

# USING QUIZLET TO ENHANCE VOCABULARY ACQUISITION FOR THE FIRST YEAR STUDENTS AT THAI NGUYEN UNIVERSITY OF AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY

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## ABSTRACT

*The latest trends in teaching and the considerable advance in technology allow teachers to utilize online applications through various apps. A mixed- method research design was used to investigate Quizlet on vocabulary acquisition in English for the first-year students at Thai Nguyen University of Agriculture and Forestry, Thai Nguyen city, Vietnam. Pre-test, post-test, and questionnaires were employed to collect data for analysis with the participation of 35 students. Learners from the treatment group underwent a pre-test and a post-test to assess their acquisition of the assigned vocabulary lessons extracted from the course syllabus. After utilizing Quizlet for vocabulary learning for the academic year 2021-2022, the results proved that these learners significantly improved their vocabulary level at the posttest. Besides, responses to the questionnaires displayed students' positive attitudes toward Quizlet use. Accordingly, this research recommends utilizing Quizlet as a supplementing tool for university students.*

**Key words:** *Quizlet, vocabulary acquisition, first-year students, students' attitude, Thai Nguyen University of Agriculture and Forestry*

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## INTRODUCTION and RESEARCH BACKGROUND

Vocabulary is the basis for communication and essential for language proficiency [1]. It is as crucial as other skills such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Fisher and Frey [2] stated that vocabulary is at the core of all literacy. Without it, students would not be able to comprehend anything they read. Conversely, if students understand complex vocabulary, they are more likely to read and comprehend more complex texts and, in turn, able to write more complex texts at a more complex proficiency. Furthermore, by mastering vocabulary, they can deliver messages to others without miscommunication. As vocabulary enables learners to understand their interlocutors and express their ideas in the target language, vocabulary development is considered the basis for learning any language [3]. Similarly, Swan and Walter [4] agreed that vocabulary acquisition is the most crucial task facing language learners. Therefore, promoting vocabulary learning has been a sustainable goal emphasized by any English training programs, especially at fundamental levels.

Though enriching lexical knowledge is essential, vocabulary acquisition is challenging to many language learners since it is “the most sizeable and unmanageable component” in language learning [5]. So far, various approaches to vocabulary teaching and learning have been introduced and implemented to help students tackle the learning challenges and facilitate word mastery. Driven by the technological development in this era, numerous technical tools have been developed to motivate vocabulary learning

and enhance retention. Quizlet is among the most popular and has been reported to be highly effective with language learners of different ages.

Quizlet is a mobile and web-based study application that allows students to study information via learning tools and games. Quizlet is an online interactive learning platform operating on electronic bilateral flashcards that can not only be used to study any subjects but also serve mainly as a system for learning languages and various games and tests. It can be used either online in a browser on [www.Quizlet.com](http://www.Quizlet.com) or with a mobile application (for iOS and Android) on a Smartphone or a tablet computer.

The tool is immensely convenient for teachers to create lessons; their only job is to prepare a list of the target words (and pictures if they want to use their own) to enter and choose the meanings and pictures suggested by Quizlet. Multiple learning activities are then automatically created by the tool. The links to the lessons can easily be copied and sent to learners so that they can join. Quizlet teacher accounts also allow teachers to create classes on the platforms better to control their students' studying process and results. Teachers can also share the lessons they design and use lessons available on the Quizlet system. Quizlet incorporates some studying modes to facilitate word mastery, including *Flashcards*, *Learn*, *Write*, *Spell*, and *Test*. *Match* (a scatter game), *Gravity* game, and the *Live game* mode for more engaging and interactive lessons are also among the activities designed. Sound files to guide pronunciation for the intended words through listening are automatically attached. By this token, Quizlet appears to be comprehensive and has a high potential to enhance the effectiveness of the vocabulary learning process and improve the learning products as a consequence. Quizlet is regarded as the perfect tool for learners to improve vocabulary.

In the teaching context at TUAF, there were problems with learning vocabulary that the researcher came across. The first problem was that intensive learning vocabulary was a sub-part of a lesson, which was often integrated into other communicative skills, and students were left to study words autonomously. Thus, if the students did not learn or practice new words at home, they would quickly forget the meaning of new words they had learned in class. Besides the leading textbook, students also used *Vocabulary In Use* (Pre-Intermediate level) as a reference book. Due to a strict curriculum, teachers did not have time to introduce every topic of this book to students, thus it was assigned for study at home. It was not easy to evaluate the effectiveness of self-studying outside the class when the teachers did not have enough time to check every students' learning. Therefore, the students found it challenging to remember the meaning of new words and their use.

Based on the currently existing issues, the researcher would like to assist the students in gaining a larger number of words and their attitudes toward using Quizlet in vocabulary learning. Therefore, the researcher decided to conduct the study "Using Quizlet to enhance vocabulary acquisition for the first-year students at Thai Nguyen University of Agriculture and Forestry."

According to Nation [6], acquisition is defined as "many degrees of knowing." Generally, knowing a word means knowing its form, meaning, and use. More specifically, knowing a word means knowing its form in terms of spoken, written, and word parts; its meaning in terms of forms and meanings, concepts and referents, and associations; and its use in terms of grammatical functions, collocations and constraints on use such as register or frequency. Similarly, Thornbury [7] explained that knowing a word, at the most basic level, involved knowing its form and meaning, which was mentioned as the knowledge of spoken and written form, the grammatical behaviors, derivations, collocations, register, connotations, word's frequency, and meanings. In this study, since the subjects of the study were primarily pre-intermediate, the researcher also looked at the mastery of form, meaning, and use to evaluate students' vocabulary acquisition, but at a moderate level with the focus on the spoken and written form (pronunciation and spelling), grammatical behavior, and meanings.

The study aimed to investigate the effects of using Quizlet Application on the first-year students' vocabulary acquisition at TUAF. Therefore, the specific research question addressed in this study was as follows:

*"How does Quizlet improve students' vocabulary acquisition?"*

*"What are the students' attitudes towards using Quizlet for vocabulary learning?"*

## METHODOLOGY

### *Sample choosing*

The research was conducted with 35 non-English major students of the same class. They were at different levels of English proficiency, ranging from elementary to pre-intermediate. They followed the same syllabus and number of class hours per week and used the same classroom with the same teacher. The 35 students received the same 10-week treatment in which they studied with a traditional method in the first five weeks, and Quizlet was utilized to review vocabulary in the last five weeks both outside and inside the classroom.

### *Data collection instruments*

Pretest and posttest with the same format were employed as the main tools to collect data, which the former was done after the first two modules and the latter when module No. 4 was finished. All lexical items to be tested were the targeted words in their internal textbooks, written by the university's English lecturers. Each test covered five different types of tasks: written, matching, multiple-choice, true/false, and spelling. These two tests assessed learners' acquisition of four modules of the course syllabus. The top score of each task in a test was 10 marks. The pretest was administered after the first two modules of the course and before utilizing Quizlet. The learners' outcomes were recorded for further correlation to the scores of the posttest, which was offered at the end of the academic year after the last two modules were taught. The researcher designed learning set for each unit where illustrations, paraphrasing, and annotation are employed to explain the meaning of the new words.

Brief survey questionnaires were distributed to students at the end of the course to collect data regarding students' attitudes toward using Quizlet in learning vocabulary.

### *Procedures*

The research period lasted for 10 weeks and was divided into two phases. In the first five-week phase, the students were taught with traditional method. Students studied vocabulary in a usual way in which the teacher introduced new words and provided them with pronunciations and meanings. During this phase, students learned the first two units of the course, which consisted of 68 target words that they were expected to remember. In traditional approach, the students were asked to spend time practicing vocabulary exercises in the Students' textbook and workbook.

In the second phase which lasted 5 weeks, the students learned vocabulary in the usual way in class and at home they were asked to practice with exercises on Quizlet. During this time, they were expected to be able to learn 70 new words in the following 2 units. After every class session, they were required to review the targeted lexical items by completing the compatible Quizlet lesson. At the end of this phase, the students were also asked to fill out the survey. Respond to survey questionnaires regarding their attitudes towards vocabulary learning were also analyzed.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### *Pre-test and post-test results*

The learners achieved the outcomes, which were shown in Table 1 below. It should be mentioned that the t-tests were paired samples since the study was measuring changes in the same students.

**Table 1. Mean scores and t-test outcomes of the scores (Cohen's *d*)**

	Measure, mean (SD)		<i>t</i> -Student		<i>d</i>
	Pre	Post	<i>t</i> (35)	<i>p</i> -value	

Written		5.21 (1.57)	6.83 (1.52)	-7.669	< 0.001	1.56
Matching		6.07 (1.55)	7.25 (1.65)	-15.402	< 0.001	3.14
Multiple choice		5.46 (1.77)	7.15 (1.72)	-6.382	< 0.001	1.30
True/False		5.67 (1.79)	7.21 (1.59)	-7.73	< 0.001	1.58
Spelling		6.38 (1.79)	7.86 (1.32)	-3.844	< 0.001	0.78
<b>Total</b>		<b>5.76 (1.22)</b>	<b>7.26 (1.05)</b>	<b>-14.035</b>	<b>&lt; 0.001</b>	<b>2.86</b>

The figures in Table 1 showed that the outcomes of the five variables were higher in the posttest than in the pretest. In general, the mean scores implied a significant improvement in the outcomes of this group. The mean of the posttest was 7.26, significantly higher than the pretest (5.76). However, the Standard Deviation (SD) of the scores of this group at the posttest was only 1.05, which was slightly lower than the SD at the pretest (1.22). The difference in SD between both tests was minimal. This suggested that their scores were more homogenous after studying with Quizlet and hence involved that the effect of the application on all participants was more consistent than the classic methods where a huge modification between the learners' outcomes was witnessed. Related to the outcomes of the different variables in Table 1, it can be seen that the results improved significantly in the various posttests in comparison with the corresponding pretests.

Moreover, the total mean of the posttest was notably higher than the pretest. This meant that the participants in the experiment improved their level of vocabulary through Quizlet. This significant improvement of the outcomes in the various posttests may result from the application of the program specifically, such as out-of-class exposure and immediate feedback. For this reason, it was recommended that learners practice vocabulary through Quizlet.

#### *Students' attitudes towards vocabulary learning.*

**Table 2: Students' attitudes towards vocabulary learning through Quizlet.**

Items	Students' evaluation		Label
	M	SD	
I enjoy using the Quizlet program	4.21	.86	Very positive
I benefit from the Quizlet program	4.06	.68	Positive
I study all the lessons	3.64	.35	Positive
I take much care of my own learning	3.31	.65	Positive
I learn best from the 'learn' option (match vocabulary word with definition using multiple choice)	4.19	.64	Positive
I learn best from the 'flashcards' option	4.16	.70	Positive
I learn best from the 'write' option (correctly identify vocabulary word based on definition/part of speech)	3.83	.59	Positive
I learned best from the 'spell' option (correctly spell vocabulary word after program read it orally)	3.96	.74	Positive
I learned best from the 'test' option (assess knowledge of words/definitions through matching/multiple choice/true or false, and written examples)	3.89	.60	Positive
<b>Total</b>	<b>3.91</b>	<b>.64</b>	<b>Positive</b>

This section presented the analysis of participants' responses to a questionnaire administered after the completion of vocabulary training sessions in the research. It asked about their behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement in learning vocabulary with Quizlet. Students' attitude was evaluated by the mean of the 9 main items of the survey. In which each statement in the items was evaluated on a 5-level Likert scale (from 1 to 5), where value 5 was the most positive (strongly agree), and value 1 was the most negative (strongly disagree). Questions 1 and 2 explored students' feelings towards learning vocabulary



through Quizlet. Questions 3 and 4 were set to gauge students' perceptions of learning vocabulary by using Quizlet. Questions 5 to 9 found out the students' current behaviors in learning different modes in Quizlet.

To conclude students' attitudes towards the survey factors, agreed on the distribution of the average value of the observed variables is as follows: 1 to 1.8 (very negative); from 1.8 to near 2.6 (negative); from 2.6 to near 3.4 (normal); from 3.4 to 4.2 (positive), from 4.2 to 5 (very positive). Statistical results (see Table 2) showed that the mean value of attitudes toward English learning of 35 respondents in the survey was 3.91 (standard deviation of 0.64). This data shows that students have a positive attitude towards learning vocabulary through Quizlet. In addition, the mean of the three components of attitudes, including cognitive, emotional, and behavioral, was positive, with the emotional component achieving the highest value of 4.13 (standard deviation of 0.77), followed by the behavioral component of 4.0 (standard deviation of 0.65) and the cognitive component of 3.47 (the standard deviation is 0.50). Quizlet seemed to have fostered emotional engagement in learning vocabulary from these results. Besides, they had realized the attention to learning vocabulary and had a positive behavioral attitude towards the five main kinds of studying modes in Quizlet. Thus, educational apps such as Quizlet seem to have a great potential in promoting better learning outcomes in educational contexts while maintaining the student's pedagogical motivations [8].

## CONCLUSION

Based on the data analysis, it can be concluded that the application of Quizlet was beneficial to the first-year students at TAAF. Regarding vocabulary acquisition, Quizlet facilitated the learning of the primary but crucial aspects of an individual word, including meanings, pronunciation, and spelling. Specifically, Quizlet helped improve retention of the target vocabulary items, train pronunciation and familiarize students with their written form. Concerning students' attitudes, the data collected has shown that most students surveyed were cognitively, behaviorally, and emotionally engaged in vocabulary learning activities with Quizlet. They perceived Quizlet as an exciting and beneficial tool for vocabulary learning and were aware of their study. The application of Quizlet has inspired students to love learning and helped them learn more quickly and easily through a wide range of studying modes in the program. Therefore, Quizlet should be highly recommended for English learners of all ages. For the successful application of Quizlet with students, some recommendations should be considered. First, Quizlet should be used as a regular class activity, enabling teachers to control their students' learning, assist promptly, prevent students from skipping any lessons, and ensure that all students receive the same treatment. When Quizlet is used as home assignments, brief training and care instructions should be provided in advance so that students are clear about what they are supposed to do. Besides, since Quizlet automatically creates an array of learning activities for each lesson, it is recommended that teachers consider the amount of vocabulary to be covered in a lesson to suit students' average capacity.

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