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Students' Perceptions on Wordup Application to Enhance English Vocabulary

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ABSTRACT

Background: Vocabulary mastery is a key challenge for junior high school students, as they often face difficulties in remembering and applying new words effectively.

Purpose: This study aims to explore students' perceptions of using the WordUp application to enhance English vocabulary learning.

Method: A qualitative case study design was applied with 11 junior high school students aged 14-15. Data were collected through open-ended questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, then analyzed thematically using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework. The instruments included ten descriptive questions and follow-up interviews conducted via online sessions. The purposive sampling technique was used with the criterion of active involvement in English learning.

Results and Discussion: The analysis revealed eight key themes. Students reported that WordUp supported vocabulary comprehension and retention through contextual examples, repetition, and pronunciation features. Interactive tools such as quizzes, daily words, and favorite lists increased engagement, while the app's design and gamification elements enhanced motivation. WordUp also contributed to students' confidence in applying vocabulary in academic tasks and informal communication. However, limitations were identified, including internet dependency and the absence of writing practice.

Conclusions and Implications: WordUp is perceived as an effective and flexible vocabulary learning tool that supports autonomous learning and student motivation. The findings highlight the importance of integrating mobile applications into formal and informal English instruction to strengthen vocabulary development.

Keywords:

Student Perception; Wordup; Vocabulary Learning;

ABSTRAK

Latar Belakang: Penguasaan kosakata merupakan tantangan utama bagi siswa SMP karena mereka sering mengalami kesulitan dalam mengingat dan menerapkan kosakata baru secara efektif.

Tujuan: Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi persepsi siswa terhadap penggunaan aplikasi WordUp dalam meningkatkan pembelajaran kosakata bahasa Inggris.

Metode: Penelitian ini menggunakan desain studi kasus kualitatif dengan melibatkan 11 siswa SMP berusia 14-15 tahun. Data dikumpulkan melalui kuesioner terbuka dan wawancara semi-terstruktur, kemudian dianalisis secara tematik menggunakan kerangka enam fase Braun dan Clarke (2006). Instrumen penelitian meliputi sepuluh

pertanyaan deskriptif dan wawancara lanjutan yang dilakukan secara daring. Teknik pengambilan sampel menggunakan purposive sampling dengan kriteria keterlibatan aktif dalam pembelajaran bahasa Inggris.

Hasil dan Pembahasan: Analisis menghasilkan delapan tema utama. Siswa melaporkan bahwa WordUp mendukung pemahaman dan retensi kosakata melalui contoh kontekstual, pengulangan, dan fitur pelafalan. Alat interaktif seperti kuis, kata harian, dan daftar favorit meningkatkan keterlibatan, sementara desain dan elemen gamifikasi aplikasi meningkatkan motivasi. WordUp juga berkontribusi terhadap kepercayaan diri siswa dalam menerapkan kosakata pada tugas akademik dan komunikasi informal. Namun, ditemukan keterbatasan seperti ketergantungan pada internet dan tidak adanya fitur latihan menulis.

Kesimpulan dan Implikasi: WordUp dipersepsikan sebagai alat pembelajaran kosakata yang efektif dan fleksibel yang mendukung kemandirian belajar dan motivasi siswa. Temuan ini menekankan pentingnya integrasi aplikasi mobile dalam pembelajaran bahasa Inggris formal dan informal untuk memperkuat penguasaan kosakata.

Kata Kunci

persepsi siswa, WordUp, pembelajaran kosa kata



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INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary mastery is a fundamental component of English language acquisition, serving as the foundation for developing the four key skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Without sufficient vocabulary knowledge, students are unable to comprehend texts, express ideas, and engage effectively in communication.[1], [2] Vocabulary knowledge is consistently identified as one of the strongest predictors of overall language proficiency, directly influencing learners' success in all language domains.[3]

Despite its recognized importance, vocabulary learning continues to pose significant challenges for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners worldwide. Research highlights persistent problems such as the difficulty of retaining new words, limited exposure to authentic contexts, and the monotonous nature of traditional memorization techniques.[4], [5] Learners often report boredom and low motivation when vocabulary is taught through rote memorization without meaningful engagement, leading to poor long-term retention.[6]

These challenges are particularly evident in Indonesia, where English is taught as a compulsory subject in junior high schools (SMP). National reports indicate that Indonesian junior high school students often exhibit limited vocabulary knowledge, which hampers their reading comprehension and writing abilities.[7] Classroom observations further show that English instruction at this level tends to emphasize grammar drills and translation-based methods, with little focus on interactive or contextual vocabulary learning.[8] As a result, students frequently lack the lexical resources necessary to engage with more complex English texts as they progress through the curriculum.

The problem is exacerbated by low exposure to English outside the classroom and the dominance of teacher-centered approaches. Studies by Astuti[9] and Putri[10] revealed that students experience low motivation and weak retention when vocabulary learning relies solely on memorization techniques. This pedagogical limitation underscores the urgent need for innovative

approaches that can enhance students' vocabulary mastery in a way that is both engaging and sustainable.

One promising solution is the use of digital learning applications. Educational technology has transformed language learning by providing access to multimedia-rich, interactive, and personalized learning experiences.[4] Mobile applications, in particular, offer flexibility for students to learn anytime and anywhere, integrating learning into daily routines.[11] WordUp, a vocabulary learning application powered by artificial intelligence (AI), exemplifies this potential. It delivers context-based vocabulary input through authentic materials such as movie clips, real-life sentences, and spaced repetition techniques.

Empirical studies have demonstrated WordUp's effectiveness in improving learners' vocabulary knowledge. For example, Melati et al.[12] found that students who used WordUp in collaborative learning settings achieved significantly higher vocabulary test scores compared to those using conventional methods. Similarly, Riki [13] reported that WordUp users outperformed control groups in vocabulary post-tests, while Topal [14] highlighted its ability to enhance learner motivation through engaging visual input.

However, most of these studies have several limitations. They primarily measure vocabulary improvement through test scores and focus on senior high school or university students in various contexts.[15] Few studies have examined learners' subjective experiences with WordUp, particularly at the junior high school level. In Indonesia, research addressing how younger learners perceive AI-based vocabulary applications remains scarce.[16] This lack of investigation represents a critical gap in the literature: while WordUp's effectiveness in improving test performance is well documented, little is known about its impact on students' motivation, engagement, and perceived usefulness in early stages of language learning.

Addressing this gap is crucial because understanding students' perceptions can inform the effective integration of digital tools into EFL classrooms. As Arifa et al. argue, incorporating learners' feedback is essential to designing technology-enhanced learning environments that meet students' needs and promote sustainable learning practices.

Therefore, this study aims to explore junior high school students' perceptions of using the WordUp application to support their English vocabulary learning. Specifically, it investigates how students perceive WordUp's features, usability, and contribution to their vocabulary development. By focusing on learners' experiences in the Indonesian context, this study seeks to contribute to the growing body of research on AI-assisted language learning and provide pedagogical insights for integrating digital tools into junior high school English instruction.

This study was guided by the following research question: How do junior high school students perceive the use of the WordUp application in enhancing their English vocabulary mastery? In line with this, the study aims to describe students' perceptions regarding the use of the WordUp application to improve their vocabulary mastery in English.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Vocabulary Learning in Foreign Language Education

Vocabulary is a core component of foreign language learning because it directly supports the development of communicative competence. Without adequate vocabulary knowledge, learners cannot effectively understand or produce language in meaningful contexts.[2] In foreign language education, vocabulary is often considered the building block of all four language skills listening, speaking, reading, and writing.[17], [18] However, teaching and learning vocabulary in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) settings presents persistent challenges. These challenges include students' difficulty in retaining new words, limited exposure to authentic input, and a tendency

toward rote memorization rather than meaningful engagement.[9] In the Indonesian EFL context, these problems are exacerbated by teacher-centered instruction and low exposure to English outside the classroom.[19]

Conceptual Definitions and Theoretical Support

The main construct of this study is vocabulary mastery, which refers to learners' ability to understand, recall, and appropriately use words in various contexts.[20] This study is theoretically supported by Nation's (2001) framework of vocabulary learning, which emphasizes the importance of form, meaning, and use in vocabulary acquisition.[21] Additionally, Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985) underpins the role of learner motivation in language learning, suggesting that intrinsic motivation fueled by engaging and autonomous learning environments is key to successful vocabulary retention.[6]

Digital Tools for Vocabulary Learning

Technological advancements have transformed vocabulary learning by providing interactive, multimedia, and context-rich environments.[22] Research indicates that mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) enhances vocabulary acquisition by enabling students to access authentic materials and practice beyond the classroom.[1], [3] Features such as gamification, spaced repetition, and multimedia input have been shown to increase motivation and retention compared to traditional approaches.[2]

AI-Based Applications and WordUp

Artificial intelligence (AI)-based applications, such as WordUp, have gained attention for their ability to deliver personalized and context-based vocabulary learning. WordUp utilizes AI to curate vocabulary lists based on learners' proficiency levels and interests, supplemented with authentic examples from movies, articles, and real-life contexts. Empirical studies have demonstrated its effectiveness: Melati et al.[23] found that students using WordUp achieved higher vocabulary test scores compared to those using conventional methods. Riki [24] reported improved vocabulary mastery in EFL university students, while Topal [1] highlighted its motivational benefits through visual and contextual input.

Analysis of Previous Studies and Research Gap

Although the literature supports the use of digital tools like WordUp, most existing research focuses on quantitative outcomes (e.g., test scores) and involves older learners at the secondary or tertiary level.[10] Few studies have explored younger learners' subjective experiences, particularly in the Indonesian junior high school context. As noted by Arifa et al.[25] research on students' perceptions of AI-based vocabulary learning tools in Indonesia remains limited. This gap highlights the need to understand how junior high school students perceive and experience WordUp, which may provide valuable insights for integrating AI-driven applications into EFL classrooms.[26]

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative single-case study design to explore junior high school students' perceptions of using the WordUp application to enhance their English vocabulary. A single-case study focusing on one group of students from a single school was considered appropriate as it enabled an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon within its real-life context, particularly in a setting where exposure to English outside the classroom was limited.[27] The study was conducted at SMPN X, a public junior high school in Medan, Indonesia. The population consisted of 48 eighth-grade students enrolled in the 2024/2025 academic year, from which 11 students (aged 14–15) were selected through purposive sampling. The inclusion criteria required students to have achieved a minimum score of 80 in English, maintained at least 90% attendance

in English classes, actively participated in classroom discussions, and had used the WordUp application for a minimum of four weeks prior to data collection.[8], [12]

Data were collected using two primary instruments: an open-ended questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. The questionnaire consisted of ten descriptive questions designed by the researcher, adapted from previous studies on technology-enhanced vocabulary learning [3], [4], and validated by two experts in English education.[7] A pilot test was conducted with five students outside the main sample to ensure clarity and reliability. The questionnaire was administered first through a 30-minute online session via Zoom, which included an introduction, briefing on the questionnaire, completion time, and closing. Semi-structured interviews were then conducted individually with three students selected based on the depth of their questionnaire responses. Each interview lasted approximately 5–7 minutes, was audio-recorded with participants' consent, and aimed to obtain deeper insights into their perceptions of the WordUp.[28]

All data were analyzed using thematic analysis based on Braun and Clarke's six-phase framework[29], which involved familiarization, coding, theme development, review, definition, and reporting. The researcher acted as the primary facilitator and analyst while an independent peer reviewed the coding process to ensure consistency. Methodological triangulation was applied by comparing questionnaire and interview data, and member checking was conducted to confirm the accuracy of interpretations. These strategies strengthened the trustworthiness of the findings.[30]

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

This section presents the findings derived from the analysis of students' responses to both questionnaires and interviews, followed by a discussion informed by relevant literature. The analysis was conducted using Braun and Clarke (2006) thematic analysis framework, which identified eight key themes reflecting students' experiences and perceptions in using the WordUp application. The presentation of each theme combines direct excerpts from the participants in Indonesian with an interpretive discussion to provide a deeper understanding of how WordUp supports vocabulary learning among junior high school students.[31]

WordUP Facilitates Students' Comprehension and Retention of Vocabulary

Comprehension and retention of vocabulary are essential foundations in mastering English, especially for junior high school students who are still in the early stages of language development. In this context, many learners struggle to relate word meanings to real-life usage and often forget vocabulary shortly after learning it. WordUp provides a learning alternative that supports both aspects simultaneously: helping students understand word meanings more contextually and strengthening their memory through integrated and repeated exposure. The key lies not merely in the quantity of vocabulary presented, but in how it is delivered so that it becomes meaningful and easier for students to absorb.

Student 1: *"Lumayan membantu sih, karena aku bisa tahu makna kata dengan contoh kalimatnya juga."*

"It's quite helpful because I can understand the meaning of words through example sentences."

This quote illustrated how WordUp enhanced understanding by placing vocabulary within contextual examples. Seeing words used in real sentences helped students not just memorize definitions, but also understand practical usage. This process built deeper comprehension because students saw how words function in different situations, making the learning more meaningful.

Student 11: *"Sangat membantu! Nilai kosa kata aku juga naik."*

"It really helps! My vocabulary scores have improved too." [2]

This student's response showed that the app led to measurable academic improvement. The increase in vocabulary scores indicated strong retention of learned words. Repetition and interactive exposure within WordUp likely contributed to this progress, proving its effectiveness in helping students remember vocabulary for long-term use.

Student 6: *"Ya, aku lebih gampang ingat kalau belajar dari sini."*

"Yes, it's easier for me to remember when I learn from this app."

This quote emphasizes WordUp's strength in facilitating memory retention. The student finds learning through the app easier, likely due to its use of repetition, visuals, and context-based learning. When students engage with vocabulary repeatedly in meaningful ways, it supports stronger long-term recall.

Student 1: *"Saya jadi lebih gampang paham karena katanya dipakai dalam kalimat dan ada video. Kalau katanya sering muncul juga jadi lebih hafal." (interview)*

"I can understand the words more easily because they are used in sentences and there are videos. When the words appear frequently, I remember them better."

This statement illustrated a combined effect of context, multimedia, and repetition. By seeing words in sentences and videos, and encountering them often, students strengthened both their understanding and retention. The multimodal input visual, audio, contextual created richer mental associations, aiding memory.

Student 3: *"Saya bisa lebih hafal karena katanya sering diulang. Dan saya juga suka karena ada suara pelafalan." (interview)*

"I can remember the words better because they are repeated often. I also like the pronunciation audio."

This response highlighted the value of repetition and auditory features. Repeated exposure to words, supported by correct pronunciation audio, helped students process and store new vocabulary more efficiently. It also supported listening skills, making vocabulary learning more complete and long-lasting.

Based on the students' statements above, it is evident that WordUp supported them in two key areas: understanding the meaning of vocabulary and retaining it in memory. Comprehension is strengthened because words are introduced in sentence form rather than as isolated definitions. This allows students to observe how words are used in real contexts. Meanwhile, their retention improves because the words they learn reappear periodically, making the repetition process feel natural rather than monotonous. By seeing vocabulary in context and interacting with it repeatedly, students have a greater chance of internalizing the words into long-term memory. [32]

The Application's Interactive Features Enhance the Overall Engagement of the Learning Process

One of the main appeals of digital learning applications lies in their interactive features, which not only make the learning process more engaging but also enhance students' active participation. In the case of WordUp, engagement emerged through features such as word pronunciation, daily quizzes, favorite word lists, and regularly updated daily words. These features made the learning process more dynamic, as students are not merely passive recipients of information but are invited to interact directly with the content. When students have the opportunity to choose, save, and revisit words they are learning, they became more focused and motivated to continue. Thus, the interactive features of WordUp played a crucial role in creating a learning experience that is both enjoyable and meaningful.

Student 5: *"Fitur suara kata, jadi bisa tahu cara bacanya."*

"The word pronunciation feature helps me know how to pronounce the words."

This quote demonstrated how the pronunciation feature engaged students by allowing them to actively participate in learning correct pronunciation. Instead of just reading silently, students can listen and imitate, which made the learning more interactive and auditory-based. This feature enhanced engagement because it involves both visual and auditory senses, making the vocabulary learning experience more complete and responsive. Students are not only exposed to the written form but also to how the word should sound, which increased their motivation to practice.

Student 11: *"Fitur quiz dan kata-kata harian yang muncul terus."*

"The quiz feature and the daily words that keep appearing are helpful."

The mention of quizzes and daily words reflected how WordUp kept learners continuously engaged by presenting fresh and varied content. These features introduced a sense of routine and excitement, as students look forward to discovering new words each day and testing themselves. It shifted learning from a repetitive task into a dynamic and gamified experience. The quizzes also helped reinforce memory through interaction, while the daily words maintained consistency in vocabulary exposure, both of which contributed to active learning involvement.

Student 7 : *"Fitur favorite word, jadi bisa simpan kata."*

"The favorite word feature lets me save words."

This response highlighted a personalized learning feature that enhanced student engagement by giving them control over what they want to focus on. Saving favorite words allowed students to build their own vocabulary bank, which can be reviewed repeatedly. This sense of ownership made learning more meaningful and tailored to their needs. It also encouraged students to revisit the app frequently, knowing they have specific content stored for personal learning goals.

Student 2: *"Saya suka fitur daily word dan bisa simpan kata. Jadi saya bisa fokus ke kata yang belum tahu."* (interview)

"I like the daily word feature and being able to save words. That way I can focus on words I don't know yet."

Here, the student appreciated both the daily word update and the ability to save unfamiliar words. These tools gave students agency to identify their knowledge gaps and address them directly. They turned passive learning into a more strategic and interactive process, which boosted their engagement and sense of direction. When students focus on words they don't know, they felt more purposeful in learning, and WordUp supported this by letting them track and revisit those specific words.

Student 3 : *" Saya suka fitur suara dan pronunciation, karena itu membantu saya mengucapkan kata dengan benar."* (interview)

"I like the sound and pronunciation feature because it helps me pronounce the words correctly."

The student's feedback confirmed that interactive audio features do more than just improve pronunciation they also raised motivation. By being able to listen and repeat, learners became more active and confident. These interactive elements reduced anxiety around pronunciation mistakes and made the learning feel safer and more approachable. This sense of comfort increased the likelihood of frequent engagement with the app.

From the students' responses, it is evident that the interactive features in WordUp played an important role in increasing their engagement during the vocabulary learning process. The

pronunciation feature helped them practice correct pronunciation, while the quizzes and daily words provided a sense of routine that encouraged them to open the app regularly. Moreover, the ability to save favorite words enabled students to prioritize their learning based on personal needs. These features together created an active and personalized learning experience, where students are not only following the material but also shaping their own learning paths. This showed that interactive features are not merely add ons, but essential components in enhancing student motivation and engagement in vocabulary learning.

WordUp Contributes to the Development of Students' Confidence in Applying Vocabulary in Various Contexts

One of the key indicators of vocabulary learning success is when students are able to apply the words they have learned in real-life contexts. However, for many learners, the main challenge is not just understanding word meanings, but having the confidence to use them actively in different situations. In this regard, WordUp not only helped students comprehend and retain vocabulary but also built their confidence to apply it. By frequently seeing words in authentic sentences and hearing their pronunciation, students felt more assured that they understand how to use them correctly. This encouraged them to apply the vocabulary in school tasks, conversations, and even informal settings such as social media.

Student 8 : *"Iya, aku pakai waktu bikin tugas dialog."*

"Yes, I used it when doing a dialogue assignment."

This statement showed that the student has moved beyond just memorizing vocabulary and has started to apply it in a real academic task. The use of words from WordUp in a dialogue assignment suggested a sense of ownership over the vocabulary learned. This practical application helped reinforce both meaning and usage, which naturally built the student's confidence in using English. It also showed that the app supported classroom performance, encouraging students to actively try new words.

Student 3 : *"Lumayan, aku pernah pakai pas bikin caption IG pakai bahasa Inggris."*

"Quite helpful, I once used it when making an Instagram caption in English."

The student is applied vocabulary beyond the classroom, indicating a high level of confidence and comfort with using English in informal, public platforms. Creating captions in English required a certain assurance in word choice and grammar, which suggested that the student trusts their understanding of the words they learned from WordUp. This shift from passive learning to active production in a social context highlighted the app's role in boosting practical language use.

Student 1 : *"Iya, pernah pas disuruh buat kalimat sendiri di kelas, aku pakai kata yang aku lihat di WordUp."*

"Yes, once when we were asked to make our own sentences in class, I used a word I saw on WordUp."

Here, the student demonstrated the ability and confidence to retrieve vocabulary from the app and apply it independently in sentence construction. This reflected not just memory, but functional use of the language. Being able to use a new word without prompting showed internalization, and it also reflected a sense of readiness to use English actively. This supported the theme that WordUp built student confidence through consistent contextual exposure.

Student 3 : *"Pernah, waktu presentasi saya coba pakai kata baru dari WordUp dan guru saya mengapresiasi." (interview)*

"I tried using a new word from WordUp during a presentation, and my teacher appreciated it."

This quote highlighted a moment of confidence and risk-taking in a formal academic setting. Using a new word in a presentation showed that the student felt secure enough in their understanding to use it in front of others. Positive feedback from the teacher reinforced this confidence and validated the student's effort. WordUp's exposure to real contexts gave students that extra push to take language risks, which is a vital step in language development.

Student 1 : “*Pernah. Waktu pelajaran Bahasa Inggris saya pakai kata 'predict' yang saya pelajari dari WordUp. Guru saya bilang bagus.*” (interview)

“Yes, during an English lesson I used the word ‘predict’ which I learned from WordUp. My teacher said it was good.”

The student's use of the word "predict" during class and the teacher's praise demonstrated both learning success and increased confidence. Choosing an academic word and applying it correctly reflected deeper understanding and comfort with the vocabulary. The fact that the teacher noticed and praised the usage further reinforced motivation and willingness to apply more new words in future.

These statements showed that WordUp not only expanded students' vocabulary but also gave them the confidence to actively apply it in various situations. When students felt assured that they understand the meaning and usage of a word, they are more willing to use it in presentations, writing tasks, or informal communication. This confidence stemmed from WordUp's repeated and contextual learning experience, which made students feel equipped to speak or write in English. Thus, WordUp served as a bridge between passive learning and active language use, especially in supporting the development of students' self-confidence.

The visual aesthetics and user interface of Word Up serve as motivational factors that encourage students to engage in learning.

In digital learning, visual design and user interface (UI) are important aspects that often influence students' motivation and comfort when using an application. For junior high school students who are typically more responsive to engaging visuals, a modern, colorful, and user-friendly design can create a positive impression from the first use. WordUp presented a clean and visually appealing design that made students feel at ease and unburdened while studying. The combination of colors, icons, and simple navigation helped students stay focused on the material without being distracted by technical complexities. In this context, the app's appearance functions not only as an aesthetic element but also as a motivational factor that encouraged consistent engagement in learning.

Student 1 : “*Tampilan aplikasinya keren dan warna-warni, jadi aku semangat buka.*”

“The app looks cool and colorful, so I feel excited to open it.”

The student's excitement to open the app due to its visual appeal showed that aesthetic design can directly affect motivation. When students perceived an application as visually interesting, they are more likely to use it regularly. This quote illustrated that the bright colors and modern design of WordUp served as external stimuli that triggered students' willingness to learn. It proved that UI is not just about appearance, but also a psychological tool to increase engagement.

Student 3 : “*Desainnya modern dan nggak ngebosenin.*”

“The design is modern and not boring.”

The student emphasized how a modern, non-boring design helped sustain their attention during learning. An outdated or dull layout could caused disinterest, while WordUp's fresh and modern look maintained enthusiasm. This statement affirmed that thoughtful visual design

enhanced the learning experience by creating a positive emotional response and preventing disengagement.

Student 10 : “*Tampilan dan ikon sangat menarik.*”

“The layout and icons are very attractive.”

This comment revealed how even small UI elements like icons can influence user motivation. A clean layout with visually engaging icons helped make the app feel more interactive and less like a rigid academic tool. It reduced cognitive load and allowed users to focus more on the content, which indirectly increased motivation.

Student 7 : “*Tampilan enak dilihat, warna-warni.*”

“The display is nice to look at, colorful.”

The student's response underscored the impact of visual comfort on learning engagement. A colorful, pleasant interface could make users feel relaxed, reducing stress commonly associated with studying. When students felt at ease, they are more open to exploring content and spending more time with the app. WordUp's use of colors is therefore both aesthetic and functional.

Student 6 : “*Tampilan bikin betah lihat lama-lama.*”

“The look of the app makes me feel comfortable staying on it for a long time.”

This reflected a deeper engagement where students are not only motivated to open the app, but also willing to stay and learn for extended periods. The comfort provided by the interface helped build a habit of longer study sessions, contributing to sustained vocabulary improvement. It also showed that UI affected time-on-task, which is a key factor in successful digital learning.

Based on the students' responses, it can be concluded that WordUp's visual design acted as a motivational factor in the vocabulary learning process. The bright colors, appealing icons, and modern layout created a more inviting and positive learning atmosphere. When students felt comfortable with the app's appearance, they are more likely to be motivated to open and use it regularly. This indicated that visual elements not only enhanced aesthetics but also supported an enjoyable and sustained learning environment. Therefore, WordUp's user interface indirectly reinforced students' commitment to consistent self directed learning.

Word Up is integrated flexibly into students' daily activities, supporting continuous and self-directed learning.

One of the advantages of app-based learning technology is the flexibility of accessing material anytime and anywhere. For junior high school students, who have varied schedules and limited time, this flexibility is highly beneficial. WordUp allowed students to access vocabulary materials whenever they need whether during breaks, before bed, after study time, or while working on assignments. Without having to wait for classroom instruction or open a textbook, students can learn independently at their own pace. The integration of this app into daily routines showed that WordUp is not only used during formal study sessions but has become part of a continuous learning habit, supporting more autonomous and personalized learning.

Student 9 : “*Tiap malam sebelum tidur.*”

“Every night before bed.”

The student's statement suggested that WordUp is embedded into their daily bedtime routine, reflecting a habit of consistent vocabulary exposure. Using the app before sleep may enhanced memory consolidation, making learning more effective. This also proved that WordUp's flexibility allowed it to be accessed during personal downtime, reinforcing self-directed and stress-free learning.

Student 4 : “*Aku pakai pas lagi istirahat atau habis belajar.*”

“I use it during breaks or after studying.”

This quote highlighted how students can easily integrate WordUp into short intervals of free time. It supported the idea that effective learning doesn't always require long sessions, as consistent microlearning through short, repeated use is also beneficial. WordUp became a supportive tool that adjusted to each student's daily rhythm, reinforcing flexible and independent study habits.

Student 7 : “*Saat belajar bareng teman.*”

“When I study with friends.”

This response indicated that WordUp is not only used individually but can also supported collaborative learning. Its presence in group study sessions showed that the app enhanced vocabulary learning even in social settings, making learning more dynamic. It also reflected students' initiative to integrate the app into various types of learning environments, promoting peer-based motivation.

Student 8 : “*Saat ada tugas atau PR bahasa Inggris.*”

“When I have English homework or assignments.”

This quote showed that students considered WordUp as a reliable academic resource to assist them during homework. Its accessibility made it a practical supplement to classroom instruction. The ability to use it when needed empowered **students to take control of their learning** process, **which** aligns with the theme of self-directed and need-based learning.

Student 11 : “*Aku pakai sebelum ujian dan tiap malam.*”

“I use it before exams and every night.”

The student's routine use of WordUp before exams and at night suggested long-term commitment and strategic learning. This dual usage both for short-term test prep and long-term vocabulary building showed that WordUp supported continuous and goal-oriented study. It reflected that students trust the app's content and saw it as an integral part of their personal learning journey.

From these student responses, it is clear that WordUp has successfully become part of their daily study routines. The app is used not only in formal contexts like preparing for exams but also in casual moments such as before bedtime or while hanging out with friends. This indicated that WordUp is flexible and adaptable to each student's learning style. With easy access and unconstrained study times, students are encouraged to learn independently and continuously. Therefore, WordUp not only expanded learning beyond the classroom but also strengthened students' awareness of vocabulary learning as a habit rather than merely an obligation.

Students exhibit a preference for WordUp in comparison to conventional vocabulary learning methods due to its accessibility and interactivity.

Many students felt that conventional vocabulary learning methods such as memorizing word lists from textbooks or using dictionaries are often monotonous and boring. These approaches provided little context and rarely involved active student participation. As a result, motivation to learn vocabulary declined, and the learning process became unsustainable. In contrast, WordUp offered a more interactive, personalized, and accessible learning experience. With its appealing visuals and enjoyable features, the app created a feeling of learning through play. Students do not feel like they are being “forced to learn,” but rather that they are learning in a more natural and enjoyable way. This is a key reason why they tend to prefer WordUp over conventional methods.

Student 1 : *"Lebih menarik dari buku teks, soalnya ada gambar dan suara juga."*

"It's more interesting than textbooks because there are pictures and sounds."

The student highlighted how WordUp's multimedia elements enhanced interest compared to the static nature of textbooks. Visuals and audio made vocabulary learning more lively and engaging, reducing the feeling of boredom that often accompanied traditional learning. This shift from passive to multisensory learning is a key factor in why students preferred digital platforms like WordUp.

Student 3 : *"Lebih enak dari kamus, karena langsung ada penjelasan."*

"It's better than a dictionary because the explanations are provided directly."

The student compared WordUp favorably to dictionaries, emphasizing the ease of understanding due to direct explanations. Unlike dictionaries that often provided only definitions, WordUp added context and examples, which enhanced learning. This user friendly format reduced effort and frustration, making learning more accessible and efficient.

Student 8 : *"Lebih seru dan nggak bikin ngantuk."*

"It's more fun and doesn't make me sleepy."

This short but strong statement captured WordUp's ability to turn vocabulary learning into an enjoyable activity. Fun and engagement are key elements often missing in traditional approaches. When learning is enjoyable, students are more likely to continue using the app, creating a sustainable learning habit.

Student 2 : *"Lebih interaktif. Saya merasa kayak main game, bukan belajar. Jadi lebih semangat." (interview)*

"It's more interactive. I feel like I'm playing a game, not studying. So I feel more excited."

The student drew a comparison between WordUp and gaming, which suggested that gamification increased motivation. Feeling like they are playing, not studying, made students more relaxed and focused. This gamified approach provided immediate feedback, rewards, and a sense of achievement elements absent in conventional methods.

Student 1 : *"WordUp lebih menyenangkan dan interaktif. Kalau buku atau kamus kadang bosan. Di WordUp bisa dengar suara dan lihat video." (interview)*

"WordUp is more enjoyable and interactive. Books or dictionaries can be boring, but on WordUp I can hear sounds and watch videos."

This statement summarized the core advantage of WordUp its ability to provide an immersive experience through sound and video. Compared to the one dimensional experience of books and dictionaries, WordUp engaged multiple senses, keeping the learning process fresh. It also reflected the shift in learning preferences among modern students who are more responsive to audiovisual content.

The quotes above revealed a significant contrast between learning experiences with WordUp and with conventional methods. Students perceived WordUp as more interactive, visual, and easier to understand, which not only reduced boredom but also boosted their enthusiasm to learn. When learning felt like an enjoyable activity rather than a burdensome obligation, student motivation tended to increase. Instead of opening dictionaries or memorizing from books, students are more drawn to a digital, flexible, and multisensory approach. Therefore, WordUp successfully addressed the weaknesses of traditional methods and provided a learning experience that aligned better with the needs and learning styles of today's students.

Students recognize both the strengths and limitations of Word Up as a vocabulary learning tool.

Although WordUp offered many benefits in vocabulary learning, students also showed a critical attitude toward their experience using the app. They are able to identify major strengths, such as its appealing design, interactive features, and ease of use. On the other hand, they also acknowledged several technical limitations, such as the need for a stable internet connection, the lack of writing exercises, or occasional slow performance. This awareness of both strengths and weaknesses showed that students do not use WordUp passively, but are capable of actively evaluating their learning experience. Such awareness is important for developing healthy digital literacy in the context of modern education.

Student 2 : *"Kelebihannya praktis, kekurangannya harus pakai internet."*

"Its strength is that it's practical; the weakness is it needs internet."

The student acknowledged the dual nature of the app its practicality and dependence on internet access. This reflected their awareness of technological constraints, which is essential in evaluating educational tools. While appreciated the efficiency WordUp offered, they also critically noted the need for connectivity, showing balanced judgment.

Student 9 : *"Kelebihan: interaktif, Kekurangan: belum ada latihan tulis."*

"Strength: interactive. Weakness: there are no writing exercises yet."

The student's critique showed that they are aware of what's missing from the app in terms of comprehensive language development. While valuing its interactivity, they also noticed the lack of productive language skills like writing. This insight implied that students expected a well-rounded language tool, and their feedback is part of active digital literacy.

Student 11 : *"Kelebihannya banyak fitur bagus, kekurangannya kadang berat buka."*

"The strength is it has many great features; the weakness is that it's sometimes slow to load."

This comment recognized the richness of the app's features while also pointed out a usability issue. The student is not only focusing on what they like but also expressing a concern that affects their user experience. It suggested that technical performance is a crucial aspect in maintaining consistent use of educational apps.

Student 3 : *"Kelebihannya fiturnya lengkap dan menarik. Kekurangannya kadang internetnya lemot jadi lama buka. Mungkin kalau bisa offline lebih bagus." (interview)*

"The strength is that it has complete and interesting features. The weakness is when the internet is slow, it takes time to load. Maybe it would be better if it could be used offline."

The student not only identified a weakness but also provided a potential solution, showing proactive thinking. They recognized the app's strengths in content but suggested offline access to improve its practicality. This balanced and constructive critique reflected an analytical approach to learning technology.

Student 2 : *"Aplikasi ini bagus, tapi kalau sinyal jelek jadi lemot. Mungkin lebih ringan kalau bisa dipakai offline." (interview)*

"This app is good, but if the signal is weak, it becomes slow. Maybe it would be lighter if it could work offline."

The repetition of the same technical concern by another student strengthened the point about connectivity issues. It suggested that this limitation is commonly experienced and affected overall usability. Their suggestion for offline functionality indicated a deeper level of understanding of how digital tools can be optimized for learning.

The students' responses demonstrated their ability to assess the use of WordUp objectively. On one hand, they appreciated the app's quality in supporting vocabulary learning in a fun and efficient way. On the other hand, they are also open to the fact that technology doesn't always function perfectly and that there are areas needing improvement. This kind of evaluation reflected students' maturity in responding to the use of digital media for learning. With such understanding, students are not merely users of technology, but active learners who can critically evaluate their learning tools.

Students provide constructive feedback and propose enhancements to improve the effectiveness of Word Up.

Students' participation in giving feedback on the learning media they use is a sign of their active involvement in the learning process. In the context of WordUp, several students not only recognized its strengths and weaknesses but also offered suggestions they believed could enhance the app's effectiveness. These suggestions reflected students' needs for more varied learning activities, more personalized features, and language support that aligned better with their skill level. Input such as adding grammar exercises, games with point systems, peer leaderboards, and explanations in Indonesian showed that students hoped the app can be not only engaging but also increasingly adaptable to their learning styles and needs.

Student 11 : *"Bisa ditambah fitur latihan grammar juga."*

"They could add a grammar exercise feature too."

This suggestion indicated the student's desire for a more comprehensive learning experience that goes beyond vocabulary. By proposing grammar exercises, the student showed an understanding that language skills are interconnected. This feedback reflected not just user satisfaction, but also a thoughtful awareness of what is lacking and how the app can be improved.

Student 7 : *"Boleh tambah game atau kuis pakai poin."*

"It could include games or quizzes with points."

The student is suggesting gamification elements that could increased motivation and competitiveness. This aligned with modern educational trends that showed point based systems could boost learner engagement. Their input reflected an understanding that learning is more effective when it is both educational and enjoyable.

Student 5 : *"Kasih latihan per level supaya tahu perkembangan."*

"There should be level-based exercises so we can track progress."

This feedback showed a clear interest in tracking learning progress through levels, which encouraged long term goal setting. By asking for structured stages, the student wanted a clearer path of improvement. It reflected a learner centered mindset where progress and reflection are seen as essential to effective learning.

Student 2 : *"Bisa ditambah penjelasan dalam bahasa Indonesia juga."*

"They could add explanations in Indonesian too."

This suggestion revealed the student's need for better linguistic support to bridge understanding. Especially for beginners, having explanations in their native language helped reduce

confusion and built confidence. It showed that students are aware of their learning limitations and are seeking scaffolding strategies.

Student 10 : “*Mungkin bisa pakai leaderboard antar teman.*”

“Maybe they could add a leaderboard between friends.”

This feedback introduced the idea of social comparison and friendly competition as a motivational tool. A leaderboard could have made learning more dynamic and interactive, especially among peers. It showed that students are not only thinking about individual learning but also how social aspects could improve engagement.

These quotes reflected that students not only use WordUp as a learning tool but also felt a sense of ownership toward it. They showed enthusiasm in wanting the app to become better and more tailored to their needs. The suggestions given are highly relevant to the learning context of junior high school students, who needed visual, interactive support and clear guidance in a language they understand. This indicated that student involvement in evaluating educational media can be a valuable source for developing more effective and sustainable learning applications.

Discussion

Students perceived that WordUp helped them retain vocabulary more effectively through contextual examples, repetition, and pronunciation features. One student explained, “I can understand the words more easily because they are used in sentences and there are videos. When the words appear frequently, I remember them better” (Student 1). This perception is consistent with findings in [33], which reported that using WordUp in collaborative learning improved junior high school students' vocabulary scores. Unlike [1], however, the present study adds depth by showing how learners themselves described the process of remembering words, emphasizing that retention is strengthened when vocabulary is presented multimodally and repeatedly in meaningful contexts.

Students perceived that WordUp's interactive features, such as quizzes, daily words, and pronunciation tools, increased their engagement and motivation in learning vocabulary. As one student stated, “The quiz feature and the daily words that keep appearing are helpful” (Student 11). This reflects how learners viewed WordUp not only as a study tool but also as a game-like experience that sustained their interest. Such findings are consistent with [2], which reported that university students found WordUp interactive, authentic, and motivating. The present study strengthens this evidence by focusing on junior high school learners, showing that features like quizzes and daily vocabulary updates encouraged younger students to practice more consistently and enjoyably.

Students reported that WordUp increased their confidence in applying new vocabulary in both academic and informal contexts. For example, one student explained, “I tried using a new word from WordUp during a presentation, and my teacher appreciated it” (Student 3). This shows that learners were not only memorizing words but also actively using them in meaningful communication, which strengthened their self-assurance in speaking English. Similar findings were noted in [19], where university students felt more confident using vocabulary after engaging with WordUp in realistic contexts. The present study extends this by showing that junior high school students in Indonesia gained confidence at an earlier stage of language learning, both in classroom tasks and in everyday contexts.

Students perceived that WordUp's colorful and modern interface motivated them to use the app more frequently. As one student expressed, “The app looks cool and colorful, so I feel excited to open it” (Student 1). This shows that the aesthetic design of the platform directly influenced learners' willingness to engage with vocabulary learning. Such findings align with [23], which

emphasized that UI/UX design plays a crucial role in sustaining learners' engagement in digital platforms. Moreover, based on Mayer's Cognitive Affective Theory of Learning with Media, positive emotions triggered by appealing design can enhance motivation and attention, thereby reinforcing learning outcomes.[16]

Students reported that WordUp was easily integrated into their daily routines, supporting continuous and flexible vocabulary learning. For instance, one student shared, "Every night before bed" (Student 9), showing how the app became part of a personal habit. This indicates that WordUp allowed students to engage in microlearning during their own free time, whether before sleep, during breaks, or in group study sessions. Similar findings were reported in [34], where flexible mobile apps encouraged learning beyond formal lessons. Pedagogically, teachers could take advantage of this habit by encouraging students to use WordUp for short, daily practice, making vocabulary learning more consistent and sustainable both inside and outside the classroom.

Students reported that they preferred WordUp over traditional methods such as textbooks and dictionaries because it was more interactive and engaging. As one student explained, "It's more interactive. I feel like I'm playing a game, not studying. So I feel more excited" (Student 2). This perception shows how WordUp's gamified and audiovisual features transformed vocabulary learning from a monotonous activity into an enjoyable and motivating experience. Similar findings were noted in [35], where learners valued the interactive and offline features of digital apps compared to conventional approaches. The current study contributes by showing that even junior high school students in Indonesia felt motivated to learn vocabulary through gamification and multimedia support, which made them more consistent in practicing compared to when using books or dictionaries.

Students noted both the strengths and weaknesses of WordUp, reflecting their ability to critically evaluate the app. One student stated, "The strength is that it has complete and interesting features. The weakness is when the internet is slow, it takes time to load. Maybe it would be better if it could be used offline" (Student 3). Such feedback demonstrates that learners are not passive users but active evaluators who provide constructive input. This aligns with the principles of User-Centred Design (UCD), where user feedback is essential in improving digital learning tools. Similar observations were made in [36], which emphasized that students' critiques often lead to design improvements. The present study extends this idea by showing that even junior high school students are capable of offering practical suggestions, such as offline access or writing features, to enhance app usability and effectiveness.

Students suggested several ideas for further development of WordUp, highlighting their role as active contributors to the design process. One participant proposed, "It could include games or quizzes with points" (Student 7). This feedback illustrated the demand for gamification elements that can enhance motivation, competitiveness, and enjoyment in language learning. According to User-Centred Design (UCD), user-driven suggestions are essential to ensure that digital learning platforms align with learners' preferences and needs. Prior research [12] similarly demonstrated that incorporating gamification features, such as points and leaderboards, increased engagement and sustained usage. The present study adds to this by showing that junior high school students are not only consumers but also co-designers, expressing practical ideas like grammar practice, level-based exercises, and gamification features that can make the app more effective and appealing.[37]

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study explored junior high school students' perceptions of using the WordUp application for vocabulary learning. The findings showed that students viewed WordUp as an effective and engaging tool that strengthened their understanding and retention of vocabulary

through contextual and multimedia-based features. Interactive elements such as quizzes, pronunciation tools, and favorite word lists maintained motivation, while gamified points and badges made learning enjoyable. The application also fostered autonomous learning and improved students' confidence in using vocabulary in both spoken and written contexts, although challenges such as internet dependency and the absence of writing exercises were identified.[38], [39]

The implications of this study suggest that teachers can integrate WordUp as supplementary material to support classroom learning and encourage students to practice vocabulary independently. For application developers, improvements such as grammar exercises, explanations in Indonesian, and leaderboard features are recommended to better meet learner needs. At the policy level, schools may consider adopting WordUp as a digital support tool that complements the English curriculum and promotes digital literacy. Theoretically, this study contributes to mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) research by reinforcing the importance of learner-centered digital tools with contextual and gamified features in vocabulary acquisition.[40]

This study is limited by its small sample size and relatively short period of application use. Future research could involve larger participant groups, longer-term studies, or comparative analysis with other applications. Further investigations might also explore the integration of WordUp into formal classroom practice to evaluate its long-term impact on vocabulary development.[41]

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