Exploring the Students' Voices on the Use of *Wordshake* and *Shusi Spell* Games to Teach English Vocabulary

Asfi Aniuranti[1], Arini Hidayah[2]
[1] *Universitas Nahdlatul Ulama Purwokerto, Indonesia*
[2] *Universitas Surakarta, Indonesia*

Corresponding Email: a.aniuranti@unupurwokerto.ac.id

Abstract. The vocabulary teaching process has been discussed widely, and the studies that are concerned with the strategies for teaching English vocabulary were explored by many researchers. However, research about students' voices is commonly neglected. This descriptive quantitative research aims to fill this gap by investigating students' perceptions of *Wordshake* and *Shusi Spell* games as tools for teaching English vocabulary. The two games were employed in Lexical Studies 1 class for seven meetings as ice-breaking activities. Then, the students (16 students) had to complete a closed questionnaire. The data were examined by finding out the percentage of every item in the questionnaire. The results showed two significant findings. Firstly, the students agreed that the games affected them positively. Secondly, the games influenced the teaching and learning process positively. In short, *Wordshake and Shusi Spell* got students' positive responses.

Keywords: *Students' Perception, English Vocabulary, Wordshake and Shusi Spell*

Introduction

English has some essential elements called vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. The first component is often considered as important yet problematic element. Vocabulary is a crucial element for mastering English skills (Dakhi & Fitria, 2019; Hikmah et al., 2022; Ledy et al., 2023; Wijayanti, 2020; Wulandari, 2021). Vocabulary helps someone to express their ideas in communicating with others (Al Adzillina & Hasanah, 2021; Wulandari, 2021). Laily & Febrianingrum (2023) explain that increasing one's vocabulary is the primary way to become more proficient in a language. Alqahtani (2015) mentions that Vocabulary awareness is commonly seen as a crucial technique for second-language learners since an insufficient vocabulary in a second language learning prevents successful communication. Wilkins in Thornbury (2002) argues that without grammar very little can be delivered, without vocabulary, nothing can be said. Thus, mastering English vocabulary effects positively to the process of communication.

The significance of vocabulary is undeniable. Unfortunately, vocabulary still becomes an issue for English learners. They still lack vocabulary although they have learned since they were in junior high school level or even primary school. Rohmatillah (2014) even points out that vocabulary learning is still a quite big issue for university students. Vocabulary has

been considered the students' biggest single source of problems (Meara in Alqahtani, 2015). Therefore, every English teacher has to employ effective strategies of teaching vocabulary.

One of the recommended ways of teaching vocabulary is using games. Ramadhaniarti (2016) argues that games must be the core of the foreign language teaching process, and they can be implemented in all teaching stages. Games bring a lot of merits to the teaching and learning process. Wulandari (2021) also argues that if the games are introduced well, they can be used as a way to motivate learners. In short, using games can bring a lot of benefits to the learners.

Nowadays, in the digital era, English teachers can access online games easily. For example, British Council through their web provides games called *Wordshake* and *Shusi Spell*. The first game, *Wordshake*, is a game providing 16 jumbled letters, then the students have 3 minutes to arrange words containing at least 3 letters as many as possible. The second game is called *Shusi Spell*. This game provides some moving letters, and the students need to arrange the words consisting of at least three letters.

In this study, the games were used as icebreakers in Lexical Studies 1 class, and the students were still in the second semester. Their English vocabulary was still in the beginning level. Ice-breaking activities are considered essential in every teaching and learning process. Implementing ice-breakers at the beginning of the class is assumed as an essential learning stage (Aniuranti, 2021; Aniuranti et al., 2021; Marneni et al., 2017; Yeganehpour & Takkaç, 2016). Before moving into the primary teaching phase, ice breaking is an activity that can be used to reduce students' anxiety and boredom in the classroom, making the teaching and learning process more enjoyable and conducive (Astuti et al., 2020). Hutasoit & Tambunan (2018) point out that icebreakers are a terrific way to begin a meeting and can also be used to defuse tension and provide the necessary pauses during demanding classes.

After implementing the two games as an icebreaker in seven meetings, the writers tried to find out what the students thought. Student perception is considered an important element in the EFL context. According to Hikmah et al., (2022), exploring students' opinions is very important in the EFL context. perception is a process that plays a critical part in the learning process as a stimulus that has an impact and provides experiences both directly and indirectly (Yusovi et al., 2023). According to Harianto (2021), perception is crucial because it shapes mental information, and prior knowledge—such as schemas—influences perception and ensuing learning. Kurniawan (2015) also states that perception is a very important psychological aspect because with perception we can know certain phenomena around us.

There is some relevant research to this study. The first study was conducted by Wulandari (2021). She explored the students' voices toward the implementation of games in teaching English vocabulary, but she didn't mention the names of the games. The results revealed positive responses from the students. The second research was conducted by Alhebshi & Halabi (2020). He focused on the teachers' and learners' voices toward vocabulary learning through the usage of digital based-games. The study showed positive opinions from both parties. The third study was conducted by Ramadhaniarti (2016). This research focused on the high school students' perception of the usage of the games to teach English vocabulary. This study revealed that the students gave positive feedback toward the games.

This investigation is distinct from earlier relevant examinations. Firstly, the games employed were different. This study used digital games called *Wordshake* and *Shusi Spell*. After searching on the internet, the researchers have not found any studies related to these games yet. Secondly, the subjects of this research were also different from the three previous studies. In short, this study aims to explore the students' perceptions toward the digital games called *Wordshake* and *Shusi Spell* in vocabulary teaching classes.

Theoretical Framework

English Vocabulary

Alqahtani (2015) argues that vocabulary is the total quantity of words needed to construct concepts and convey the speaker's meaning. According to Notion (2001), developing one's vocabulary is a crucial aspect of learning a foreign language and meets as a key building block for both spoken and written works. Additionally, he says that memorising vocabulary words is essential for developing all language skills whether learning English as a second language or as a foreign language. Thus, vocabulary is a collection of words used to construct thoughts and convey the speaker's meaning. Vocabulary is an important and valuable tool for communicating and learning. According to Cameron in Gushendra (2017), there are some elements of Vocabulary. They are as follows:

Pronunciation

One of the factors that greatly affect vocabulary is pronunciation. How a particular person pronounces the word of a language is known as pronunciation. To recognize the sound at the word's beginning and completion as well as its pattern of stress, students need to hear unfamiliar words in a foreign language.

Spelling

Students should be familiar with the letters and syllables that make up the word. Spelling is the practise of correctly piecing together words from individual letters or the way a word is spelt.

Grammar

Learning words can aid youngsters in learning grammar because words and grammatical phrases are related. This demonstrates that when we emphasise vocabulary, we are not neglecting grammar.

Meaning

Nation and Cameron in Gushendra (2017), argue that the amount of mental effort put out by the learner in determining the meaning of a new foreign language word influences how effectively the word is ingrained in memory. The more carefully the students consider the word and its meaning, the more probably it is that they will retain it.

Students' Perception

The study of students' perceptions or opinions is one of the studies commonly carried out in the field of research on English as a foreign language. Perception itself can be interpreted as an opinion or someone's thoughts on something. According to Slameto in Kurniawan (2015), perception is the process by which the human brain processes information that is stated to occur when a person is continually engaging with both his surroundings and himself. Meanwhile, Mulyana (2007) describes perception as an internal process that takes place inside an individual and enables them to select, arrange, and analyse environmental inputs. This process has an impact on their attitudes. Then, the cognitive dimension of perception was introduced by Eggen and Kauchak in Adediwura & Tayo (2007), who defined it as the process through which humans give meaning to their experiences. They indicated that processing continues with perception after people pay attention to specific stimuli in their sensory memories. Perception is defined as something related to someone's opinion or view (Unumeri, 2009). Simply put, perception is closely relevant to someone's opinion that there is something.

According to Walgito in Kurniawan (2015), there are three stages of perception that are processed in humans. They are as follows:

Stimulus

Perception arises because of the response to a stimulus. The first stage of a perception is the sensation or feeling that is perceived by the senses. The whole sensation that enters into one's five senses. The sensation will affect the stimulus.

Registration

The stimulus received will be transferred by the nerves to the human brain. In this process, humans will recognize the stimulus.

Interpretation

Stimulus that enters the human brain will be interpreted, constructed and given meaning through a complicated process.

Games for Teaching English

Games are one of the recommended ways to teach English vocabulary. Hadfield in Deesri (2002) argues that a game is an activity that has objectives, rules, and a sense of enjoyment. There are many advantages to using games to help attain educational goals. Constantinescu (2012) claims that the students can implement games to enhance their comprehension of spoken and written English. Playing games allows students to acquire vocabulary and grammar in a context while using proper spelling and pronunciation. Ramadhaniarti (2016) argues that even if the majority of teachers are unaware of the importance of games as a teaching tool, they have a significant role in language learning environments. Students always find learning to be pleasurable when they play games, which makes them more engaging than traditional classroom settings. The classroom games help the children learn the language while having a good time.

Constantinescu (2012) mentions several merits of using games in teaching process. They are games can enhance the students' motivation and willingness for self-improvement, games encourage the students to pay more attention in completing the exercises since games contain of challenge and competition, games can promote learners' skill to monitor, games have clear rules and purposes, games offer creative and dynamic ways to teach and practice, they also foster critical thinking, problem solving, and imagination, games can be tailored to meet the needs of students with varying levels of knowledge, games are simple to understand and use, can be incorporated into the teaching process quickly, a lot of available online games are free, games can give teachers and students immediate feedback, and games are more visible—sometimes both visual and auditory

Wordshake and Shusi Spell

Wordshake and *Shusi Spell* are two digital games provided by British Council. These games ask the students to arrange English words consist of at least three letters within three minutes. These games also provide music when the students play it. Here are the pictures of the games:

Figure 1.
Wordshake

Figure 2.
Shusi Spell

Material and Method

The study was descriptive quantitative research since the objective of this research was exploring students' perception on the use of games called *Wordshake* and *Shusi Spell*. According to Mohajan (2020), quantitative research uses exact, static numerical data that is evaluated mathematically, especially using statistics that answer questions about who, what, when, where, how much, how many, and how. According to Creswell (2011), a quantitative study is a distinct inquiry wherein the investigator chooses the subject of interest, develops targeted research questions, collects quantifiable data from participants, employs statistics to assess the data, and conducts the study in an impartial and neutral way.

There are two types of quantitative research namely experimental and non-experimental. This research belongs to non-experimental with descriptive method. The descriptive technique, according to Mohajan (2020), investigates a phenomenon that is happening at a certain location and time, and it is concerned with the circumstances, customs, setups, distinctions or linkages, held beliefs, and processes that are readily apparent. Sugiyono (2019) mentions that descriptive is type of quantitative study focusing on one or more independent variable, and in this form, the researcher will not compare or find out the correlation among variables.

The participants were 16 students of the second semester of English Language Education Study Program. The data were collected through closed questionnaire adapted from Wulandari (2021). There were nine items divided into two categories namely the effects of the games to the students and the effects of the games to the teaching and learning process. According to Sugiyono (2019), questionnaire is data collection technique conducted by giving some written questions to the respondents. Suwartono (2014) also explains that questionnaire is employed to (1) describe and (2) measure. As a description, the information from a questionnaire can be used to describe about identity, for example gender, age, education, occupation, income, and others. Meanwhile, the information for measuring can be employed to measure variables. Winarni (2018) explains that a questionnaire is a tool used to collect data given to respondents in the form of a list of questions.

The percentage of each item was then determined in order to analyse the data. Arikunto (2014) mention the following formula to calculate the percentage:

$$P = \frac{F}{N} \; x \; 100\%$$

P = Percentage
F = Number of the students choosing the item
N = Total number of the students

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Results and Discussion
Results

The closed-questioner delivered to the students showed two essential findings called the effect of the games for the students, and students' perception on the effects of the games for the teaching and learning process. Here are the detailed explanations:

Table 1.
The Effects of the Games for the Students

No	Item	SA	A	N	D	SD
1	Learning English vocabulary through *Wordshake* and *Sushi Spell* is fun.	50%	43.8%	6.2%		
2	I like learning English vocabulary through *Wordshake* and *Sushi Spell*.	31.3%	56.3%	12.4%		
3	Learning English vocabulary through *Wordshake* and *Sushi Spell* motivates me.	6.2%	81.3%	12.5%		
4	The usage of *Wordshake* and *Sushi Spell* is useful to add my vocabulary.	25%	56.3%	18.7%		
5	The usage of *Wordshake* and *Sushi Spell* is effective to learn vocabulary.	12.5%	75%	12.5%		
6	The usage of *Wordshake* and *Sushi Spell* reduces the learning anxiety.	12.5	56.3%	31.3%		

The result of the first item showed that most of the students had positive respond to the usage of the games. 50% of the students strongly agreed with the statement, and 43.8% agreed. It means the games employed were fun for the students. The next items also revealed positive responses from the students. Most of the students (56.3%) agreed that they liked learning English vocabulary through the games, and 81.3% of the students agreed that the games motivated them in learning English. In addition, the students agreed (56.3%) that the games were useful, and most of the students (75%) agreed that the games were effective. The sixth items showed that most of the students (56.3%) agreed that the games could reduce the learning anxiety.

Table 2.
Students' Perception on the Effects of The Games for the Teaching and Learning Process

No	Item	SA	A	N	D	SD
7	Learning English vocabulary through *Wordshake* and *Sushi Spell* creates enjoyable learning.	37.5%	50%	6.25%	6.25%	
8	Learning English vocabulary through *Wordshake* and *Sushi Spell* creates positive learning atmosphere.	18.8%	75%			
9	Learning English vocabulary through *Wordshake* and *Sushi Spell* creates interesting learning atmosphere.	18.8%	75%			

Based on the table above, most of the students had positive responses toward the use of the games in teaching and learning process. In the seventh item, 37.5% of the students strongly agree that the games created enjoyable learning process, and 50% agreed with that statement. In the eight items, most of the students (75%) agreed that the games

created positive learning atmosphere, and in the last item, most of the students (75%) agreed that the games created interesting learning atmosphere.

Discussion

The outcomes of the questionnaire showed that the students' perception tended to be positive toward the implementation of the games. Most of the students agreed that learning English vocabulary through the games was fun, and most of them also liked it. During the implementation of the games, the students were so enthusiastic. They tried hard to complete the games by proposing English words that can be arranged. According to Taghizadeh et al., (2017), games add a fun factor to the classroom and are a crucial part of the teaching and learning process. Games are also excellent for revision exercises that help students remember information in a fun, enjoyable way (Ramadhaniarti, 2016).

The next results showed that most of the students agreed that the games could reduce the learning anxiety and motivate them to learn more about English vocabulary. According to Ersöz (2000), learning games are extremely motivating in the teaching of foreign languages because they are entertaining and fascinating, can be used to practise all language skills, and can be used to practise many forms of communication. One of these benefits is that playing games encourages students to learn the language (Ramadhaniarti, 2016). A game can be one of the most effective motivational tools if it is introduced in the right way (Wulandari, 2021). The use of games in the classroom reduces tension and dread (Jassim & Dzakiria, 2019).

Most of the students also agreed that learning vocabulary through the games were effective and enhanced their English vocabulary. According to Deesri (2002), students study while they have fun. They pick up new vocabulary and learn how to pronounce and spell it. Students begin to grasp that if they want other people to understand them, they must say or pronounce the words correctly. Gozcu & Caganaga (2016) add that games help students learn vocabulary and grammatical structures in context by employing correct spelling and pronunciation. Digital games are an effective way to learn new words since they provide vocabulary lessons context and provide pleasure for the class (Jassim & Dzakiria, 2019).

The next finding was most of the students thought that learning English vocabulary through games influenced positively to the teaching and learning process. They responded that the teaching process became positive, enjoyable, and interesting. The display of the games which are colourful and have music may attract the students' attention and create more enjoyable and interesting atmosphere. In every meeting, the lecturer gave the chance to three students to be the operators and the others students propose the words that can be arrange. According to Wulandari (2021), games may be used to make lessons more engaging, fun, and effective—but teachers must think about which games are ideal for their pupils. Furthermore, games provide students a motivation to keep up their studies, encourage them to interact and communicate effectively, give them a context in which to utilise the language meaningfully, ease their anxiety, and allow them to study in an enjoyable and relaxed setting (Gozcu & Caganaga, 2016).

Conclusion

After implementing the games called *Wordshake* and *Shusi Spell* as ice breaking activities, the students of Lexical Studies 1 class gave positive feedback to the usage of those games. This study revealed two essential findings namely the students agreed that the games affected them positively, and the students agreed the games influenced the teaching and learning process positively. The students' perception tended to be positive since most of the students chose agreed and strongly agreed. Thus, digital games such as *Wordshake* and *Shusi Spell* received positive responses from the students can be employed as vocabulary teaching tools in EFL classes.

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