards at home and proudly brought them to class, which reflected a sense of ownership and learner identity (E. Fitriani, 2020; Graves, 2016; S. R. Kusumaningrum et al., 2020).

Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985) identifies intrinsic motivation as thriving when students feel competent, autonomous, and connected. The Word Wall was able to support students' perceptions of competence with the more words they learned, autonomy by voluntarily contributing words, and connectedness from their shared participation in the classroom (Hibatullah, 2019; A. K. Wardani & Prasetyo, 2023).

The students also began to show metacognitive awareness. The results of the interviews showed that some students had developed specific strategies for 'internalising' vocabulary, such as making associations, relating English words to a word in their native language, or using rhymes. These independent learning methods showed that the students were progressing towards greater learner autonomy and reflection (Alqahtani, 2015; Renandya, Hamied, & Nurkamto, 2018), with many students, outside of the classroom, keeping personal vocabulary notebooks, creating sentences at home, and even teaching their new words to younger siblings, which was indicative of an emerging independent learning culture (Dwiningrum et al., 2024; L. Handayani, 2017).

The Word Wall also played an important role in reducing students' anxiety level and increasing confidence when speaking and writing. It acted as an implicit agreement that they were allowed to use the words on the wall as visible assistance, especially with students who were already shy or reluctant to participate (Cameron, 2001; Songbatumis, 2017). The classroom teacher noted that the students had stronger abilities to focus and were self-motivated, indicating better teaching than collaborative learning activities.

### **3.3 Implementation Challenges**

The demonstration did have some drawbacks. One was the physical limitations of space; not every classroom had sufficient wall space to share a growing vocabulary card collection. In fact, at SDN Paji, the teacher had to rearrange classroom displays to make sure all students could see the words (Graves, 2016; L. Handayani, 2017).

Time was another challenge. The Word Wall needed to be updated regularly which required weekly time & effort to design cards, transfer content, and incorporate the content into lessons. Although within this study the researcher supported the teacher, in real-world contexts, teachers often struggle to keep strategies going sustainably due to lack of support (E. Fitriani, 2020; I. Mahaputri & Nizar, 2025).

Some students had never used interactive visual learning and were unsure about the process and slow to engage. Through consistent modelling and encouragement of using the method, these students were able to gradually adjust to using interactive visual learning (Vygotsky, 1978; A. K. Wardani & Prasetyo, 2023)

Material limitations were also an issue. There was little access to colorful papers, markers and laminating materials in this rural context. Nevertheless, both the teachers and students were resourceful and utilized the opportunity to recycle materials and away limitations by learning (D. Angraeni & Yusuf, 2022; Puspitasari & Cahyono, 2018).

Finally, sustainability is critical. If the implementation of the Word Wall was not updated regularly and incorporated into lessons, the impact would be non-existent. Also, ongoing training opportunities with staff and institutional support were vital factors in ensuring sustainability with the Word Wall model (I. Mahaputri & Nizar, 2025; Renandya, Hamied, & Nurkamto, 2018).

## CONCLUSION

Aligned with a descriptive qualitative study utilizing pre- and post-test, participatory observation, and interviews, we find that the Word Wall strategy enhances the vocabulary mastery for fifth-grade students in SDN Paji, along with student engagement, independence in vocabulary, and vocabulary retention. Students independently attained a session mean mastery level of 23-26 post-intervention to 11 average recognize pre intervention test. Not only did the group of students master more vocabulary post-intervention, but also developed more fluency, confidence and better ability in using contextual language. Engaging students to participate actively in the program by allowing them to draw their own illustrated word wall cards, talk, and learn new vocabulary words was motivational. All of these things symbolize the values that are embedded in the Pancasila Student Profile and the Merdeka Curriculum such as independence, cooperation, and critical thinking. When students offer their own words, sourced from their daily experiences, it reveals the advent of intrinsic motivation. The students improved their focused learning behavior and consequently their motivation was on the increase. Admittedly, there are restrictions, such as limited room for students, a minimum of materials, time limits, and being unfamiliar with this way of confronting language learning, it could be flexible and prioritized effectively despite these limitations backed by teacher collaboration and innovation. In conclusion, Word Wall is an effective and low-cost method to record in context in basic level EFL environments with limited learning and pedagogical resources. It allows a focus on language and rapport and promotes a culture of ownership and continued learning. Further research is suggested to deepen pedagogical value of the digital adaptation and it's sustained impact.

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