



Fun Media in Lower Secondary EFL Classrooms: Addressing Students' Speaking Anxiety

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ABSTRACT

Speaking anxiety remains a major challenge in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, often causing young learners to experience severe hesitation and physical symptoms during classroom interactions. Therefore, this study aimed to explore how digital fun media are utilized to address students' psychological barriers and language anxiety during EFL speaking activities. Employing a qualitative descriptive research design, the study involved 32 grade VII D students at MTs Al-Maarif 1 Singosari within a single instructional session. Data were collected through observations and semi-structured interviews and analyzed using the interactive framework of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings suggest that the collective integration of Canva-based visual presentations and interactive Wordwall flashcards via classroom projectors was perceived by students as helpful in reducing nervousness, supporting vocabulary recall, and building confidence to read constructed sentences in front of the class. These exploratory findings indicate that game-based and visually stimulating media may contribute to lowering learners' affective filters, fostering a more supportive and low-pressure classroom experience. The study contributes to the field of English Language Teaching (ELT) methodologies as an exploratory qualitative inquiry, particularly offering practical insights into creative instructional design to alleviate language anxiety under institutional technological constraints.

Keywords: Affective filter; Canva; EFL speaking anxiety; Fun media; Wordwall

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INTRODUCTION

In the field of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), speaking is widely considered one of the most challenging skills for young learners, particularly due to the presence of EFL speaking anxiety. According to Abdullah et al. (2022), speaking anxiety often causes students to feel afraid of expressing their ideas orally, leading to silence, hesitation, avoidance of eye contact, and even physical symptoms such as trembling or cold sweats during classroom interaction (Khusnia, 2016). As a result, according to Maher & King (2022), students tend to lose focus, enjoy learning less, and frequently revert to their first

language because of psychological insecurity. This condition does not indicate a lack of intelligence, but also reflects a high affective filter that hinders students from confidently processing and producing English in classroom communication.

However, English instruction at the lower secondary level is still frequently dominated by teacher-centered methods and grammar-oriented activities, which provide limited opportunities for students to practice speaking in an enjoyable and supportive environment (Mohammad et al., 2025). Such learning conditions may further intensify speaking anxiety and reduce their motivation to communicate in English, as students are rarely given the space to express themselves without fear of judgment or correction. The absence of a low-pressure speaking environment not only restricts language production but also deepens the psychological barriers that prevent students from actively engaging in classroom communication.

Despite the recognized importance of low-pressure, interactive learning environments in alleviating speaking anxiety and psychological barriers, the use of fun media in technology-limited EFL classrooms remains underexplored – particularly in Islamic secondary school settings that enforce strict no-smartphone policies (Özdemir & Seçkin, 2025). To bridge this gap, English teachers at such institutions have begun incorporating fun media including songs, short videos, games, and interactive quizzes delivered through available classroom facilities such as LCD projectors and speakers. These media are believed to create an enjoyable and inclusive classroom atmosphere, encourage active participation, improve pronunciation, and gradually reduce students' speaking anxiety and psychological barriers toward oral English production.

This context is particularly evident at MTs Al-Maarif 1 Singosari, where a preliminary observation and interview revealed that students frequently exhibited signs of speaking anxiety and psychological barriers during English lessons. This institution implements a Love-Based Curriculum (KBC) that prioritizes students' emotional well-being, while simultaneously enforcing a strict no-smartphone policy, making collective media delivery via LCD projectors and speakers the primary technological resource available for interactive learning.

Despite the growing body of research on fun media in EFL classrooms, most existing studies have employed quantitative approaches that focus primarily on measurable outcomes such as test scores, vocabulary gains, and statistical improvements in speaking performance (Ramadhani et al., 2025). These studies, while valuable, tend to overlook students' lived experiences, emotional responses, and subjective perceptions – particularly regarding how fun media alleviates speaking anxiety and reduces psychological barriers. There is therefore a significant gap in qualitative inquiry that captures how students experience fun media as a tool for overcoming psychological barriers in EFL speaking. Moreover, the specific context of Islamic secondary schools with no-smartphone policies, where fun media are delivered exclusively through shared classroom technology, has received little scholarly attention.

To address this gap, the present study adopts a qualitative descriptive approach to explore students' in-depth experiences and psychological responses during fun media-based EFL speaking instruction at MTs Al-Maarif 1 Singosari. The study contributes to the existing literature by providing rich, context-sensitive evidence of how fun media functions as a tool for reducing speaking anxiety and overcoming psychological barriers in a technology-limited Islamic secondary school setting. Therefore, this study aims to examine how fun media are utilized to overcome students'

psychological barriers in EFL speaking at MTs Al-Maarif 1 Singosari. To achieve this aim, the study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. How are fun media utilized to reduce speaking anxiety and psychological barriers in EFL speaking at MTs Al-Maarif 1 Singosari?
2. How do students respond to the use of fun media in EFL speaking activities in terms of their speaking anxiety and psychological barriers?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Psychological Barriers in English Language Learning (EFL Speaking Anxiety)

Psychological barriers, particularly speaking anxiety, constitute one of the most persistent challenges in EFL learning at the junior secondary level. Anxiety in this context is most commonly triggered by fear of negative evaluation from teachers or peers, compounded by insufficient linguistic competence accumulated from prior educational stages (Zahra et al., 2023). According to Jusuf et al. (2021), students who experience anxiety tend to become passive, avoid eye contact, and remain unresponsive during classroom interaction. Beyond these behavioral manifestations, speaking anxiety also produces physical symptoms such as trembling, sweating, and an elevated heart rate, while psychologically it causes students to withdraw from activities and develop negative expectations about their own communicative abilities.

What makes this issue particularly acute in Indonesian junior high school contexts is the limited prior exposure to English that many students carry with them. Under the 2013 curriculum, junior high school represents the first stage at which English is formally taught as a structured subject (Mubarak, 2016; Panjaitan, 2013). Because English is not mandated at the elementary level and its implementation varies across schools, many students enter junior high school with minimal linguistic foundations (Maili & Hestiningsih, 2017). This baseline deficit intensifies existing psychological insecurity, creating a compounded barrier: students lack both the linguistic tools and the emotional confidence needed to engage in spoken English. Critically, this combination is not a matter of intellectual capacity but of affective constraint, which points directly to the need for instructional strategies that address the emotional dimension of language learning, not merely the cognitive one.

The Use of Fun Media and Activity Based Learning

To address the affective roots of speaking anxiety, an Activity-Based Learning (ABL) approach supported by what this study terms fun media has been proposed as a strategic alternative to conventional, teacher-centered instruction. For the purpose of this study, fun media is operationally defined as any audiovisual or digital instructional tool, including Canva presentations and Wordwall-based interactive activities, that is intentionally selected and integrated into classroom instruction to create an enjoyable, low-pressure environment that supports EFL speaking engagement.

Audiovisual media, as a core component of fun media, can be understood as a combination of visual and auditory elements including images, video, and sound, presented simultaneously to facilitate learning material delivery in a more engaging and accessible way (Sarmud et al., 2023). When delivered collectively through classroom facilities such as LCD projectors and speakers, audiovisual media fosters a shared learning experience that encourages students to feel safer participating without the

social isolation that individual device use may produce. Empirical evidence supports this claim, as studies have consistently demonstrated that the use of audiovisual media produces positive effects on students' learning motivation, as reflected in improvements in student engagement and academic performance across learning cycles (Sarmud et al., 2023).

The theoretical foundation that explains why this works lies in Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis (1982), which posits that emotional variables anxiety, self confidence, and motivation function as internal filters that regulate how effectively learners process and acquire language input. When the affective filter is high, as is characteristic of teacher-centered, high-pressure environments, learners become less receptive to language input and less willing to engage in spoken communication. Conversely, when the affective filter is lowered through enjoyable, lowpressure activities, learners become more emotionally open to acquiring new language and more willing to take communicative risks (Li, 2026). However, a critical observation must be made here: while many studies have demonstrated that audiovisual media lowers affective filters in general EFL settings, fewer have examined how specific tools such as Canva and Wordwall interact with these processes in restricted-technology classroom contexts. This gap motivates the present study's focus.

Instructional Design Collaborative Digital Learning

Instructional design can be defined as a systematic process for addressing learning challenges through planning, material development, activity design, resource selection, and evaluation (Anggarini et al., 2015). In contexts where students are prohibited from using personal devices, such as at MTs Al-Maarif 1 Singosari, instructional design must be creatively adapted to bridge technological limitations. By repositioning classroom facilities, LCD projectors and speakers as a centralized instructional command, teachers can design interactive, modern learning scenarios without requiring individual student devices.

Within this framework, Canva presentations serve as one key component of fun media implementation. As a visually rich digital design platform, Canva enables teachers to construct aesthetically engaging slide-based content that incorporates images, color, and structured layout to deliver lesson material in a visually stimulating format. When projected collectively, Canva presentations function not only as informational tools but also as affective stimulators, capturing students' attention and reducing the monotony that typically heightens anxiety in conventional instructional delivery. Although empirical research specifically examining Canva's impact on EFL speaking anxiety remains limited, its role as a visually engaging stimulus aligns with the broader research base on audiovisual media's positive effects on student motivation and engagement (Sarmud et al., 2023).

Wordwall, on the other hand, contributes a gamification dimension to fun media implementation. As a web-based learning platform, Wordwall enables teachers to design game-based learning templates including interactive quizzes, card sorting, image matching, and crossword puzzles (Apriliana et al., 2025). These features not only increase active participation but also motivate students to engage more enthusiastically with the learning material. Crucially, students exposed to Wordwall-based instruction demonstrated greater enthusiasm and were better able to recall and apply vocabulary compared to those taught through conventional methods (Apriliana et al., 2025). The gamification embedded within Wordwall encourages students to respond and

participate actively, creating a more enjoyable and low-pressure atmosphere that directly counteracts the psychological conditions that produce speaking anxiety.

The integration of both Canva and Wordwall within a unified instructional design framework produces a multimodal learning experience. This aligns with research on embodied cognition, which holds that combining auditory, visual, and kinesthetic modalities simultaneously strengthens linguistic memory retention and fosters students' interactive engagement (Toyama, 2025). When delivered collectively through classroom technology, this multimodal stimulation dismantles students' anxiety barriers by engaging them through multiple sensory channels at once, making the speaking experience feel more natural and less psychologically threatening. In synthesizing these two tools, it becomes clear that Canva and Wordwall are not merely supplementary aids but are complementary instruments: Canva lowers the affective filter by creating a visually engaging, non-threatening input environment, while Wordwall shifts the dynamic from passive reception to active, game-based oral participation.

Students' Perceptions and Responses Toward Fun Media

Understanding how students perceive and respond to fun media is a critical dimension of qualitative EFL research that quantitative approaches frequently overlook. Students' subjective experiences, their sense of enjoyment, psychological safety, and growing confidence play a significant role in determining the actual effectiveness of media-based instruction (Kaplan & Gruber, 2023). When students perceive the learning environment as safe and enjoyable, they are more likely to take communicative risks, engage in peer interaction, and sustain their motivation throughout the activity.

Empirical evidence supports this view. Students exposed to engaging learning media tend to report increased motivation, a greater sense of enjoyment, and an enhanced ability to process lesson content (Prabawati et al., 2021). In EFL speaking contexts specifically, where anxiety and psychological insecurity frequently suppress active participation, these affective responses carry decisive pedagogical weight. When media successfully lowers students' affective filters, it creates a classroom atmosphere that feels less threatening and more conducive to spontaneous oral communication. Furthermore, media perceived as interesting and enjoyable has been found to reduce feelings of boredom and passivity, encouraging students to engage more actively with the material (Prabawati et al., 2021).

A critical synthesis across this body of literature reveals a consistent pattern: the effectiveness of fun media in reducing EFL speaking anxiety is not solely a product of the media's technical features, but depends equally on how students subjectively experience and perceive its use. This explains why quantitative measures of performance improvement while valuable are insufficient on their own to account for the complexity of speaking anxiety reduction. The affective dimension must be examined qualitatively, from the students' own perspective, in order to produce a holistic and pedagogically meaningful account of what fun media actually accomplishes in the classroom.

Drawing on the literature reviewed above, this study operates within the following conceptual framework. Speaking anxiety among EFL learners at the junior secondary level is primarily a psychological phenomenon rooted in fear of negative evaluation and limited prior linguistic exposure. This anxiety is understood through the lens of Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis (1982) as a high internal filter that blocks effective language acquisition and oral communication. To lower this filter, the present study examines the use of fun media, specifically Canva presentations and Wordwall-

based activities within a collaborative, teacher-facilitated ABL framework delivered through LCD projectors and speakers.

The relationship between these elements can be understood as follows: Canva functions as an affective stimulus that lowers students' anxiety through visually engaging, non-threatening content presentation, while Wordwall transforms the speaking activity into a gamified, participatory experience that shifts students' psychological orientation from fear toward enjoyment. Together, both tools are expected to reduce students' affective filters and support more confident oral engagement. Students' perceptions of and responses to this instructional process serve as the primary lens through which its effectiveness is evaluated in this qualitative study. This framework directly addresses the two research questions guiding this study: (1) how fun media are utilized to reduce students' psychological barriers in EFL speaking, and (2) how students respond to the use of fun media in EFL speaking activities at MTs Al-Maarif 1 Singosari.

METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design. Following the framework proposed by Creswell (2012), qualitative research is uniquely suited for exploring and describing a central phenomenon within its natural setting without manipulating the environment. This design allows the researchers to obtain detailed, nuanced, and holistic data regarding human experiences, learning processes, and cognitive behaviors. In this study, the descriptive qualitative design directly aligns with the research objectives, which aim to explore how digital fun-media is utilized in the classroom to assist students' perceived reduction of anxiety in understanding new English vocabulary items and to investigate their ability to construct simple sentences using those newly acquired words.

Research Setting

The research was conducted at MTs Al-Maarif 1 Singosari. This institution was selected because it offers an ideal environment to study alternative digital media integration under resource and policy limitations. A unique characteristic of this setting is its implementation of the Love-Based Curriculum (KBC), which heavily prioritizes students' emotional well-being and affective filters. Concurrently, the school enforces a strict no-smartphone policy for students, making collective media delivery via classroom LCD projectors and speakers the primary technological tool available to bridge the digital gap and deliver interactive learning materials.

Before the data collection, formal administrative clearance and official permission were obtained from the Vice Principal of Curriculum and the respective English teacher at the institution. To maintain standard ethical compliance, informed consent was secured from the school, ensuring that the students' participation was entirely voluntary. Furthermore, strict confidentiality protocols were enforced throughout the study, meaning that all participants' identities were completely anonymized and their personal data were fully protected.

Participants

The participants of this study were 32 students from grade VII D at MTs Al-Maarif 1 Singosari. The class comprised both male and female students within the age range of 12 to 13 years old. Purposive sampling was used to select this specific class based on preliminary observations and English teacher recommendations. The selection criteria identified grade VII D as the class experiencing significant linguistic barriers, particularly a low baseline of vocabulary mastery, which frequently hindered their confidence and caused them to hesitate or remain passive during English language activities.

From the macro-sample of 32 students, a purposive sub-sampling technique was employed to select five participants for semi-structured interviews. The participants were selected based on classroom observations, questionnaire results, and recommendations from the English teacher. They consistently demonstrated behavioral indicators of high foreign language anxiety, including reluctance to speak, hesitation when answering questions, avoidance of classroom participation, and visible signs of nervousness during English learning activities. These students were considered capable of providing rich and relevant insights into their experiences of learning vocabulary through Canva and Wordwall.

Table 1. Research Participants Profile

Grade	Total Students	Interview Informants' Code	Age Range	Selection Criteria
VII-D	32 Students	S1, S2, S3, S4, S5	12-13 Years Old	Teacher recommendation, low vocabulary mastery, and high passive learning indicators.

Research Instruments

Data were collected through three sources: classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and a simple evaluation questionnaire. Classroom observations were conducted throughout the learning session to document students' behavioral and emotional responses to the use of Canva and Wordwall, including their participation, peer interaction during group activities, willingness to communicate in English, and observable signs of foreign language anxiety. Following the classroom session, a purposive sub-sampling technique was employed to select five students (S1-S5) for semi-structured interviews. The participants were selected based on classroom observations and recommendations from the English teacher, as they consistently demonstrated behavioral indicators of high foreign language anxiety, such as reluctance to speak, hesitation when answering questions, avoidance of classroom participation, and visible signs of nervousness during English learning activities. The interviews were conducted in two stages: before the lesson to explore students' initial learning difficulties and experiences of foreign language anxiety, and after the lesson to examine their perceptions of how Canva and Wordwall influenced their vocabulary learning, confidence, and willingness to communicate in English. The interview questions focused on students' learning preferences, perceived challenges in learning English, emotional responses during classroom activities, and their perceptions of the usefulness of the two digital learning media.

Table 2. The Blueprint of Questionnaire List

No.	Statements
1.	I can understand vocabulary about festival foods easily.

2. The teacher explained the lesson clearly.
3. The learning activities helped me remember new vocabulary.
4. I learned many new vocabulary words about festival foods today.
5. Pictures, gestures, or games helped me understand the vocabulary.
6. I felt actively involved during the lesson.
7. I can pronounce the vocabulary better after the lesson.
8. Today's lesson was enjoyable and interesting.

In addition, a simple paper-based closed-ended evaluation questionnaire consisting of dichotomous (Yes/No) items was administered to all 32 students at the end of the lesson. The questionnaire was used to obtain students' overall responses to the implementation of the learning activity. To ensure that students clearly understood each item and to minimise potential misunderstandings, the questionnaire was presented in Indonesian. A paper-based format was employed because students were not permitted to bring mobile phones into the classroom. The questionnaire was used as a supporting source of data to provide a descriptive overview of students' responses to the learning activities, including vocabulary acquisition, perceived ease of understanding the lesson, and overall learning enjoyment, rather than as the primary qualitative research instrument. Finally, the findings from classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and questionnaire responses were triangulated to enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the study.

Table 3. Instrument Matrix and Measured Indicators

Instrument	Timing	Target / Source	Purpose	Indicators Measured
Preliminary Observation	Pre-Implementation	Regular Classroom Session	To observe conventional teaching methods and initial classroom dynamics	Teacher-centered patterns, student engagement, and baseline anxiety cues
Observation	During Session	Classroom Interaction	To observe students' real-time responses and engagement during fun media implementation	Participation level, peer interaction, willingness to speak, and non-verbal anxiety indicators
Interview (Pre)	Preliminary / Initial Stage	S1, S2, S3, S4, S5 & English Teacher	To explore initial linguistic barriers and psychological challenges	Perceived speaking difficulties, vocabulary limitations, and initial hesitation
Interview (Post)	Post-Implementation / Final Stage	S1, S2, S3, S4, S5	To gather in-depth reflections after the session	Vocabulary recall, confidence in speaking, and perceived helpfulness of fun media

Evaluation Questionnaire	Post- Implementation / End of Session	All 32 Students	To evaluate immediate vocabulary acquisition and learning satisfaction	To evaluate immediate vocabulary acquisition and learning satisfactionTo evaluate immediate vocabulary acquisition and learning satisfaction
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Implementation Procedures

Prior to the classroom session, the researchers collaborated with the English teacher to align the target vocabulary materials with the junior high school syllabus. The research timeline involved a preliminary non-participant observation conducted during a regular, conventional English session for approximately 40 to 50 minutes to observe standard pedagogical practices and initial anxiety triggers. Following this, the actual implementation and core observation phase was carried out within a single regular English class meeting lasting approximately 50 minutes. The digital learning media were constructed using Canva for visual presentations and Wordwall Flashcards for interactive vocabulary practice. Lesson plans and vocabulary lists were prepared in advance to ensure a smooth and structured implementation during the single classroom visit. At the opening of the session, the teacher introduced the theme and context of the new vocabulary words using visually engaging Canva presentations projected on the classroom screen. This stage aimed to build students' familiarity with the topic and create an engaging learning atmosphere before moving into the core activities.

During the core learning activities, the teacher projected interactive Wordwall Flashcards on the screen. Students collectively observed the visual cues, listened to the correct pronunciations through the classroom speakers, and practiced identifying the meanings of the words. This stage prioritized active student engagement, encouraging learners to participate in recognizing and understanding new vocabulary in context. Following the core learning activities, students were divided into small groups to collaboratively discuss and construct simple spoken sentences using the newly learned vocabulary. Each group was then given the opportunity to share their sentences with the class, fostering peer interaction and reducing reliance on teacher-led instruction. The Wordwall Flashcards served as a reference tool during these discussions, supporting students in recalling vocabulary items independently and building confidence in using them in spoken contexts. The entire implementation was conducted within a single classroom session during one regular English class meeting. This one-time visit approach was chosen in accordance with the qualitative nature of the study, which prioritized in-depth observation of students' responses and experiences over repeated instructional exposure.

Data Analysis

The qualitative data collected from observations and interviews were analyzed using the interactive framework proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), which consists of three systematic steps: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The data reduction process involved transcribing the observation field notes and audio recordings verbatim, followed by open coding to segment the text into

meaningful units and axial coding to group related codes into core conceptual categories, such as linguistic anxiety triggers, multimodal cognitive engagement, and peer-supported confidence. This coded data focused on students' observed and reported anxiety responses, behavioural responses during the session, and reflections on vocabulary recall and speaking confidence. In the data display stage, the coded data were organized descriptively using narrative prose and contextual quotes to present a holistic picture of students' experiences before, during, and after the fun media implementation. Finally, in the conclusion drawing and verification stage, the researchers interpreted the emerging thematic patterns to draw conclusions regarding how fun media assisted in students' perceived reduction of speaking anxiety and building their vocabulary confidence, with the descriptive findings cross-verified against the dichotomous evaluation questionnaires through methodological triangulation to ensure trustworthiness.

RESULTS

Students' Responses to Fun Media-Based EFL Speaking Activities

This section presents the findings of the study organized according to the two research questions: (1) how fun media were utilized to reduce students' psychological barriers in EFL speaking, and (2) how students responded to the use of fun media in EFL speaking activities. Data were collected from three sources: pre-implementation interviews, classroom observation, and post-implementation interviews. Participants are coded as follows: the English teacher is referred to as T1, and student participants as S1, S2, S3, S4, and S5, all drawn from Grade VII D of MTs Al-Maarif 1 Singosari. Here is the results of students' perception towards the media.

Table 4. Students' Perceptions Toward the Fun Media Implementation (N = 28)

No	Statement	Yes (f)	Yes (100%)
1.	I can easily understand vocabulary related to festival foods.	27	96,43%
2.	The teacher explained the lesson clearly.	28	100%
3.	The learning activities helped me remember new vocabulary.	28	100%
4.	I learned many new vocabulary words about festival foods today.	25	89,29%
5.	Pictures, gestures, or games helped me understand the vocabulary.	27	96,43%
6.	I felt actively involved during the lesson.	27	96,43%
7.	I can pronounce the vocabulary better after the lesson.	26	92.86%
8.	Today's lesson was enjoyable and interesting.	28	100%

As displayed in Table 4, the quantitative descriptive patterns strongly reflect positive students' perceptions toward the collective integration of Canva and Wordwall. Based on the questionnaire results, a perfect consensus (100%, f = 28) was achieved regarding vocabulary retention support, with all students agreeing that the instructional activities directly helped them remember new vocabulary items in Statement 3.

Furthermore, 96.43% of students reported that the integrated visuals, gestures, and games eased their understanding of the target words for Statements 1 and 5.

In terms of engagement, 96.43% of the class ($f = 27$) perceived themselves as active participants during the session on Statement 6, which aligns perfectly with the classroom observation notes documenting students' enthusiastic hand-raising and prompt responses. Regarding oral production, 92.86% of students in Statement 7 experienced positive reinforcement in their pronunciation abilities. Finally, another perfect consensus for the last statement confirmed that the overall learning experience delivered via the shared classroom projector was highly engaging, fun, and non-threatening for the young learners. The performance record indicated that 24 out of 28 students successfully demonstrated the ability to accurately recall and utilize 5 to 7 of these target words when constructing spoken sentences within their groups without consulting.

Table 5. Students' Oral Vocabulary Performance

Vocabulary Performance	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Successfully used 5–7 target vocabulary items correctly	24	75.00
Successfully used 3–4 target vocabulary items correctly	6	18.75
Successfully used 1–2 target vocabulary items correctly	2	6.25
Total	32	100.00

Classroom observations further supported the questionnaire findings by documenting students' ability to apply the target vocabulary during the collaborative speaking activity. As shown in Table 5, twenty-four students (75.00%) successfully incorporated between five and seven target vocabulary items when constructing and presenting simple spoken sentences without consulting written notes. Six students (18.75%) correctly used three to four target words, while only two students (6.25%) were able to produce one to two target vocabulary items. The target vocabulary included common festival-food words such as rice, noodles, satay, chicken, soup, juice, cake, and fruit. Representative examples of students' oral production are presented above, illustrating that most participants were able to construct meaningful simple sentences using the newly learned vocabulary. These observational findings provide concrete evidence that students not only recognized the target vocabulary but were also able to apply it in meaningful oral communication following the Canva and Wordwall activities.

Additionally, the researcher noticed the behavioural changes following the implementation of Canva and Wordwall. Before the learning activities, only five students voluntarily answered the teacher's questions, six students raised their hands during classroom interaction, and four students were willing to read sentences aloud in front of the class. Most students displayed behavioural indicators associated with speaking anxiety, including hesitation before speaking (25 students), avoidance of eye contact (22 students), and remaining silent when invited to participate (20 students). Following the implementation of the fun media, substantial positive changes were observed. The number of students who voluntarily answered questions increased to 24, while 27 students actively raised their hands during classroom activities. Similarly, 24 students confidently read their sentences aloud, and 30 students actively participated in group discussions. At the same time, observable signs of speaking anxiety declined

considerably, with only eight students still showing hesitation before speaking, seven avoiding eye contact, and five remaining silent during classroom interaction. These observational findings indicate that the integration of Canva and Wordwall not only increased classroom participation but also reduced behavioural manifestations of speaking anxiety, thereby supporting the questionnaire and interview findings.

Taken together, the questionnaire responses, classroom observations, and interview findings demonstrate a consistent pattern. While the questionnaire revealed overwhelmingly positive perceptions of the learning activities, classroom observations provided concrete behavioural evidence of increased participation and reduced speaking anxiety. These findings were further reinforced by students' interview responses, in which participants reported feeling more confident, experiencing less nervousness, and recalling vocabulary more easily after engaging with Canva and Wordwall. The convergence of these three data sources strengthens the credibility of the findings through methodological triangulation.

Table 6. Summary of Research Findings

Data Source	Aspect Observed	Key Finding	Supporting Quote / Evidence
Pre-Implementation Interview	Students' initial anxiety/barriers before the session	The students felt anxious and nervous, especially when asked to come to the front of the class and read aloud or present sentences they had written themselves, due to their limited vocabulary.	"Most students had not learned English in elementary school, so they felt less confident and confused during the transition from elementary to junior high school." (Teacher 1)
Observation	Students' behavioral responses during fun media session	By learning the new vocabulary through Canva and Wordwall, students became more confident. This significantly reduced their hesitation and fear when stepping forward to read their sentences by themselves.	Observer's Note: Students who initially appeared hesitant demonstrated positive behavioral changes. They smiled, participated actively, paid attention to the teacher, and spoke more clearly when reading their sentences aloud in front of the class.
Post-Implementation Interview	Students' reflections after the session	Students reported a significant reduction in nervous feelings, greater enjoyment, enhanced vocabulary recall, and improved confidence to construct and speak simple English sentences collaboratively.	"When I went to the front of the class to read my sentence aloud, I started to feel more confident because we had already learned the vocabulary through the Wordwall game, so I knew how to pronounce the words." (Student S2)

Students' Psychological Barriers Before Fun Media Implementation

Pre-implementation interviews were conducted with T1 and five student volunteers from Grade VII D to document existing psychological barriers to EFL

speaking before the instructional session. Across all six interviews, speaking anxiety was consistently identified as the dominant barrier, manifesting in both behavioral and affective dimensions. T1 described students' classroom behavior during regular English lessons as marked by prolonged silence, hesitation, and frequent reversion to Bahasa Indonesia. T1 attributed this primarily to students' lack of prior English exposure at the primary level:

"Karena kebanyakan murid-murid dulunya di SD belum belajar bahasa Inggris, jadi ada rasa minder dan bingung karena transisi SD ke SMP." (Because most students had not studied English at the primary level, they felt inferior and confused during the transition from elementary to junior high school.) (T1, personal communication, April 30, 2026)

Four of the five student participants reported a specific fear of front-of-class presentations. This fear was consistently tied to limited vocabulary mastery and uncertainty about pronunciation. S1 stated:

"Saya sering merasa grogi dan takut salah kalau disuruh bicara bahasa Inggris di kelas. Saya takut ditertawakan oleh teman-teman kalau salah ngomong, karena saya juga bingung mau ngomong apa soalnya kosa kata saya masih sedikit." (I often feel nervous and afraid of making mistakes when asked to speak English in class. I am afraid my friends will laugh at me if I say something wrong; I am also confused about what to say because my vocabulary is still limited.) (S1, personal communication, April 30, 2026)

S4 described the absence of a mistake-tolerant classroom culture as a further source of inhibition:

"Kalau salah di depan kelas, rasanya malu sekali. Makanya saya lebih memilih diam daripada coba bicara tapi salah." (If I make a mistake in front of the class, I feel very embarrassed. So I prefer to stay silent rather than try to speak and be wrong.) (S4, personal communication, April 30, 2026)

S3 and S5 similarly noted that even when they understood the general meaning of a topic, the inability to recall specific vocabulary at the right moment caused them to withdraw from speaking altogether. S3 noted:

"Saya sebenarnya tahu mau ngomong apa, tapi waktu giliran saya, kata-katanya tiba-tiba hilang dari kepala saya." (I actually know what I want to say, but when it is my turn, the words suddenly disappear from my mind.) (S3, personal communication, April 30, 2026)

Across all pre-implementation interviews, three interrelated anxiety triggers were consistently identified: (1) limited vocabulary mastery, (2) fear of peer judgment and ridicule, and (3) minimal prior English exposure at the primary school level.

Utilization of Fun Media During the EFL Speaking Session

Classroom observation was conducted on May 16, 2026, throughout a single instructional session. The session was structured in three sequential phases: a Canva-based visual presentation, a Wordwall flashcard vocabulary activity, and a collaborative sentence construction task each of which is documented separately below. At the session's opening, T1 projected Canva slides through the classroom LCD projector. The slides displayed target vocabulary items embedded within thematic visual contexts, including photographs and color-coded graphics. Within the first five minutes, most

students oriented toward the screen and side conversations ceased. Students were observed smiling at the images and directing questions toward T1 about the content. No behavioral signs of anxiety such as downward gaze, withdrawal, or silence were recorded during this phase.

In the core phase, T1 projected Wordwall interactive flashcards through the same LCD projector, with audio delivered through the classroom speaker system. Students responded by repeating target word pronunciations in unison and raising their hands to match words with their corresponding visual meanings. The observer recorded:

"Some students spontaneously repeated the target words aloud without being asked by the teacher, indicating a high level of engagement and a reduction in hesitation to speak when interacting with the digital flashcards."
(Classroom Observation, May 16, 2026)

Three students who had explicitly reported speaking anxiety in the pre-implementation interviews S1, S3, and S5 were observed raising their hands voluntarily during this phase. Laughter and peer encouragement were audible throughout the activity, and no students were observed disengaging or displaying behavioral indicators of distress.

In the final phase, students worked in small groups to construct spoken sentences using the vocabulary practiced in Phase 2, then read their sentences aloud before the class. Observation notes recorded active turn-taking, self-correction attempts prior to reading aloud, and peer encouragement between group members. Positive nonverbal indicator sustained eye contact with T1, forward body posture, and frequent smiling – were observed consistently across most participants during this phase.

Students' Responses to the Fun Media Session (RQ2)

Post-implementation interviews were conducted immediately after the session with all five student participants. Three themes emerged consistently across the data: reduced anxiety, improved vocabulary recall, and increased willingness to speak. All five students reported feeling less nervous during the fun media session compared to typical English lessons. S2 linked this directly to the collective, game-based format of the Wordwall activity:

"Belajar pakai game Wordwall tadi seru banget, membuat saya tidak tegang atau takut lagi waktu mau coba ngomong Inggris. Karena mainnya bareng-bareng satu kelas, saya jadi merasa lebih santai dan tidak malu." (Learning using Wordwall earlier was very exciting; it made me no longer feel tense or scared when trying to speak English. Because we played together as a whole class, I felt more relaxed and not shy.) (S2, personal communication, April 30, 2026)

S5 identified the diffusion of individual performance pressure as the specific mechanism behind this shift:

"Tadi tidak ada yang memperhatikan kesalahan saya karena semua sibuk main bareng. Jadi saya berani coba ngomong." (Nobody was paying attention to my mistakes because everyone was busy playing together. So I dared to try speaking.) (S5, personal communication, April 30, 2026)

Next, Four of five students reported that the Wordwall flashcards and Canva visuals substantially aided their retention of the target words. S3 described how the multimodal format supported memory:

"Gambar-gambar di Canva dan kartu di Wordwall tadi sangat membantu saya ingat arti kata-katanya. Biasanya saya cepat lupa kosa kata baru, tapi karena tadi seru dan ada gambarnya, saya langsung ingat fungsinya waktu bikin kalimat." (The pictures in Canva and Wordwall really helped me remember the meaning of the words. Usually I forget new vocabulary quickly, but because it was fun and had pictures, I immediately remembered their function when constructing sentences.) (S3, personal communication, April 30, 2026)

During Phase 3 of the classroom session, most students were observed successfully using between five and seven target vocabulary items in their spoken sentences without consulting any written notes. Also Increased willingness to speak, Three students directly linked their improved vocabulary knowledge to their increased speaking confidence. S2 stated:

"Tadi waktu maju ke depan buat bacain kalimat, saya mulai berani karena kosa katanya sudah dipelajari di game Wordwall jadi saya tahu cara bacanya." (When I went to the front to read my sentence, I started to feel brave because the vocabulary had already been practiced in Wordwall, so I knew how to pronounce it.) (S2, personal communication, April 30, 2026)

S1 who had reported the most acute anxiety in the pre-implementation interview – noted a shift in self-perception after the session:

"Ternyata saya bisa juga ngomong Inggris di depan kelas. Tadi tidak seseram yang saya bayangkan." (It turns out I can also speak English in front of the class. It was not as frightening as I had imagined.) (S1, personal communication, April 30, 2026)

DISCUSSION

Fun Media as Affective Support

The pre-implementation data confirmed that students' speaking anxiety was rooted in two primary triggers: fear of negative peer evaluation and limited vocabulary mastery. These patterns are consistent with findings documented across comparable Indonesian EFL contexts (Mustamir, 2024; Sulistyowati, 2023; Zahra et al., 2023), and align theoretically with Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis (1982), which posits that elevated emotional barriers, particularly anxiety, restrict learners' capacity to process language input and engage in oral production.

The classroom observation data showed that the deployment of Canva and Wordwall within a structured three-phase instructional sequence produced observable reductions in anxiety indicators across the session. This outcome is interpretable through the affective filter framework: the visually engaging Canva input lowered students' initial tension by creating a non-evaluative, aesthetically stimulating opening, while the Wordwall game-based activity shifted the social dynamic from individual performance to collective participation, distributing the psychological risk of speaking across the group rather than concentrating it on any single learner.

Critically, the anxiety reduction observed here was not reducible to novelty or entertainment alone. The sequential design – from contextualized visual input to gamified practice to guided oral production – constituted a deliberate affective scaffold that reduced the perceived psychological cost of speaking at each successive stage. This

aligns with Kaplan and Gruber's (2023) argument that the effectiveness of instructional media in EFL contexts depends not merely on the media's features but on whether those features successfully reshape students' emotional orientation toward the speaking task.

Collective Media Use Under a No-Smartphone Policy

A distinctive feature of this study's context is the institutional no-smartphone policy at MTs Al-Maarif 1 Singosari, which required all digital media to be delivered collectively through a shared classroom LCD projector and speaker system. The findings suggest that this constraint may have contributed positively to the anxiety-reduction effect observed, rather than limiting it.

Individual device-based digital learning can create an isolating experience that heightens self-consciousness, as students' attention is divided between their own screen and the shared classroom space (Sarmud et al., 2023). In contrast, collective projection through a single shared screen created a unified audience experience in which all students engaged simultaneously with the same stimulus. S2's remark — that playing *bareng-bareng* (together as a whole class) made the activity feel less embarrassing suggests that the shared format distributed participatory risk across the group, making individual errors less visible and less consequential in students' perception.

This finding extends the existing literature on digital media in EFL classrooms by indicating that the mode of delivery collective versus individual may carry significant pedagogical weight independent of the media content itself. For EFL practitioners working in technology-restricted or resource-limited settings, this has practical relevance: effective, anxiety-reducing digital instruction does not require individual device access. A thoughtfully sequenced collective delivery approach can produce comparable affective outcomes, and may, as the present data suggest, produce additional benefits through the shared social experience it creates.

Students' Perceived Confidence and Vocabulary Recall

The post-implementation data consistently showed that improved vocabulary recall was students' most frequently cited explanation for their increased speaking confidence. This relationship is theoretically coherent: speaking anxiety in EFL learners is substantially amplified by lexical insecurity, because the inability to retrieve the right word at the right moment intensifies fear of public failure (Burhanuddin et al., 2023; Mustamir, 2024). S3's pre-implementation account — "the words suddenly disappear from my mind" when it is time to speak captures precisely this phenomenon.

The Wordwall flashcard activity addressed this vulnerability through multimodal vocabulary exposure combining visual imagery, auditory input via the classroom speaker, and an interactive game-based response format. Students' reports of successfully recalling five to seven target items during the sentence construction phase, and their accounts of how this recall enabled more confident spoken production, indicate that Wordwall functioned as both a cognitive tool strengthening lexical retention and an effective tool reducing the fear of not knowing what to say. This dual function is consistent with Toyama's (2025) embodied cognition framework, which holds that simultaneous engagement across auditory, visual, and kinesthetic channels produces stronger and more accessible linguistic memory traces than single-modality instruction.

Canva's role in this process was primarily contextual and preparatory: the visual slides established meaningful semantic associations for the target vocabulary before Wordwall practice began, ensuring that students' word knowledge was grounded in visual context rather than abstract definition. This sequencing contextualized visual input preceding gamified oral practice reflects established principles of meaningful vocabulary instruction (Nanda & Fatimah, 2023; Fitria, 2022) and is consistent with findings that visually rich instructional materials enhance comprehension and reduce the cognitive load that would otherwise compound speaking anxiety. The evidence across all three data sources therefore supports the conclusion that Canva and Wordwall, deployed sequentially within a collective instructional design, functioned as an integrated affective and cognitive scaffold that enabled students in this study to participate more willingly and confidently in EFL speaking activities.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to investigate how engaging learning media can overcome junior high school students' psychological barriers and anxiety when speaking English and reading their own sentences individually in front of the class. The findings showed that integrating interactive digital tools, specifically Canva presentations and Wordwall flashcards, these fun media help students to overcome their nervousness, trembling, and fear of public embarrassment by successfully building their vocabulary mastery and self-confidence in a teaching and learning session. These results indicate that incorporating game-based, visual media into instructional design lowers students' affective filters, turning an intimidating public speaking task into a supportive and engaging classroom experience. Therefore, the study contributes to the field of English Language Teaching (ELT) methodologies, particularly in implementing practical digital technology to alleviate language anxiety in foreign language learners. Future research may explore the long-term impact of these interactive media tools on students' broader speaking fluency and their application across diverse language proficiency levels.

However, this study acknowledges several critical limitations that constrain the generalizability of the findings. The primary limitation lies in its restricted timeframe, as the media implementation and data collection were carried out within a single classroom session lasting approximately 50 minutes. Because of this short-term exposure, the gathered information reflects immediate student perceptions rather than sustained psychological changes, and the long-term sustainability of anxiety reduction remains unverified. Furthermore, the scope of the study is limited to a single class of 32 participants, and the data rely heavily on subjective, perception-based responses.

To address these limitations, future research should be designed with greater methodological rigor, depth, and structured preparation. It is highly recommended that future researchers employ a longitudinal descriptive or experimental design to track the long-term impacts of interactive media on students' broader speaking fluency across an extended period. Additionally, adopting a mixed-method approach—combining qualitative interviews with standardized quantitative anxiety scales—would provide a more comprehensive, precise, and objective triangulation of data across diverse language proficiency levels.

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