

Using Quizlet To Enhance Elementary-Level Vocabulary Among First-Year Students



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ABSTRACT: This research investigates the effectiveness of using Quizlet, an American interactive online website, in improving first-year students' vocabulary retention. There were 36 six students majoring in Tourism who participated in this study. By integrating Quizlet into teaching students, this study explores how effective the Quizlet is in helping students enhance their vocabulary and make their learning experience more interesting. The data collection used in this research included a pre-test, a post-test, a survey questionnaire, and an interview. The final findings indicated that Quizlet was a great vocabulary learning tool that improved students' vocabulary and made learning vocabulary more enjoyable and engaging.

KEYWORDS: Quizlet applications, vocabulary, attitudes, first year students

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the study

Vocabulary acquisition is pivotal for language learning, especially for students at the early stages of linguistic development. Hedrick (2008) asserted that the learners' knowledge of vocabulary indicates their success in acquiring a native language. Students cannot improve their English skills, such as listening, reading, speaking, and writing, without a strong foundation of vocabulary. However, the traditional teaching method fails to help students memorize words for long-term retention and engage actively in the class. In addition, students at the elementary level have to struggle with learning vocabulary because of their lack of motivation and language exposure. This study examines the use of Quizlet, a digital learning website that features interactive vocabulary flashcards and various game-based learning modes among 36 first-year students. It attempts to investigate the extent to which Quizlet is used in supporting students to memorize English vocabulary at elementary levels, and how students react towards the integration of this technology-assisted learning website. Also, based on the findings, the study identifies the difficulties that students encountered and suggests some solutions to facilitate students' vocabulary learning through Quizlet.

B. Research questions:

There are three main research questions that need to be addressed in the study:

- How effective is Quizlet in helping students improve their vocabulary?
- What are students' attitudes towards using Quizlet in the language classroom?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Overview of vocabulary

Vocabulary plays an essential role in language acquisition, and it directly impacts students' language abilities to listen, read, write, and speak. It is also a key component in ESL (English as a second language) and EFL (English as a Foreign Language). McCarthy (1990) postulated that "no matter how well the students learn grammar, no matter how successfully the sounds of L2 are mastered, without words to express a wider range of meanings, communication in L2 just cannot happen in any meaningful way". Schmitt (2000) also stated that lexical resources are pivotal to the learners' communication competence and language acquisition. Norbert Schmitt and Diane Schmitt (2014) suggested that learners have to acquire at least 2000 to 3000 core vocabulary words to comprehend daily conversations and academic documents.

B. Vocabulary learning strategies

Oxford (1990) defined vocabulary learning strategies as specific behaviors, steps, or techniques that learners use to boost their lexical resources. There are three learning strategies, including cognitive metacognitive, and social strategies that students use to enhance their vocabulary. According to Gu (2003), cognitive strategies allow learners to memorize and recall words in their

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memory and understand, and apply words in different contexts. These cognitive strategies include memorizing, guessing words from different contexts, looking up words in the dictionary, taking notes, analyzing the structures of words, using word parts, and creating a semantic network. Metacognitive strategies are associated with adjusting the learners' motivation, emotions, and attitudes toward learning vocabulary (by Chamot and O'Malley, 1994). Social strategies enable learners to communicate with others, such as teachers, friends, or native speakers. These strategies entail communicating, asking for feedback, collaborating with peers, and learning from social contexts.

In 2001, Nation also presented the categorization of vocabulary learning strategies, which are divided into direct strategies and indirect strategies. Direct learning strategies involve the learners' attempts to memorize words and phrases, whereas indirect strategies encompass guessing the meanings of unfamiliar words in listening, speaking, reading, and writing contexts.

C. Overview of Quizlet and its application in the classroom.

Quizlet is an American learning platform that is mainly designed for learning vocabulary through flashcards and multi-interactive learning activities. In 2001, Nation indicated two functional roles of Quizlet in the classroom: the learners and the teachers' roles. Online flashcards, games, tests, and live quizzes are features of the Quizlet websites, and these activities are accessible to students on the mobile apps. Nation (2016) also said that thanks to Quizlet flashcards, students can quickly memorize words and practice. Besides, Quizlet allows users to apply their vocabulary learning strategies in more interesting and effective ways.

Regarding cognitive strategies, Quizlet offers flashcards, learning modes, match and gravity games, images, and audio integration to help learners understand and retain words for a long-term period. In terms of metacognitive strategies, Quizlet enables students to receive feedback instantly and tracks their progress through spelling, writing activities, and tests. The teacher can also livestream a Quizlet vocabulary flashcard set in the class, or ask students to join engaging games by entering the code numbers to self-practice and evaluate what they have learned so far. In addition, Quizlet facilitates students to personalize their learning plans, progress at their own pace, and focus on the weaknesses that they need to improve. As for social strategies, Quizlet has three interactive vocabulary activities, namely Quizlet Live, Blast, and Checkpoint activities, which facilitate peer' interactions and competitions in the class. Students can compete with each other in small groups or in the whole class to get to the top students on the leaderboard. They also can create, and share flashcards and self-study, which enhances students' learning autonomy.

D. Previous studies

Many previous studies revealed the benefits of using Quizlet in the classroom. In Taiwan, the teacher Chien (2013) conducted an action research on 76 students, and it was concluded that Quizlet was favored by most students, especially Speller, Test, and Gravity games. Bueno Alastuey and Nemeth (2022) also explored the impacts of Quizlet and podcasts on students' vocabulary acquisition, and in terms of Quizlet, it significantly improved their vocabulary resources and retention of new words.

A different way of utilizing Quizlet in the classroom is by asking students to create flashcards and share them with others. In this case, Quizlet is a stimulus to independent learning, stated by Wright (2016). Another way is to play live games in the class. In Wolf's teaching reflection (2016) (p.27), the researcher depicted that "Quizlet Live was designed to bring fresh energy into the classroom and not only helps students enhance vocabulary, but also learn teamwork and communication skills as well. In short, Quizlet is an effective tool in supporting students in learning vocabulary more effectively and boosting their enthusiasm and learning autonomy.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A. Research Design

The researcher carried out action research to explore the problems and investigated the effective use of Quizlet in supporting students in learning vocabulary. According to Carr and Kemmis (2003:162), action research is a form of self-reflective inquiry conducted by the researchers to enhance the rationality and justice of the practices, as well as understand more about the reasons and the contexts in which the research is undertaken.

B. Research Participants

This action study consisted of 36 first-year students majoring in Tourism Management. For these students, English is an essential skill for them, which gives them a competitive edge in applying for jobs and facilitates their career advancement.

Before starting to learn English 1, students had to take an entrance English test, and the detailed results are shown in Table 1 below:

TABLE 1: LEVEL OF STUDENTS' PROFICIENCY

	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
High level	6	16,67%	16,67%	16.67%

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Medium level	19	52,77%	52,77%	69.45%
Low level	11	30.56%	30.56%	100%

From the table, it can be seen that the majority of students were at a medium English level (52,77%) and a low level (11%), while only a small minority (just 16,67%) was at a high English level.

C. Materials

- The English textbook is English File, Elementary level, published by Oxford University Press.
- For the English 1 course, students learned general vocabulary on specific topics. The course consisted of five units, which students had to study for 11 weeks via the Quizlet website. During this time, they were required to take two mini-vocabulary progress tests in week 5 and week 10. Then, the researcher used these scores to evaluate how much progress they made in vocabulary retention.

TABLE 2: CONTENT OF THE VOCABULARY LESSON.

Unit	The content of vocabulary lesson
Unit 1	Days of the week Numbers Countries and Nationalitie Classroom objects/ language
Unit 2	Things Adjectives Colors Feelings
Unit 3	Verb phrases Jobs
Unit 4	Daily routine Family Months Adverb/ Expression of frequency
Unit 5	Verb phrases (noise) The weather and seasons

D. Research data instruments

There are three types of research instruments to collect the data: Tests (1), Questionnaires (2), and Interviews (3)

(1) Tests:

- Pre-test: The pre-test was taken from the English File book sources. The entry test consisted of 25 vocabulary questions in multiple-choice and fill-in-the-blank exercises.
- Mid-Test: These formats of the mid-test were the same as the pre-test and the post-test. It was taken from the English File book sources and was compiled by the teacher.
- Post-test: The post-test was taken from the English File book sources. The post-test included 40 questions in multiple-choice and fill-in-the-blank exercises.

All these tests were at the elementary level, and they were rated on a scale of 10. The data collected from these tests were uploaded to Microsoft Excel for analysis. After the mid-test and the post-test, students' ability to learn and use words is revealed.

(2) Questionnaire survey:

The questionnaire survey had 15 questions that asked for students' views on three aspects: the effectiveness of applying Quizlet in learning vocabulary (8 questions), boosting their interests(4 questions), and learning autonomy (4 questions). The questionnaire survey was conducted on students right after the course to explore students' attitudes towards Quizlet in the classroom. The researcher used Microsoft Forms to collect students' views on Quizlet.

(3) Interview:

The researcher employed 15 students to take part in the interview and answer three main questions:

1. Do you think Quizlet is an effective tool in helping you memorize vocabulary? Why?/ Why not? What learning features do you like the best?
2. Do you think Quizlet makes you more interested in learning vocabulary and self-studying at home? Why?/ Why not? What games do you find the most exciting?

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3. What difficulties do you encounter when using the Quizlet website? Why?/ Why not?

All the participants' answers were recorded by the Voice Memos App on the iPhone 13th and subsequently analyzed to assess the effectiveness of Quizlet.

E. Research procedures

According to Kemmis, McTaggart, and Nixon (2014), there are four main steps in action research: (1) Planning; (2) Acting; (3) Observing; and (4) Reflecting.

(1) Planning:

Before the course, the teacher used the English entrance test results to analyze students' English proficiency levels and determine which student needs more support than others. Then, she had to create all flashcards on Quizlet, using the textbook. Also, she prepared the pre-test, mid-test, post-test, survey questionnaire, and interview questions, making them all ready for the study.

(2) Acting

Subsequently, in the first week of the course, students had to take a pre-vocabulary test to evaluate their vocabulary memorization. Then, they were guided and introduced to the Quizlet app and website. Throughout this 11-week course, students learned all the flashcards at home, and the teacher reviewed them in class to make sure they had memorized them. In the 8th week and 11th week, they took the mid-test and post-test consecutively to assess the progress they had made during the course. There followed a survey questionnaire and an interview to evaluate the Quizlet learning vocabulary program.

(3) Observing

The teacher paid attention to the results of each test to assess students' vocabulary retention and support those whose vocabulary sources were limited. The teacher also observed students' attitudes when they were involved in Quizlet activities and noticed the difficulties they encountered to better prepare for the next lesson.

(4) Reflecting:

After the results of tests, surveys, and interviews, the teacher reflects on what she needs to improve to help students learn vocabulary more effectively.

IV. RESEARCH RESULTS

A. The Test Results (Pre-test, Mid-test, and Post-Test)

TABLE 3: STATISTICS OF PRE-TEST, MID-TEST AND POST-TESTS

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pre-test	36	5.542	1,2500	0.2083
Mid-test	36	6.12	1,1402	0.1900
Post-test	36	6.778	1.3226	0.2204

As indicated in Table 2, 36 students took part in the pretest, and the average score was approximately 5.542 out of 10. After 7 weeks, the midtest was taken and the scores of both groups increased slightly, with an average score of 6,12. In the next 4 weeks, the post-test average score was 6,778, which was higher than the average pre-test score. The validity of the data was also shown with the p -value < 0.05 . In summary, it seemed that students gained a great amount of vocabulary thanks to the Quizlet application.

B. The Survey Questionnaire Results

There are a total of 16 questions in the questionnaire survey:

- Question 1→ 8: These questions asked for students' views on whether Quizlet is an effective tool in memorizing vocabulary.
- Question 9 → 13: These questions seek students' opinions on whether Quizlet makes learning vocabulary more enjoyable.
- Question 14→ 16: These questions explore whether Quizlet can encourage students to self-study, keep track of their progress, and set their learning goals.

All these questions are rated on a five-point scale: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Strongly Agree The findings of the survey questionnaire are shown in Table 3:

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TABLE 4: THE RESULTS OF THE SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Strongly agree	Agree	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Using Quizlet allows me to memorize vocabulary more quickly.	0%	0%	27.8%	44.4%	27.8%	36	4.17	0.8333
Using Quizlet flashcards, games, and tests helps me retain words longer	0%	0%	40.5%	51.4%	8.1%	36	4.11	0.9524
By using Quizlet, I can learn and practice pronunciation and spelling more efficiently	0%	0%	50%	36.1%	13.9%	36	3.86	0.9174
Using Quizlet enables me to review words more easily.	0%	0%	55.6 %	36.1%	8.3%	36	3.80	0.9375
By using Quizlet, I can understand words in context better	0%	0%	30.6%	27.78%	41.67%	36	3.97	0.7634
Quizlet makes reviewing words easier and less overwhelming by categorizing vocabulary into specific topics	0%	0%	22.2%	27.8%	50%	36	4.06	0.7049
I find the “Learn section” on Quizlet useful in learning new words	0%	5.6%	5.6%	77.8%	11.1%	36	4.61	0.8280
I find the “ Test section” on Quizlet useful in assessing my vocabulary	0%	2.8%	22.2%	66.7%	8.3%	36	4.39	0.9218
Quizlet motivates me to learn vocabulary more frequently.	0%	0%	13.9%	55.6%	30.6%	36	4.42	0.7216
I feel more confident when learning vocabulary via Quizlet.	0%	13.9%	11.1%	47.2%	27.8%	36	3.36	0.8548
Quizlet makes learning vocabulary more fun.	0%	0%	27.8%	61.1%	11.1%	36	4.33	0.8821
I prefer learning vocabulary via Quizlet rather than traditional methods.	0%	0%	0%	47.2%	52.7%	36	4.47	0.4992
Quizlet allows me to study at my own pace and choose the most effective learning method that facilitates my learning vocabulary.	0%	0%	33.3%	38.9%	27.8%	36	4.06	0.8479
Quizlet motivates me to self-study vocabulary more frequently outside the class.	0%	0%	16.7%	55.6%	27.8%	36	4.39	0.7558
Quizlet allows me to keep track of my progress.	0%	0%	19.4%	33.3%	47.2%	36	4.14	0.7129
Using Quizlet encourages me to set goals for my vocabulary learning.	0%	8.3%	25%	27.8%	38.9%	36	3.86	0.917

As can be seen from the table, most of the answers were strongly agree and agree with the statements, for example:
 Question 1→ 8: The effectiveness of Quizlet in helping students memorize vocabulary
 (Average Mean: 4,12; Average SD: 0.2857)

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- 72.2% of students strongly agreed and agreed that Quizlet helped them memorize words more quickly, while the percentage claiming Quizlet improved their retention was 59,5 %.
- The proportion of students who completely agreed and agreed that Quizlet supported their pronunciation and spelling was 41,7%, although 8,3 % disagreed, which meant a small percentage did not find it as useful as others.
- Regarding Quizlet features, 88,9% and 75% of students, respectively, had positive views on the Learn and Test sections. In addition, 77,8 % of students responded positively to the Quizlet feature of organizing vocabulary into specific topics.

Question 9→ 12: Quizlet makes learning vocabulary more interesting and motivating

(Average Mean: 4,15; Average SD: 0.5039)

- In addition, it is explicitly shown from TABLE 3 that Quizlet brought an enjoyable learning experience and increased students' learning autonomy. 72% of students believed that Quizlet made learning more fun, and 86,2% of students admitted that Quizlet motivated them to review words more frequently. Overall, all students preferred learning Quizlet rather than traditional methods.

Question 13→ 16: Quizlet encourages students to study independently

(Average Mean: 4,11; Average SD: 0.2285)

- Lastly, a high proportion of students believed that Quizlet encouraged them to study independently more effectively and regularly. The figure for those admitting that Quizlet encouraged them to study outside the class was significantly higher, at 83,3%. Meanwhile, 66.7 % indicated that Quizlet enabled them to study at their own pace and encouraged them to set their own goals for learning vocabulary.

C. The Interview Results

- There were 3 main questions, and 15 participants were involved in this interview.

Question 1: Do you think Quizlet is an effective tool in helping you memorize vocabulary? Why?/ Why not? What learning features do you like the best?

In their first responses, most interviewees expressed that they preferred using Quizlet because with pictures, audio, and other interactive practice activities that help them memorize the words more easily and retain them longer.

“ Quizlet is a great website for learning vocabulary. I can review the flashcards anytime, anywhere I want.”

Regarding the most favorite feature of Quizlet, it is the Matching Activity.

“ All the activities on Quizlet are useful in helping me retain the words. I love the Matching Activity because it's fun to complete the quiz as quickly as possible.”

Question 2: Do you think Quizlet makes you more interested in learning vocabulary and self-studying at home? Why?/ Why not? What games do you find the most exciting?

Many interviewees stated that Quizlet makes learning vocabulary more interesting and engaging.

“ I love Quizlet activities in the classroom. They are fun and they make me less sleepy in the class.”

“ I love Live Quizlet, Blast, and Checkpoint games. I love competing with my classmates and becoming top scorers.”

Question 3: What difficulties do you encounter when using the Quizlet website? Why?/ Why not?

While most students had positive attitudes towards using the Quizlet in the classroom, they also mentioned some common difficulties they faced when using the website and app, such as slow Internet connection, a lack of examples for difficult words, and much time consumed in creating their own flashcard set.

“ Sometimes, the Internet in the class is slow, and I can't access Quizlet.”

“ The teacher should add more examples to clarify how the words are used in the context, especially for some difficult words.”

V. CONCLUSION

About the first research question: How effective is Quizlet in helping students improve their vocabulary?

From the data analysis of three tests, the survey questionnaire, and the interview, it is concluded that Quizlet is a useful website in helping students memorize their vocabulary more quickly, retain words longer, and understand words in context better.

About the second research question: “What are students' attitudes towards using Quizlet in the language classroom?”, the data collected from the survey questionnaire and the interview proved that Quizlet makes learning vocabulary more enjoyable and engaging in the class. It also encourages students to study independently and adjust their learning to suit them best.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

A. Recommendations

Some recommendations are suggested to teachers when using Quizlet in the classroom.

- Teachers should introduce Quizlet at the beginning of the course for students and guide them on how to use it. The best way to use Quizlet is to download the app, and students can learn on their smartphones, which is more convenient. In addition, teachers

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should create a class containing all flashcards on the subject. This is also an online place where they can keep track of students' vocabulary studies.

- Due to the Internet connection, the teacher should combine Quizlet and teaching in the class; for example, teachers should integrate flashcards and some of the games into teaching and practice. Other activities should be assigned as homework.
- Divide the class into small groups, and each group will create flashcard sets to study together. This way can save teachers and students a great deal of time.

B. Limitations

Several limitations exist in this study:

- The size of the study was quite limited, as there were only 36 students who participated in the study.
- The study was conducted in only the experimental group. The data would have been more valid if there had been one control group involved.

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