CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Learning a foreign language can be discouraging for many students due to unfamiliar vocabulary`, grammar, pronunciation, and fear of making mistakes—especially speaking publicly creates a hurdle to building communicative competence (Ratminingsih, Santosa, and Ana, 2022). These challenges often weaken motivation and hinder learning outcomes. In recent years, however, research has increasingly focused on Foreign Language Enjoyment (henceforth FLE), a notion rooted in positive psychology that shifts these difficulties into opportunities for meaningful, enjoyable learning experiences. FLE is linked to positive emotional states such as curiosity, accomplishment, and social connection, which are shown to enhance students' engagement and language proficiency (Al-Dosari et al, 2022; Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Dewaele and MacIntyre, 2014; Dewaele et al., 2016; Li et al., 2021; MacIntyre and Gregersen, 2012; MacIntyre, Gregersen, and Mercer, 2012; Mercer et al., 2020; Saito et al., 2018; Yang, 2024; Zhao, 2023; Zhao and Yang, 2022).

Enjoyment in language learning is driven by intrinsic motivation, social interaction, classroom dynamics, and a sense of achievement. It brings not only a personal feeling but also a social and interactive process. Studies indicate that students who experience enjoyment tend to engage more actively, persist longer, and perform better in the target language (Inada, 2022). FLE, therefore, emphasizes the emotional and social dimensions of language learning, highlighting the importance of supportive learning environments, self-discovery, and collaborative experiences (Barkoukis et al., 2014;

Boonstra et al., 2021; Jang, Kim, and Reeve, 2016; Liu et al., 2021; Nguyen, Cannata, and Miller, 2018; Quin, 2017; Skinner, 2016; Zimmar-Gembeck, and Connel, 1998).

Aligned with this view, several researchers have emphasized the positive value of classroom dynamics in supporting emotional well-being and language development. It was found that supportive environments helped students to feel safe, motivated, and more willing to communicate, which led to better engagement and language outcomes (Guo et al., 2022; Zhang et al., 2024). Further, MacIntyre, Gregersen, and Mercer (2012) noted that a supportive classroom environment and interactive activities contribute to positive emotional experiences. Similarly, Mercer MacIntyre, Gregersen, and Talbot (2020) argued that students' enjoyment is increased when they feel competent, connected to others, and independent. These findings support the idea that positive emotions, enjoyment are not isolated feelings but are shaped by the environment, class activities, and social relationships in the classroom. Thus, to foster FLE, teachers need to create learning experiences that integrate challenge with support, allow for creativity, and encourage interaction.

One instructional approach that aligns closely with FLE is game-based learning (henceforth GBL). GBL integrates play, interaction, and purposeful challenges, making language learning more dynamic and emotionally engaging. It encourages students to become risk-takers, problem-solvers, and confident users of the target language (Prensky, 2001; Zarzycka-Piskorz, 2016). This transforms the classroom into a more dynamic, student-centered environment where students are active participants rather than passive recipients. In technology-enhanced contexts, this integration is positively believed to shift the learning experience of both teachers and students (Santosa, 2022;

Santosa et al., 2023). One accessible digital platform is Wordwall. It offers a range of interactive activities such as flashcards, speaking cards, open the box, and customizable games that promote speaking practice and engagement (Umairoh & Agustina, 2023; Ratminingsih et al., 2024; Santosa et al., 2024; Mahayanti et al., 2024). Its accessibility and adaptability make it suitable for students' varying capabilities and classroom needs and contribute to higher levels of enjoyment.

Although numerous research have highlighted the benefits of Wordwall in foreign language classrooms, much of this research has been conducted in primary and secondary education contexts (Umairoh & Agustina, 2023; Sugito & Widyantoro, 2017). These research reported that Wordwall helped students actively participate and enjoy language activities, with motivation driven by external factors such as grades and teacher expectations. However, in contrast tertiary-level students face distinct learning challenges and dynamics. They are expected to demonstrate greater independence and critical thinking in their studies while balancing academic demands with preparation for professional careers (Mercer et al., 2020). In the Indonesian context, this gap is particularly relevant to be seen as gap as many tertiary students still struggle with low speaking confidence and persistent foreign language anxiety. While Wordwall has shown potential internationally (Mazelin et al., 2022), empirical evidence in Indonesian higher education remains scarce. Cultural and educational factors such as classroom norms, technology access, and students perceptions may shape how tools function.

Given these considerations, it becomes evident that there is a need for research that examines not only implementation of Wordwall but also its effect on learning outcomes. Despite these promising results, most often miss detailed measurement of students'

engagement, FLE dimensions, and speaking proficiency outputs, especially in tertiary education settings. To address this gap, the present research investigates how Wordwall, as a game-based learning tool, supports FLE and affects students' engagement and speaking proficiency among students in the Global Workplace English Program (henceforth GWEP) at Horizon University Indonesia in Karawang, West Java. Combining theoretical insights from FLE and GBL with practical applications of Wordwall, the research seeks to provide empirical evidence on how game-based tools can create more emotionally engaging, socially supportive, and pedagogically effective language learning environments at the tertiary level.

1.2 Problems Identification

Aligned with the background outlined above, this research identifies several core problems as follows.

1. Foreign Language Enjoyment plays an important role as positive emotions that foster students' engagement and speaking proficiency. This assumes that if the students enjoy their language learning, they can be engaged and improve their proficiency, specifically their speaking.

2. Students need a tool that engages and motivates them in their language learning process. It itself is proposed as a strategy for teachers to gain measurable engagement and speaking proficiency of the present research.

3. The tool is expected to possess interactive, knowledgeable, and accessible resources for students. To some extent, it should also possess both fun and meaningful effects as the game-based learning focus.

4. Numerous research of FLE, GBL, Wordwall, students' engagement, and speaking proficiency, have been significantly conducted, yet limited in the context of Indonesian university students fully portraying measurable students' engagement and speaking proficiency as the effect of interactive tools that integrate meaningful game-based learning.

1.3 Research Limitation

The research limits the FLE of the second semester in Horizon University Indonesia' Global Workplace English Program class. The English class is designed to prepare the students for their career developments in the future. Therefore, students' engagement and their language proficiency, in particular speaking, are expected to be achieved in their language learning using Wordwall.

1.4 Research Questions

Given the importance of FLE in fostering positive students' outcomes and the promising role of game-based learning tools like Wordwall in enhancing engagement and speaking proficiency, the following research questions are formulated:

1. Is there any simultaneous significant effect of Wordwall on students' engagement and speaking proficiency?

2. Is there any significant effect of Wordwall on students' engagement?

3. Is there any significant effect of Wordwall on students' speaking proficiency?

1.5 Research Objectives

After formulating the research questions, it is specifically expected to obtain the research objectives as follows:

1. To analyze the simultaneous effect of Wordwall on students' engagement and speaking proficiency.

2. To investigate the effect of Wordwall on students' engagement.

3. To examine the effect of Wordwall on students' speaking proficiency.

1.6 Research Significance

1.6.1 Theoretical Significance

This research provides theoretical insights into the construct of FLE and its role in fostering engagement and language proficiency using interactive game-based tools. As emphasized by Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014), FLE represents a set of positive emotions that can enhance students' motivation and active participation in language acquisition. Thus, this research strengthens the understanding of FLE as a key factor that supports students' engagement and improves speaking proficiency in foreign language learning contexts.

1.6.2 Practical Significance

1. For EFL students

   This research is expected to help EFL students experience greater enjoyment in the language learning process. By promoting positive emotions, students may overcome common challenges such as anxiety, low confidence, and fear of making mistakes, particularly in speaking activities.

2. For English language classes

   The findings encourage the integration of Wordwall as a dynamic and engaging instructional tool in English language classrooms. Its use is expected to engage students more actively.

3. For future researchers

   This research aims to serve as a foundation for future researchers investigating

   FLE through various forms of interactive tools and its potential influences on

   learning language experiences.