



TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF USING VARIOUS EDUCATIONAL APPLICATIONS IN VOCABULARY TEACHING

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Abstract

The objective of this study is to examine the perspectives of teachers on the use of a variety of technologies in the instruction of vocabulary to junior high school students. The study was conducted in two schools in Kecamatan Gunuang Omeh, West Sumatra, and involved four English teachers. Classroom observations and interviews were employed to gather comprehensive insights into their instructional practices. The results indicate that technology is generally regarded by teachers as a highly effective instrument for improving vocabulary acquisition. Applications like Kahoot!, Wordwall, and Quizlet were commended for their adaptability to students' learning styles, engagement, and interactivity. These tools were perceived to increase student motivation and facilitate more dynamic and personalized vocabulary learning. Additionally, educators identified obstacles, such as lack of facilities, limited digital literacy, and poor internet connectivity, which often hinder effective implementation. Nevertheless, they presented a strong desire to continue investigating and integrating technological tools to enhance student outcomes. The study highlights the necessity of enhanced infrastructure and targeted teacher training to optimise the integration of technology in language instruction, particularly in rural or under-resourced areas.

Keywords: Teachers' perception, Vocabulary Teaching, Educational Technology, Wordwall, Kahoot!, Quizlet

INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary is a fundamental component of linguistic competence. Limited vocabulary affects learners' ability to comprehend spoken or written texts, express their thoughts, or participate meaningfully in conversations (Durgunoglu et al., 2021). For junior high school students, vocabulary acquisition provides the foundation for developing the four language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Robiya et al., 2024). In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching especially in Indonesia, vocabulary acquisition frequently poses difficulties for students due to their restricted exposure to new vocabulary, not enough practice, and dominance of teacher-centered pedagogies (Almusharraf, 2020).

The integration of digital technology into language teaching is gaining significant importance (Shadiev & Yang, 2020). A growing body of research emphasises that educational applications can function as engaging and adaptive instruments for vocabulary learning (Zou et al., 2021). Platforms like Kahoot!, Wordwall, and Quizlet are popular for their interactivity, gamified learning formats, and ability to provide personalised feedback. These applications aim to accommodate various learning methods and offer repeated exposure to target language in a dynamic, learner-centred setting. Additionally, they

promote the cultivation of 21st-century competencies by enhancing digital literacy, independence, and collaboration among students (Martínez-Bravo et al., 2022).

In Indonesia, the implementation of educational technology has been promoted through national policies and curriculum modifications (Machmud et al., 2021). However, its implementation is inconsistent between regions, particularly in rural areas. Schools located in rural areas often face difficulties, including unstable internet connectivity, restricted availability of digital gadgets, and limited teacher training (Das et al., 2021). Understanding the perspectives of teachers in these regions about the use of digital tools could provide valuable insights on the application of technology in limited in resources schools (Haleem et al., 2022).

Teachers are essential drivers in the integration of technology into the classroom (Silva et al., 2020). Their attitudes, beliefs, and knowledge of teaching significantly impact the use and scope of educational applications. Teachers' perceptions influence their teaching decision-making, including tool selection, learning activity design, and reactions to student needs (Chounta et al., 2022). On the other hand, negative or ambivalent attitudes may result in resistance, superficial engagement of digital developments. In rural schools, where external assistance may be limited, teachers' opinions are essential in influencing the efficacy of technology-enhanced learning (Kim & Jang, 2020).

Despite the growing interest in digital tools for language learning, there is lack of research specifically investigating English teacher perceptions of employing educational applications for vocabulary training, especially in rural Indonesian settings. The majority of current research has concentrated on students' experiences, resulting in a deficiency in comprehending the viewpoints of teachers tasked with creating and implementing instructional strategy.

This study aims to explore the perceptions of English teachers in junior high schools in Kecamatan Gunuang Omeh regarding the utilisation of various educational applications for vocabulary teaching. It examines teachers' perceptions of the advantages and disadvantages of these tools, their application in the classroom, and the factors that affect their utilisation. This study specifically addresses the following research questions:

1. What are English teachers' perceptions of utilising different educational applications for teaching vocabulary to junior high school students?
2. What the challenges face by teachers when integrating educational applications like Kahoot!, Wordwall, and Quizlet into vocabulary teaching?

METHOD

This study utilized a qualitative descriptive methodology to investigate English teacher perceptions regarding the use of educational applications in vocabulary teaching. The qualitative approach was used as it allows researchers to obtain a comprehensive and contextual overview of participants' lived experiences, social behaviors, and processes of meaning-making (Creswell, 2014). The study took place in two junior high schools located in Kecamatan Gunuang Omeh, West Sumatra, Indonesia. Four English teachers were part of the study. The participants were selected based on their teaching expertise and previous utilization of digital resources, including programs like Kahoot!, Wordwall, and Quizlet, for vocabulary learning. Every teacher has a minimum of three years of teaching experience and had actively utilized at least one of the previously stated applications.

Data was collected through classroom observations and semi-structured interviews. Observations were carried out during vocabulary-focused lessons to document the integration of educational applications into teaching methodologies and the students' responses to them. Emphasis was directed into the form of interaction, student involvement, and classroom dynamics. Following to the observations, semi-structured interviews were conducted to further investigate the teachers' perceptions, encompassing perceived advantages, problems, and pedagogical consequences of using such programs. The interviews were conducted in Bahasa Indonesia, audio-recorded with approval, and transcribed for further analysis.

The data analysis followed the thematic analysis framework developed by Braun and Clarke (2006), including six phases: familiarization with the data, generation of initial codes, theme identification, theme review, theme definition and naming, and report composition. The analysis was performed inductively to facilitate the development of themes from the data, unencumbered by pre-existing theoretical frameworks. To enhance the trustworthiness of the study, data triangulation was employed by comparing results from interviews and observations, while reflective notes were maintained for added confirmability.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

RQ1: What are English teachers' perceptions of utilising different educational applications for teaching vocabulary to junior high school students?

Interviews and classroom observations indicate that all four English teachers had generally positive perspectives regarding the utilization of educational applications—specifically Wordwall, Kahoot!, and Quizlet—to enhance vocabulary learning. These technologies were seen as significant in increasing student engagement, increasing motivation, and facilitating improved vocabulary retention, especially in junior high school contexts where learners are still developing their language skills.

Two teachers (P1 and P2) consistently use Wordwall in their teaching. It was described as an interactive and time-efficient platform allowing teachers to quickly design customized vocabulary lessons. P1 highlighted the importance of Wordwall in creating a more active and interactive classroom.

"I really like utilize Wordwall. It facilitates the delivery of vocabulary lessons in an engaging and innovative way. The students show increased enthusiasm and concentration when I introduce games such as matching or the spinning wheel." (P1)

P2 also shared the same view, mentioning that Wordwall helps save preparation time and aligns with students' preferences.

"Creating vocabulary games with Wordwall is a quick process, and the students find them enjoyable. They show more enthusiasm as they feel the moment as play rather than studying." (P2)

These findings support the previous literature highlighting that gamified learning environments, such as Wordwall, enhance student engagement and accommodate to various learning styles (Widhiatama & Brameswari, 2024). The utilization of templates and interactive exercises fosters active engagement, essential for vocabulary acquisition (Rodriguez-Escobar et al., 2023).

Furthermore, P3 who integrated Kahoot! into their teaching, praised the application's competitive attributes, asserting that it generated a sense of enthusiasm and urgency among students:

"Kahoot! brings energy into the classroom. Students exhibit increased engagement and concentration due to their motivation for achievement. It enhances their commitment to remembering the words." (P3)

This observation aligns with Wang and Huang (2023), who found that teachers regard digital competition as an effective method to enhance student motivation and performance. The teacher noted that Kahoot! provides immediate formative assessment, permitting real-time monitoring of student development (Mdlalose et al., 2022).

P4, who utilized Quizlet, valued its adaptability and focus on learner autonomy. Quizlet's digital flashcards, games, and learning modalities offered students resources for personalized review, both in and out of the classroom:

"Quizlet is helpful, particularly for individuals who like studying at home. They can create their own flashcards and assess themselves. It is adaptable and accommodates various learning styles." (P4)

This viewpoint aligns with previous research emphasizing the efficacy of spaced repetition and student-created content in vocabulary acquisition (Bueno-Alastuey & Nemeth, 2022).

In conclusion, teachers' perceptions of educational applications were highly positive, with each tool presenting different benefits that corresponded to various instructional objectives and student preferences. These perspectives highlight the significance of teacher agency in determining the application of technology in the classroom, while also emphasizing that ongoing support and infrastructure are crucial for optimizing the efficacy of digital technologies in vocabulary instruction.

RQ2: What the challenges face by teachers when integrating educational applications like Kahoot!, Wordwall, and Quizlet into vocabulary teaching?

Although the advantages of utilizing educational applications were acknowledged, teachers faced numerous challenges that impeded the seamless use of these technologies into vocabulary teaching. Teachers identified insufficient school infrastructure and unstable internet connectivity as obstacles to the effective implementation of these tools. One teacher said that:

"Sometimes, the internet stops operating during the activity. The students become distracted, resulting in a pointless session" (P1)

Another difficulty was the teachers' constrained digital literacy. Although all participants were enthusiastic about incorporating technology, they acknowledged mostly depending on self-directed learning or peer assistance instead of formal training programs.

These findings align with other research that emphasizes the digital divide and infrastructure deficiencies as critical obstacles to effective technology integration, particularly in rural or under-resourced regions (Li et al., 2024). The teachers' reliance on peer learning and trial-and-error highlights a larger concern regarding insufficient institutional support, potentially impacting the consistency and quality of technology-driven instruction (Jita & Dhliwayo, 2024). Kaimara et al. (2021) assert that the full potential of game-based learning platforms cannot be achieved in the classroom without sufficient training and system support.

CONCLUSION

This study explored English teachers' perceptions regarding the utilization of different educational applications—Wordwall, Kahoot!, and Quizlet—for vocabulary instruction in junior high school students. The results indicate that these digital tools were predominantly regarded as beneficial in improving students' motivation, engagement, and vocabulary retention. Teachers highlighted that the interactive and gamified elements of the programs cater to many learning styles, rendering language education more engaging and pleasurable.

Nonetheless, other obstacles were discovered, including limited school infrastructure, unreliable internet connectivity, and teacher lack of formal digital training. Despite these obstacles, educators exhibited an outstanding commitment to persist in incorporating technology into their pedagogical methods, utilizing peer support and self-direct learning.

The research highlights the urgent necessity for enhanced technology infrastructure and specialized digital literacy initiatives for educators, especially in rural areas. By tackling these challenges, schools can enhance the effective and fair implementation of instructional technology in language teaching.

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