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ENHANCING *VOCABULARY LEARNING WITH QUIZLET AND ANKI MOBILE APPS*

This research paper devotes an in-depth examination of effective methodologies for teaching vocabulary to students in higher education institutions in Kazakhstan. It is widely recognized that vocabulary is a fundamental component in the process of acquiring a new language. It's no secret that many teachers have prioritized grammar when teaching English. No one denies the need for grammar, but vocabulary plays a huge role in teaching a foreign language for communication. However, research signifies that students often struggle with communication due to insufficient vocabulary. While grammatical proficiency is essential, it is inadequate for effective communication when learners have a limited lexical repertoire.

The purpose of this study is to highlight the essential role of vocabulary in communication and examine its acquisition through mobile applications such as Quizlet and Anki. It will explore effective strategies for helping students retain and recall new words, phrases, and idiomatic expressions. Furthermore, the paper will examine how contemporary online tools, such as Quizlet and Anki, can enhance the memorization process, leveraging the power of advanced technology to support language learning in the digital age.

Keywords: vocabulary, tools, English, Quizlet, Anki, application.

Introduction

Vocabulary is widely recognized as the cornerstone of successful foreign language acquisition. Without it, communication becomes impossible, regardless of how well one knows grammar. While learners of English and other languages often

devote considerable time to grammar exercises and immersive media exposure, the critical role of vocabulary development remains undeniable. Developing a wide and active vocabulary is crucial for learners to express ideas, understand others, and navigate real-world interactions. Various methods for learning vocabulary have been used for the purpose of retaining a considerable number of words. «The issue is that many foreign language learners feel unmotivated or uninterested in learning new vocabulary when they cannot find clear explanations for this challenge» [1, p. 45].

Advances in technology have provided learners with new tools and strategies, revolutionizing the way vocabulary is acquired. Applications like Quizlet and Anki have enabled personalized and interactive learning, often with visual aids that enhance memory retention [3, p. 1].

Quizlet, a free online site and mobile app, is one of several available computing tools. Anyone can register for a free account and make electronic flashcards. Teachers can incorporate students into their classes and give targeted vocabulary learning using word cards they have produced. Students can create new cards or edit old ones, adding definitions, example sentences, audio recordings of the word, photographs, and even links to short films. Quizlet also offers assessment features, enabling teachers to create quizzes, tests, and games [2, p. 40].

«In teaching English, using anki as a computer-based flashcard program should be used by the teacher to improve students' vocabulary mastery. Teacher can choose any topic as the material for teaching. This will help both of teacher and students to run the learning method effectively and to make students more interest in learning English.» [4, p. 41]. Despite these resources, many university students continue to struggle with vocabulary acquisition, particularly those at the beginner level, where vocabulary forms the bedrock of all further learning. This complexity goes beyond simply memorizing definitions; it involves navigating linguistic interference, understanding nuanced meanings, and applying vocabulary within appropriate cultural contexts discusses some of the challenges and features of implementing a multilingual system in Kazakhstani secondary schools. Researching effective strategies requires understanding these challenges and exploring methodologies that address the specific needs of this multilingual learner population. For example, incorporating culturally relevant materials and utilizing techniques that bridge the gap between languages can be crucial. Additionally, understanding teachers' perspectives and experiences [4, p. 41], [5, p. 6] within this context is essential for developing practical and applicable teaching strategies. This research has the potential to significantly impact English language education in Kazakhstan by providing valuable insights for educators and policymakers alike.

British linguist David A. Wilkins famously stated, «Without grammar, very little can be conveyed; without vocabulary, nothing can be conveyed» [6,

p. 111]. This highlights the crucial role of vocabulary in language learning, as words are the foundation of communication. While grammar provides structure, a lack of vocabulary makes expressing even basic ideas impossible. For example, young children acquire language primarily by learning words first -they name objects, emotions, and needs before mastering complex grammar. Similarly, when learning a foreign language, students with a strong vocabulary can often communicate effectively, even with limited grammatical accuracy. In contrast, knowing grammatical rules without sufficient vocabulary severely restricts understanding and expression.

This paper aims to examine whether using Quizlet and Anki-specifically by adding images to digital flashcards-enhances vocabulary acquisition.

The acquisition of English vocabulary is a fundamental pillar of language learning, especially in countries like Kazakhstan, where English is primarily learned as a second language. A robust vocabulary is essential for effective communication, allowing learners to articulate their thoughts clearly and comprehend diverse texts with confidence.

One major challenge is learner motivation. When students fail to understand why vocabulary is difficult to learn or how to overcome this barrier, they may become disengaged. In multilingual environments like Kazakhstan, where English is often a second or third language, these challenges are intensified. Students must navigate linguistic interference from Kazakh and Russian, cultural differences, and the complexity of using vocabulary appropriately in diverse contexts.

The problem of finding effective vocabulary teaching strategies in Kazakhstan's trilingual education system is significant. English learners in this context face unique difficulties that require tailored teaching methods. Cultural relevance, multilingual interference, and teacher experience all influence student outcomes. As such, research must consider both the linguistic and sociocultural dimensions of vocabulary learning.

Vocabulary development extends beyond rote memorization. It requires grasping subtle meanings, applying words in context, and navigating challenges such as false cognates and loanwords. This complexity makes vocabulary instruction in Kazakhstan both demanding and essential. Educators need practical, locally relevant strategies to effectively support learners.

The current study explores whether incorporating images into electronic vocabulary flashcards (via Quizlet and Anki) improves vocabulary acquisition among Kazakhstani students. By identifying effective, culturally relevant methods, this research seeks to inform vocabulary instruction that is both practical and scalable.

It should be noted that mobile applications focused on a specific language skill, such as listening, not only involve auditory comprehension but also

incorporate training in reading, speaking, and vocabulary development. The versatility of mobile applications is one of the key advantages of organizing distance learning [7, p. 50].

Hypotheses

This study is guided by the following research questions:

Does the use of electronic flashcards with images (via Quizlet and Anki) enhance vocabulary acquisition among Kazakhstani university students learning English as a second or third language?

How does the inclusion of culturally relevant images in flashcards impact students' motivation and retention of new vocabulary?

What are the students' perceptions of using image-enhanced flashcards as a vocabulary learning tool?

Materials and methods

The study involved 30 students from the Academy of Physical Education and Mass Sports in Kazakhstan, all enrolled in an English as a Second Language (ESL) course. The group included five females and twenty-five males (note: your original version mistakenly repeated «males»). Participants represented various English proficiency levels, ranging from A1 to B1, as determined by a standardized placement test.

Their ages ranged from 18 to 20, and all were experienced in using Quizlet and Anki for vocabulary learning. All participants were Kazakhstani citizens and had lived in Kazakhstan since birth. Regarding their language learning background:

54.2 % had been learning English for more than one year.

29.2 % had been studying English since the 5th grade,

12.5 % began learning English three years ago.

All students regularly attended three compulsory 50-minute English lessons per week. Each participant had access to both smartphones and computers with internet connectivity, ensuring no technological barriers to using the apps. Participation in the study was voluntary, and students expressed a willingness to contribute to the research.

For this study, two digital tools-Quizlet and Anki-were selected for vocabulary learning. The rationale for choosing these apps is discussed below, based on the results of a preliminary questionnaire conducted among students at the academy.

Research Instruments:

Vocabulary tests (pre-, post-, and delayed post-tests) were designed to assess recall and recognition of the 16 target words.

A 23-item student questionnaire was used to assess participants' perceptions and learning habits.

14 items used a 5-point Likert scale to gather quantitative data on motivation, ease of use, perceived effectiveness, and satisfaction.

9 items explored the frequency and context of Quizlet use.

Open-ended questions allowed participants to express opinions on the benefits and limitations of both apps.

Learning materials and tools

Vocabulary items were drawn from the reading text Patagonia and delivered using flashcards on Quizlet and Anki. Each flashcard included:

The target word (front),

A definition,

A relevant image,

A pronunciation feature (back).

Quizlet's seven learning modes were available, including Flashcards, Learn, Write, Spell, Test, Match, and Gravity (historical mode). Anki offered spaced repetition, cloze deletion, image occlusion, typing answers, and audio integration for a customized experience.

Andrew Sutherland was the Founder and Chief Technology Officer of Quizlet. He started Quizlet while he was in high school because he wanted a tool to help him learn French. It has become a ubiquitous tool, used by the vast majority of teachers and students in the U.S. and soon the world. They use it to learn every imaginable thing. Andrew studied Computer Science at MIT, and left after three years to pursue Quizlet full-time. Quizlet offers seven self-study modes in total, each designed to help learners practice and retain information in different ways. These modes include:

Flashcards – Digital flashcards that allow learners to review terms and definitions.

Learn – An adaptive learning mode that guides users through progressively harder questions based on their performance.

Write – Requires users to type out answers from memory to reinforce learning.

Spell – Focuses on improving spelling by prompting users to type what they hear.

Test – Generates a customizable quiz with multiple-choice, true/false, and written-answer questions.

Match – A timed game where users match terms with their definitions as quickly as possible.

Gravity (previously available, now replaced by other features) – A space-themed game where users must quickly type answers before asteroids reach the bottom of the screen Anki primarily uses one core self-study mode based on spaced repetition, but it offers several ways to customize learning. Unlike Quizlet, which has multiple predefined modes, Anki is highly flexible, allowing users to adjust settings to fit their needs.

Anki operates using a flashcard-based system that schedules reviews based on how well the user remembers each card.

Users rate their recall strength (e.g., «Easy», «Good», «Hard», or «Again»), and Anki adjusts the interval for when the card will reappear.

Additional Customization & Features

While Anki technically has one primary mode, users can modify their study experience through various features:

Custom Study Sessions – Users can focus on specific cards, review forgotten ones, or change the order of study.

Cloze Deletion – Hides certain words in a sentence, forcing users to recall them.

Image Occlusion – Allows users to hide parts of an image (e.g., labeling diagrams for medical or language learning).

Audio Flashcards – Supports text-to-speech and recorded audio for pronunciation practice.

Typing Answers – Can be set up to require users to type responses instead of just recalling information mentally.

A key advantage of these apps is their ease of use: since they can be accessed on smartphones or tablets, students can engage with learning materials anytime and anywhere, seamlessly integrating study sessions into their daily routines. This accessibility has redefined how students approach vocabulary enhancement, establishing mobile apps as one of the most interactive and effective learning strategies available. The convenience they offer is unparalleled, enabling students to study at their own pace and in environments that suit them best. With the ubiquity of smartphones and tablets, these apps are highly accessible, accommodating any study schedule and making it remarkably easy for students to develop their English vocabulary skills. While it is likely to be the case, other factors may cause the progress such as practice effect [8, p. 250].

Data Analysis

To evaluate vocabulary acquisition:

A paired-sample t-test was conducted to compare pre-test and post-test scores.

A second paired t-test compared post-test and delayed post-test scores to assess long-term retention.

Descriptive statistics were calculated for questionnaire responses.

Qualitative responses were coded thematically to explore user perceptions and experiences.

Results and discussions

Results

Quantitative Findings

A total of 30 undergraduate ESL students from the Academy of Physical Education and Mass Sports participated in the questionnaire. The quantitative data were analyzed to understand the frequency of app usage, perceived effectiveness,

and feature preferences. To connect practical experience with theoretical content, we utilized a Google Forms questionnaire. The result of the questionnaire is the following:

Table 1 – Frequency of App Usage

Frequency of Use Percentage (%)	
Daily	12.5 %
Weekly	54.2 %
Monthly	20.8 %
Never Used	12.5%

Table 2 – Time Spent Using Apps per Day

Time Allocation	Percentage (%)
Less than 15 minutes	20.8 %
15–20 minutes	20.8 %
Less than 20 minutes	41.7 %

Table 3 – Perceived Effectiveness of Apps

Effectiveness Level	Percentage (%)
Highly effective (5/5)	34.8 %
Moderately effective (4/5)	33.3 %
Not effective (3/5)	30.4 %

Table 4 – Preference: Mobile Apps vs. Traditional Exercises

Preference	Percentage (%)
Mobile apps	60.0 %
Traditional textbook exercises	40.0 %

Table 5 – Integration of Apps into Classroom Learning

Response	Percentage (%)
Support integration	63.3 %
Oppose integration	3.4 %
Neutral or undecided	33.3 %

Table 6 – Preferred Features in Vocabulary Apps

Feature	Rating (5/5)
Pronunciation assistance	43.3 %

Writing and spelling exercises	30.0 %
Gamification elements	36.7 %
AI chatbot dialogues	40.0 %

Qualitative Findings

Qualitative content analysis was applied to open-ended responses. Three key themes emerged:

Perceived Benefits:

Students appreciated the interactive nature and flexibility of Quizlet and Anki.

Many respondents emphasized the importance of visual aids, pronunciation support, and the ability to study at any time.

Sample response: «Quizlet helps me remember vocabulary better because of the images and pronunciation».

According to the results indicated that low performers gained the most from studying vocabulary on Quizlet. Overall, Quizlet was highly beneficial for low- and mid-level students, but less so for high-level students, possibly because they had already achieved high scores.

After all, adequate English knowledge and skills are needed for them to be able to read and write international scientific papers. At this point, gamified vocabulary learning at home can be one of the alternatives to help university students enhance their vocabulary knowledge while studying specific courses in their academic majors. It is common knowledge that vocabulary knowledge underlies the knowledge and skills in reading, writing, listening, and speaking both either in L1 or L2 language [9, p. 171.].

Conclusions

That is the peak of this research, where mobile applications vividly influence university-level English vocabulary learning and bring out an important paradigm shift in the educational practices of using digital tools. The outcome, therefore, reveals an interesting trend where students prefer to use mobile technology in their efforts to learn vocabularies, since there is access, flexibility, and the interactivity brought about by mobile applications. Such preferences are reflective of a bigger digital trend that ekes out of traditional learning boundaries, offering the learner comfort in studying from his preferred time and place, hence fitting into his routine comfortably. Most of the students practiced vocabulary through a mobile application, which could reveal a trend of independence and personal learning environments, backed by the ubiquity of smartphones.

This becomes further manifest when the students value particular app benefits, including gamification and features for assisting learners in pronunciation. This does not only improve the learning experience on the whole but also caters to the different modes of learning and requirements. The openness to mobile apps for

formal educational settings points to the emerging educational landscape where technology and traditional methods shake hands for an amalgamated learning experience. Further, the way the study sheds light on the varied effectiveness of these tools, as seen by students, really drives home just how subjective learning tools are and how educational technologies need to be tailored to the profile of every individual learner.

In modern education, ignoring digital learning tools means missing a key opportunity to improve language skills. Research shows that apps like Quizlet and Anki use scientifically proven methods to make vocabulary learning faster and more effective. These platforms help learners memorize words through spaced repetition, a technique that strengthens long-term memory.

Thanks to utilizing these applications, students not only expand their vocabulary but also boost speaking and communication skills. Interactive exercises, such as flashcards, quizzes, and audio examples, help learners understand words in real-life contexts. This is much more effective than just memorizing word lists because it improves recall and usage in conversation.

Moreover, digital tools make learning flexible and personalized. Students can study anytime, anywhere, and track their progress. For learners in multilingual environments like Kazakhstan, these apps can also reduce language interference by providing clear examples and pronunciation guides. The effectiveness of technology for vocabulary learning can be increased with multimedia tools, text, visuals, audio, and animations; in other words, with interactive and engaging interfaces, as they are more attractive and let learners enjoy personalized learning. Also, vocabulary tools can easily adapt to students' proficiency rates, their interests, and their aims, providing them with tailored word lists and tasks that are appropriate for the learner's demands [10, p. 99.].

In conclusion, technology like Quizlet is not just helpful – it is essential for modern language learners. By using these tools, students can learn vocabulary more efficiently and communicate more confidently. It is no doubt that the use of Quizlet for learning vocabulary is efficient.

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СӨЗДІК ҚОРДЫ БАЙЫТУҒА АРНАЛҒАН QUIZLET ЖӘНЕ ANKI МОБИЛЬДІ ҚОСЫМШАЛАРЫ

Технологияның, әсіресе смартфондар саласындағы, жылдам дамуы білім беру стратегияларын жүзеге асыру тәсілдерін түбегейлі өзгертіп, ағылшын тілін үйрену саласында елеулі өзгерістерге әкелді. Бұл зерттеу университет студенттерінің ағылшын тіліндегі сөздік қорын дамытуда мобильді қосымшалардың тиімділігін зерттейді. Зерттеу ағылшын тілін үйрену үшін мобильді қосымшаларды пайдаланудың студенттердің қолдану үлгілері мен түсініктеріне бағытталған және дене тәрбиесі мен массалық спорт саласында мамандаған оқу орнында әртүрлі академиялық бағыттағы студенттер арасында жүргізілген құрылымдалған сауалнама деректеріне негізделген.

Бұл мақалада студенттердің дәстүрлі оқу әдістеріне қарағанда мобильді қосымшаларды қолданудың артықшылықтары, жиілігі, ұзақтығы және олардың тіл үйренудегі тиімділігі талданады. Нәтижелер мобильді қосымшалардың сөздік қорын үйренуге ыңғайлылығын және тиімділігін көрсетеді. Ойындану (gamification) және интеграцияланған айтылымды қолдау сияқты ерекшеліктер студенттер арасында үлкен құндылыққа ие болып, интерактивті, аудиовизуалды элементтердің қатысуды және оқу нәтижелерін арттырудағы тиімділігін атап өтеді.

Кілтті сөздер: сөздік қор, құралдар, ағылшын тілі, Quizlet, Anki, application.

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МОБИЛЬНЫЕ ПРИЛОЖЕНИЯ QUIZLET И ANKI ДЛЯ УЛУЧШЕНИЯ ИЗУЧЕНИЯ СЛОВАРНОГО ЗАПАСА

Быстрое развитие технологий, особенно в области смартфонов, кардинально изменило подходы и методы реализации образовательных стратегий, в частности в сфере изучения английского языка. Данное исследование изучает эффективность мобильных приложений в улучшении усвоения английской лексики среди студентов университетов. Исследование сосредоточено на восприятии и моделях использования мобильных приложений для изучения английской лексики, основываясь на данных структурированного опроса, проведенного среди студентов бакалавриата различных академических направлений в учебном заведении, специализирующемся на физическом воспитании и массовом спорте.

В данной статье рассматриваются предпочтения студентов в использовании мобильных приложений по сравнению с традиционными методами обучения, анализируются частота, продолжительность и воспринимаемые преимущества этих инструментов в изучении языка. Результаты показывают сильную склонность студентов к использованию мобильных приложений для изучения лексики, при этом значительное большинство студентов, как на местном, так и на глобальном уровне, используют эти приложения ежедневно или еженедельно.

Результаты подчеркивают удобство и эффективность мобильных приложений в обеспечении гибкого изучения лексики. Особенно ценятся такие функции, как геймификация (игровые элементы) и встроенная поддержка произношения, что подчеркивает эффективность интерактивных аудиовизуальных элементов в повышении вовлеченности и результатов обучения.

Ключевые слова: словарный запас, инструменты, английский, Quizlet, Anki, приложение.