

# USE OF QUIZLET OUTSIDE CLASS IN ENHANCING ESFL LEARNERS' VOCABULARY LEARNING: A CASE STUDY

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## ABSTRACT

Quizlet, one of the applications of Mobile assisted language learning (MALL) is a free tool to learn vocabulary, concepts, and terminology through flashcards and fun games to help learners remember easily and remember for a long time. This study aims at investigating the use of the Quizlet outside classroom to improve the English vocabulary learning capacity for 11th grade students at Hoang Hoa Tham Upper Secondary School - Danang city, Vietnam. The research employed a mixed study method using quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative data were gathered from vocabulary tests involving 81 students and questionnaires, while the qualitative data were collected through interviews with 10 students. The results showed that Quizlet changed the vocabulary scores significantly compared to traditional methods. Most student participants agree that Quizlet is a useful tool for learning new vocabulary. In addition, it is also suggested that students should use a combination of traditional methods and Quizlet to gain the best results. Regardless of students' perceptions, Quizlet encouraged them to learn vocabulary at great frequency. They also indicated that they had high emotional engagement in using Quizlet. Quizlet was user-friendly and helped them to learn vocabulary fast. Therefore, students can use Quizlet as a useful tool in learning English vocabulary and improving their vocabulary memorization.

**Keyword:** Quizlet, vocabulary, vocabulary learning capacity, memorization, 11th grade students

## INTRODUCTION

English is widely used as an international language all over the world. Therefore, learning English and especially learning English vocabulary has become indispensable for all learners of English as a second or foreign language (ESFL). Without a wide range of vocabulary, it is difficult for learners to communicate or even express themselves properly. However, many students claimed that it is difficult for them to remember and retain the English vocabulary they have learned. At present, there exist some traditional ways for learners to enhance and review the vocabulary acquired such as multiple-choice questions, blank-filling, and cloze on worksheets, but students are less motivated. They are also shy to ask questions to clarify the meaning of words or phrases they are not sure of. It is boring for students to do vocabulary worksheets. For these reasons, there has been a long debate about the best methods for vocabulary instructions and various suggestions concerning vocabulary learning were posed. In this setting, Mobile assisted language learning (MALL) might be a promising choice. Quizlet, one of the applications of MALL, has recently, been designed for learning vocabulary. Created in 2005, Quizlet comes with a great deal of features that can help teachers to organize their

classes and help students to learn vocabulary more easily. This study was conducted as a case study to examine the use of the Quizlet outside classroom to learn English vocabulary by a group of 11 graders at Hoang Hoa Tham Upper Secondary School - Danang city, Vietnam (sourced from Hoang et al. 2014). At the same time, another 11-grader group learnt English vocabulary with the same material provided by the researchers in their normal way. The study findings were hoped to answer the question of whether Quizlet applied to vocabulary learning created better results for the ESFL learners than the normal way of vocabulary study did.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### ***What to learn when learning vocabulary***

According to Doff (1988, p.11), teachers must be aware of three key aspects when teaching new vocabulary namely the form, the meaning, and use. Therefore, these are what any ESFL learners should focus on. Nation (2001, p.40-47) defined a word's form as its pronunciation (spoken form), spelling (written form), and any word parts that comprise this specific item (such as a prefix, root, and suffix). Also for Nation (2001, p.47-49), meaning encompasses the way form and meaning interact, in other words, the concept and what items it refers to, as well as the associations that come to mind when people think about a specific word or expression. Nation characterized use as "the grammatical functions of the word or phrase, the collocations that normally accompany it, and any constraints on its use, in terms of frequency, level, and so on."

### ***Importance of vocabulary learning***

Vocabulary plays a key part in communication. While knowing only a few words may be helpful in some situations, it is said people must understand as much as 98% of a text so as to get an acceptable understanding of that text (Hsueh-Chao & Nation, 2000).

### ***Mobile Assisted Language Learning***

Mobile assisted language learning (MALL) is the subsector of the developing field of mobile learning and the way learners make use of mobile technology in learning a language. If a learner takes up MALL, they do not have to sit in a classroom or use a computer to get access to learning materials. MALL is one of the most suitable means for a learner to learn a language since it can solve the problems caused by time and place. Thanks to these advantages in language learning, Quizlet, one application of MALL was chosen to enhance the learner's vocabulary learning outside the classroom in this study.

### ***Quizlet***

Quizlet is an online study application that uses gamification on learning. It is a free tool to learn vocabulary through flashcards and interesting games. In addition to learning on computers by going to quizlet.com (Quizlet supports many languages, including Vietnamese), learners can also download applications on iOS and Android devices. There are 8 learning modes on the website and 5 learning modes on the mobile app. Table 1 below describes the learning modes of Quizlet on the mobile app.

**Table 1:** Description of quizlet learning modes available on mobile app

<b>Mobile application (Android &amp; iOS)</b>	<b>Description</b>
Flashcards	The study mode provides users with Quizlet flashcards (i.e., digital flashcards), which are basically similar to paper ones.
Learn	In the study mode, the user answers questions about written forms and meanings of target words. They are flashcards, multiple-choice and short-answer questions. Right after he or she gives an answer, they are informed whether it is right or wrong.
Write	The study mode provides the user with short-answer questions about written forms or Vietnamese translations of target words. Right after he or she gives an answer, they are informed whether the answer is right or wrong. Written output is required in the mode.
Spell	When using Spell, the user listens to a target word provided with its translation. Then, they have to type it. Right after the user answers any question, he/she will be informed whether the answer is right or wrong. If the user answers any question wrongly, he/she will be provided with the right answer, and have to re-answer the question before moving to the next one.
Test	In the study mode, the learner is able to take a test, which includes multiple-choice, short answer, matching and true/false questions about written forms and meanings of words. Once the user answered all questions, he or she would be given the test result.
Match	When playing Match, the learner races against the clock to drag and drop each vocabulary item on its correct Vietnamese translation. When the user matches the English word with its correct Vietnamese translation, both of them will disappear. In contrast, if he/she make any wrong matching, the word and Vietnamese translation will still exist.

Besides, Quizlet offers users with Play modes namely Match, Gravity and Live. However, just Match is available in applications on iOS and Android devices.

## **METHOD AND SAMPLING**

A combination of different methods was used to gather both quantitative and qualitative data (Dörnyei, 2007). The quantitative data were collected using anonymous tests, while the qualitative data were collected through interviews with students. The vocabulary used in the tests was collected from the Glossary of the textbook *Tieng Anh 11* currently used by students in class. While the tests gathered information about the students' knowledge of the vocabulary, the interviews provided information about the students' opinions on learning new vocabulary by using Quizlet.

The participants in the study were 81 11th grade students of Hoang Hoa Tham Upper Secondary School in Da Nang, Vietnam. Those students come from 2 classes (11/1 and 11/3) in which they learn English as a foreign language. Students in class 11/1 learned the vocabulary in their normal way, while those in class 11/3 used Quizlet to learn new vocabulary. These subjects were all asked to do the pre-tests and post-tests. 40 students in class 11/3 were chosen to respond to the questionnaire and 10 out of them were randomly chosen to give responses to the interviews conducted by the researcher.

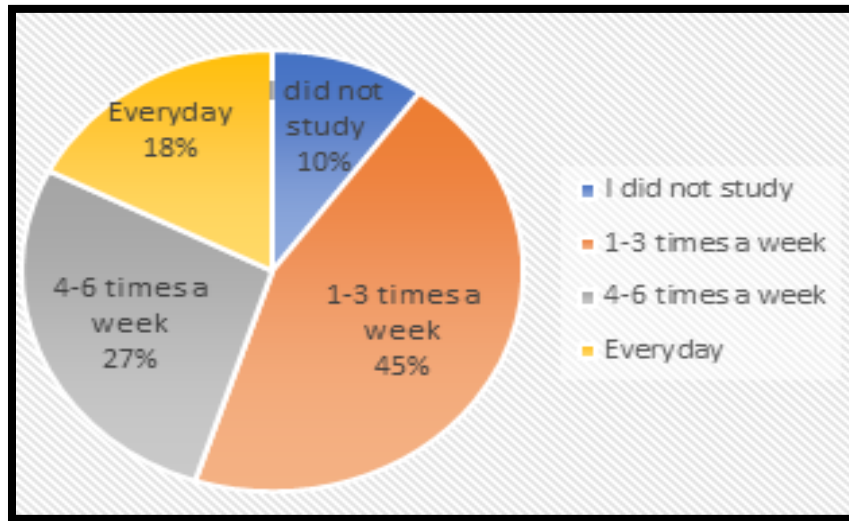
The research duration was initially planned to last four weeks from March 18<sup>th</sup> 2021 to April 18<sup>th</sup> 2021. The pre-tests were done on March 18<sup>th</sup> 2021, and the students worked with

the vocabulary in their book in the following four weeks. The post-tests were held on April 19<sup>th</sup> 2021 and supervised by the researcher. The students also responded to a questionnaire at the end of the research to express their perception of using Quizlet as a vocabulary learning tool. Moreover, the qualitative data were gathered by face-to-face interviews.

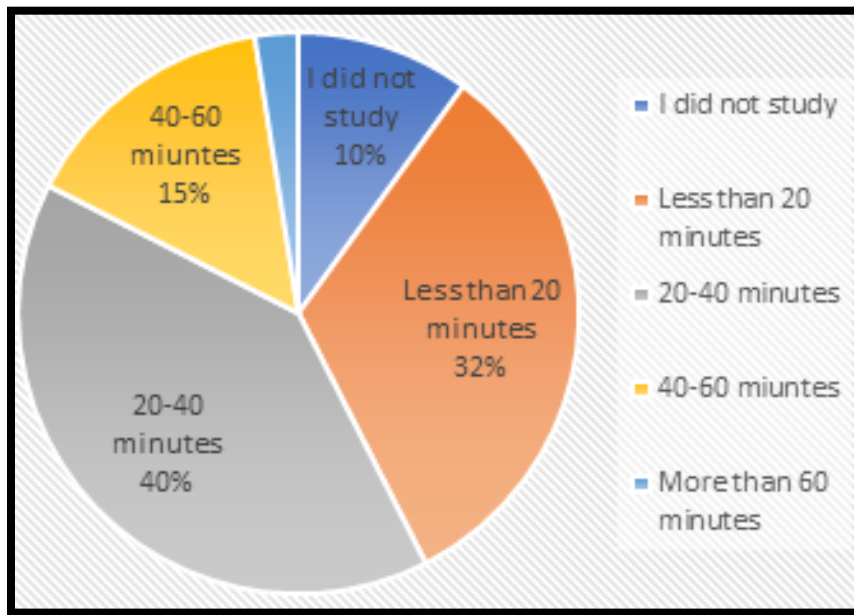
## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### *Students' perception towards using Quizlet as a vocabulary learning tool*

Figure 1 shows the frequency of learning vocabulary with Quizlet outside the classroom while Figure 2 shows the length of the vocabulary learning session with Quizlet outside the classroom.



**Figure 1:** Frequency of learning vocabulary with Quizlet outside the classroom



**Figure 2:** Length of the vocabulary learning session with Quizlet outside the classroom

**Table 2:** Students' opinions about the usability and usefulness of quizlet

Statements	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree
Quizlet helps me learn English vocabulary quickly.	0%	3%	10%	20%	43%	25%
Quizlet helps me memorize English vocabulary in the longer term.	8%	10%	20%	10%	30%	23%
Using Quizlet helps me improve my English vocabulary.	0%	8%	3%	23%	38%	30%
Learning English vocabulary via Quizlet is enjoyable.	0%	0%	0%	10%	33%	58%
It is easy to use Quizlet to learn English vocabulary.	0%	0%	0%	18%	40%	43%

It can be seen from Table 2 that Quizlet seems to have encouraged participants to learn vocabulary at great frequency and stimulated emotional engagement. Additionally, there were more students who perceived using Quizlet was easy and helped to increase the learning speed. Some students also believed Quizlet supported long-term memorization and development of vocabulary. Lastly, more participants preferred Quizlet to their normal methods. The most frequently mentioned reason for their preference was the tool promoted vocabulary memorization. Furthermore, some students favored Quizlet because of some of its features, which are unavailable in paper flashcards (games and spoken forms of target words). Thus, Quizlet seems to have a great potential in promoting better learning outcomes in educational contexts while maintaining the student's pedagogical motivations.

### ***Comparison of pre-test and post-test results***

The results of the pre and post tests were compared. After 1 month, there are differences in the change of average point between the two tests (pre-test and post-test).

**Table 3:** Comparison of pre-test and post-test results

Class	Average point of Pre-test	Average point of Post-test	Change	Change in percent
11/1	10.8	23	+ 12.2	+ 32.1%
11/3	10.6	26.8	+ 16.2	+ 42.6%

Table 3 shows that while students in class 11/1 who learned vocabulary by normal methods improved by 12.2 point (32.1%), those in class 11/3 improved by 16.2 points (42.6%) as they used Quizlet as a vocabulary learning tool. The results proved the fact that learning vocabulary through Quizlet helps students in class 11/3 improve the average point (from 10.6 to 26.8) which is 10.5% more than class 11/1 whose students used the normal method to learn vocabulary.

Looking at the comparison of the two tests, students in class 11/1 who learned vocabulary by their own normal ways improved their score by 32.1%, students in class 11/3 improved their score by 42.6% as they used Quizlet as a vocabulary learning tool. That the class using Quizlet improved with 10.5% more than the class using traditional methods implies that using Quizlet is beneficial.

Students who used Quizlet have acquired nearly a half of the words. This task is not an easy one because it contains several complicated words such as *accompany*, *accomplished*,

*artificial, aspiration, cosmonaut, psychological,...*As 1 point equals 1 word, the students have learned between 1 and 25 of the 38 words that are used in the vocabulary tests.

The students also answered questions about their opinion on learning English and the importance of learning English vocabulary. The students in both classes express that they like learning English more in the post-test than in the pre-test, and they also find it more important to learn new vocabulary in the post-test. This also means that concentrating on vocabulary made the students more highly appreciate the significance of learning English and learning English vocabulary.

As for the test results from the two classes, there is a clear relationship between students' interest in learning English and the importance of learning English vocabulary. In the pre-test, 72.5% of the students say "Yes" to both questions, and the number has risen to 79% in the post-test. Surprisingly, there are some students who are not interested in learning English but still believe learning new vocabulary is important.

To conclude, using Quizlet gives better results to students. In general, two classes have medium scores. The results from the tests are relatively consistent with the results from interview regarding learning English and the importance of vocabulary. There is an indisputable relationship between students' interest in learning English and the importance of learning English vocabulary.

### ***Results of the interviews***

The questions for the students revolved around learning English and learning English vocabulary, and what methods students preferred to use when learning vocabulary.

#### ***1. Do you think learning English vocabulary is important? Why? Why not?***

All students agreed that they must learn new vocabulary and it was very essential. One student believed that it was essential to see connections in the language and that new vocabulary helps him to utilize various terms. Five students mentioned that vocabulary helped them to enhance their communicative skills. One student said that it was useful but exhausting to learn vocabulary. One student said "It depends. At times the stuff we read was truly boring and afterward I don't think it's so imperative to get familiar with the new words".

#### ***2. Which vocabulary learning methods do you prefer?***

Most students thought that repeating the vocabulary and memorizing was the most appropriate strategies. The other two students said that they liked using traditional methods such as rewriting words on paper or repeating words over and over to memorize vocabulary. Five students believed that gaming in general was a good method as it was more interesting for them to learn new vocabulary.

#### ***3. Do you prefer using Quizlet or normal methods when learning English vocabulary?***

Seven out of ten students said that they liked using Quizlet as a tool to memorize vocabulary quickly. One student said "In my opinion, it's useful to use traditional methods because I can totally focus on my work and then I remember better." Another student said that traditional



methods, like talking, writing the words, reading and looking up words in a dictionary were good ways to learn. The last student said: "I liked to write down new words on my notebook".

#### ***4. Is Quizlet an interesting and useful tool for learning vocabulary, and if yes, how?***

All students said that Quizlet was very effective for vocabulary learning because it helped them practice vocabulary many different times. Moreover, students thought it was motivating to see how their results improve. They also agreed that when the vocabulary was taught in advance, the learning and memorization process were quicker and easier. Five students said that learning vocabulary with Quizlet was fun and helpful. Two other students said that learning vocabulary using their normal methods was still the most useful method for learning.

#### ***5. Do you think learning vocabulary with Quizlet gives you better results?***

All students believed that Quizlet would give them better results. However, to gain the best results, they agreed that new vocabulary once memorized should be put into use in contexts.

#### ***Difficulties students encountered in the process of using Quizlet***

Through the interviews, some typical difficulties in learning vocabulary through the Quizlet have been revealed as follows:

- Quizlet can only help students remember words in isolation. This can make students confused when they see the word again in context. Also, this might negatively influence students' skill of predicting the word meaning while reading a text.
- Using Quizlet in this study means that students have to work with a smartphone. Thus, sitting with Quizlet for a long time might cause health problems such as eye strain and back pain. These health hazards bring students the feeling of discomfort and tiredness which prevent them from being interested in learning with mobile devices.

#### ***How to overcome these difficulties***

As mentioned above, there are some difficulties resulted from learning vocabulary with Quizlet. However, these difficulties are not too severe to be improved. To make the vocabulary learning process more interesting and useful, students should combine the use of Quizlet tool with contextual vocabulary learning. This helps students not only understand new vocabulary clearly but also memorize the vocabulary longer.

Besides, students should make a plan for themselves when learning vocabulary through Quizlet to ensure their health and effectiveness:

- After learning vocabulary through context, students should use Quizlet to learn and remember words longer.
- Because Quizlet has different learning modes, within 1 week, students can learn vocabulary by changing different modes in turn to create such an innovative learning environment and avoid boredom.
- Students should use Quizlet for 20-30 minutes per day to gain the best results.
- When using smartphones to learn vocabulary, students should pay attention to keep the device at the right distance, sit in the correct posture, adjust the appropriate brightness and avoid working in the dark room.

Based on the results, Quizlet seems to be a more useful tool for learning new vocabulary than traditional methods, but the results may be affected by the long testing period. Students also agree that Quizlet is useful for repeating words that they have already learned, implying that the tool is beneficial when working with vocabulary.

Quizlet is useful with known vocabulary, and that Quizlet is a good aid to normal learning methods. Students should combine the former with the latter to gain the best results.

## CONCLUSION

This study was a part of the digital transformation process in teaching and learning ESFL in Vietnam. The aim of this case study was to investigate if using the Quizlet, one of the realizations of MALL, for vocabulary learning in a Hoang Hoa Tham Upper Secondary School makes the learning more effective and motivating than using the normal methods. The following key findings were beneficial for language teachers and learners in their learning and teaching. First, the data collected from tests and interviews suggest that using Quizlet would marginally improve vocabulary learning capacity. Therefore, compared to the normal method, it is an effective tool for learning new vocabulary. It is also acknowledged as a valuable tool for making lessons varied and fun and is motivating to the students. Second, in the process of using Quizlet to learn vocabulary, it is inevitable that students will be confused when they encounter vocabulary in context or related health issues. However, these problems are not so insignificant and can be completely solved. Third, according to the participants' responses to the questionnaire, Quizlet encouraged them to learn vocabulary at great frequency. They also indicated that they had high emotional engagement in using Quizlet. Quizlet was user-friendly and helped them to acquire vocabulary fast. Thus, Quizlet is effective in vocabulary memorization and development (Glotzbach, 2019). Finally, this research made a lot of contributions to the use of Quizlet in learning English vocabulary for ESFL upper secondary students in Viet Nam.

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## APPENDICES

### PRE-TEST

THE USE OF QUIZLET OUTSIDE CLASS IN ENHANCING ESFL LEARNERS' VOCABULARY LEARNING - A CASE STUDY IN HOANG HOA THAM UPPER SECONDARY SCHOOL IN DANANG

#### PRE-TEST ON LEARNING VOCABULARY

1. Which class are you in? \_\_\_\_\_

Question	Yes	No
2. Do you like learning English?		
3. Do you think learning new vocabulary is important?		

Translate the words into Vietnamese:

1	accompany (v)	
2	accomplished (adj)	
3	avid (adj)	
4	continually (adv)	
5	discarded (adj)	
6	fascinating (adj)	
7	fish tank (n)	
8	gigantic (adj)	
9	ignorantly (adv)	
10	indeed (adv)	
11	indulge in	
12	tune (n)	
13	wonder (n)	
14	appoint (v)	
15	artificial (adj)	
16	aspiration (n)	
17	astronaut (n)	
18	bid goodbye	
19	biography (n)	
20	breakthrough (n)	
21	caption (n)	
22	challenge (v) (n)	
23	Congress (N)	
24	conquest (n)	
25	cosmonaut (n)	
26	extreme (adj)	
27	feat (n)	
28	gravity (n)	
29	leap (n)	
30	mission (n)	
31	orbit (n)	
32	pioneer (n)	
33	pressure (n)	
34	psychological (adj)	
35	reminder (n)	
36	shuttle (n)	
37	tragic (adj)	
38	venture (n)	

## POST-TEST

THE USE OF QUIZLET OUTSIDE CLASS IN ENHANCING ESFL LEARNERS' VOCABULARY LEARNING - A CASE STUDY IN HOANG HOA THAM UPPER SECONDARY SCHOOL IN DANANG

### POST-TEST ON LEARNING VOCABULARY

1. Which class are you in? \_\_\_\_\_

Question	Yes	No
2. Do you like learning English?		
3. Do you think learning new vocabulary is important?		

4. If you have learned vocabulary by using Quizlet, do you prefer using Quizlet to learn English vocabulary to using traditional methods? Why?

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Translate the words into Vietnamese:

1	accompany (v)	
2	accomplished (adj)	
3	avid (adj)	
4	continually (adv)	
5	discarded (adj)	
6	fascinating (adj)	
7	fish tank (n)	
8	gigantic (adj)	
9	ignorantly (adv)	
10	indeed (adv)	
11	indulge in	
12	tune (n)	
13	wonder (n)	
14	appoint (v)	
15	artificial (adj)	
16	aspiration (n)	
17	astronaut (n)	
18	bid goodbye	
19	biography (n)	
20	breakthrough (n)	
21	caption (n)	
22	challenge (v) (n)	
23	Congress (N)	
24	conquest (n)	
25	cosmonaut (n)	
26	extreme (adj)	
27	feat (n)	
28	gravity (n)	
29	leap (n)	
30	mission (n)	
31	orbit (n)	
32	pioneer (n)	
33	pressure (n)	
34	psychological (adj)	
35	reminder (n)	
36	shuttle (n)	
37	tragic (adj)	
38	venture (n)	

## INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Do you think learning English vocabulary is important? Why? Why not?
2. Which vocabulary learning methods do you prefer?
3. Do you prefer using Quizlet or traditional methods when learning English vocabulary?
4. Is Quizlet an interesting and useful tool for learning vocabulary, and if yes, how?
5. Do you think learning vocabulary with Quizlet gives you better results?
6. Do you have any difficulties in using Quizlet to learn vocabulary? What are they?

## QUESTIONNAIRE

### STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF USING QUIZLET AS A VOCABULARY LEARNING TOOL

Question 1: How often do you use quizlet to learn English vocabulary?

- A. I did not study.
- B. 1-3 times a week.
- C. 4-6 times a week.
- D. Everyday.

Question 2: On average, how much time do you spend learning English vocabulary with quizlet?

- A. I did not study.
- B. Less than 20 minutes.
- C. 20 – 40 minutes.
- D. More than 60 minutes.

Question 3: Read and give your opinion on the following statements.

Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree
Quizlet helps me learn English vocabulary quickly.						
Quizlet helps me memorize English vocabulary in longer term.						
Using Quizlet helps me improve my English vocabulary.						
Learning English vocabulary via Quizlet is enjoyable.						
It is easy to use Quizlet to learn English vocabulary.						