

Learning English Vocabulary through Essential Vocabulary Application: Students' Perceptions

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Abstract

Technology plays an important role in English language learning, especially in vocabulary acquisition. This research is motivated by several problems faced by the students of secondary school in North Sumatra related to English vocabulary. This study aims to explore the students' perceptions of using Essential Vocabulary application to learn English vocabulary. A qualitative case study method was used, involving one class of 20 students in the eighth grade of a secondary school in North Sumatra. Students consisted of both males and females in grade eight. The data were collected through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The students completed a thirty-minute questionnaire and five selected students were interviewed in more depth on the use of the Essential Vocabulary app. The findings of this study revealed five main themes in students' perceptions regarding the use of the Essential Vocabulary app. The five main themes are: usability, effectiveness, interactivity, confidence and motivation, and the last is satisfaction.

Keywords: *English Vocabulary Learning; Essential Vocabulary Application; Students' Perceptions*

INTRODUCTION

Technology has a big influence on education, particularly in English lessons, as it helps attract the students' attention and improves the teaching and learning process (Zheltukhina et al., 2023; Srivani et al., 2022; Lee et al., 2022). It significantly impacts education, particularly in English courses, by changing the way teaching and learning take place (Pinargote et al., 2024; Pham, 2022; Erbas et al., 2021). It is critical to attract students' attention and create a more interesting and participatory learning environment. The students can connect with the knowledge more dynamically using multimedia resources such as videos, interactive applications, and educational games, allowing them to stay focused and motivated (Guo, 2022). Furthermore, technology enables more individualized learning experiences, allowing students to work independently and receive immediate feedback via digital platforms. Teachers can also use technology to supplement their instruction with a broader range of materials, such as online dictionaries, grammar checks, and language learning apps. This makes English courses more interesting and allows students to improve their language skills more effectively, increase vocabulary, and understand the vocabulary well (Priyadarshini et al., 2023).

Technology plays a very important role in the world of teaching, especially the English teaching world. Technology has eased and facilitated learning, especially English language learning (vocabulary), for students to remember and understand the material or vocabulary

(Saranya & Saranya, 2022; Hao et al., 2021). Technology is not just about sophisticated tools but also about several ways to utilize tools to increase productivity (Edgerton, 2007). Using and utilizing multimedia applications and content such as YT and TikTok allows and helps students to learn vocabulary in various life contexts so that learning becomes much more effective and students easily remember vocabulary (Teng, 2023). Therefore, technology is expected to help students learn vocabulary and be a tool for students to learn English more deeply. By using technology or apps to learn vocabulary, students can practice alone at their own pace and receive feedback directly from the app so they can remember and master the vocabulary better (Fengyu, 2023).

Using applications and technology can significantly facilitate students' understanding of the material, particularly in learning English vocabulary. The challenge often encountered in vocabulary acquisition is that students find it difficult to memorize new vocabulary (Rosyada-AS & Apoko, 2023; Tsuraya & Awaliah, 2022). The Essential Vocabulary application aims to solve these problems by offering structured and engaging vocabulary learning. In addition, it offers interactive exercises that can help students remember new and rarely heard vocabulary in everyday life. Many students have difficulty remembering and even understanding vocabulary, so it is necessary to implement a solution to overcome this common problem (Hasan, 2024; Ankawi, 2022). This application is designed to overcome these problems and support students in mastering and improving their vocabulary knowledge.

In the research context, the researchers found some challenges or problems students face in one of the secondary schools in North Sumatra. Before explaining the problems in the school, (Linse, 2005) argued that vocabulary is a set of words people know. In addition, vocabulary is a very important component when learning a new language, especially in learning English (Sundanis & Akbar, 2025). Therefore, if students do not have much vocabulary, it will be difficult for them to receive or send information (Hidayat et al., 2025). The problems and challenges faced by secondary school students vary. Some students are afraid to mention the vocabulary in front of the class. Some students find it difficult to remember vocabulary, especially vocabulary rarely used daily. The researchers also found problems, such as students not knowing the difference between verbs, adjectives, and nouns. They only memorize but do not understand. The next problem researchers found was that students could not apply the vocabulary to a sentence. One of the problems is the lack of motivation to learn the vocabulary due to the boring learning model. Technology is important in increasing student motivation (Panagiotidis et al., 2023). Educational technology is the planning, developing, and applying systems and tools to improve learning effectiveness. This includes digital media, software, and online learning platforms (JanusJewsky & Molenda, 2008).

To that extent, an application is needed to overcome the problems found by research researchers in one of the secondary schools in North Sumatra. The application that will be used to bridge the gap is the "Essential Vocabulary application." Ramazan developed the "Essential English Vocabulary" app, which is accessible for iOS devices. This application has been downloaded 50 thousand times in the Play Store. The software is intended to assist users in increasing their English vocabulary by offering word definitions, synonyms, spellings, and sentence use examples. This app also provides word usage in a sentence. In addition, the app includes tests to check that users grasp the phrases they have learned. After achieving a particular score, users can proceed to the following lesson, which includes a new word list. To make learning easier, words are categorized into many categories. The software will also add new terms as the system changes. This software has a wide range of vocabulary, from beginner to

advanced. The application discusses the vocabulary (such as its description and when it is used) and explains the term's class. Because vocabulary is an essential component of the English language. Furthermore (Rashid et al., 2022) stated that vocabulary is an important aspect of the English language, and its study is critical for students and researchers in English language acquisition.

Some previous studies have researched the use of applications in learning English vocabulary. (Zakiyah & Afriani, 2024) Have researched the Duolingo application at secondary schools in Banyuwangi. The study found that the Duolingo application increased motivation and interest in learning, effectiveness in developing vocabulary, and ease of use. The research done by Rahman & Nabhan (2023) on the Hello English Application in junior high school, resulted in the findings of two main themes: the benefits of the app and student-related concerns when using the app, such as difficulties when registering. Furthermore, (Aprilani, 2021) has researched the Quizlet application for learning English vocabulary. Although some previous studies have conducted research on applications for learning English vocabulary, few have conducted research on Essential Vocabulary applications as a tool for learning English vocabulary. For this reason, the researchers conducted this research on the Essential Vocabulary Application. Where this research is important to do because this research aims to find out: How are students' perceptions after using the essential vocabulary application to learn English vocabulary in the classroom?

METHOD

Research Design

This research used a qualitative case study, in which the researchers explored the real-life activities, beliefs, behaviors, and personalities of subjects from various points of view to highlight and explore the various complexities of the phenomenon they are and how to understand a problem based on the perspective of people involved in the problem (Baxter & Jack, 2008). The case study method thoroughly examined students' viewpoints on using the Essential Vocabulary Application for acquiring English vocabulary. This design enabled a comprehensive understanding of how students interacted with the program, their experiences, and the educational outcomes associated with its use.

Participants & Collecting Data

The participants of this study were 20 students in the eighth grade in one of the secondary levels in North Sumatra. The researchers conducted the study with 20 students because the researchers only examined one class, and one class consisted of 20 students. The participants were male and female students, providing a diverse sample to examine various perspectives on the app. After that, five of them will be selected to be interviewed more deeply about the app. Five of them were selected for the interview because only they were willing to be interviewed further about the app. This study collected data through questionnaires and interviews. The questionnaire consisted of 10 statements about the app. The questionnaires were presented in hard copy, and students could complete them within 30 minutes. The questionnaires used a Likert scale (1-5) to determine whether students agreed or disagreed with various statements about usability, effectiveness, etc.

Furthermore, five selected students were interviewed semi-structured to learn more about their experiences and perspectives of the app. This strategy allowed for the investigation of individual narratives and thorough feedback.

Techniques of Data Analysis

The data were analyzed in two ways. First, content analysis was used to examine the data from the questionnaires regarding students' perceptions of the Essential Vocabulary Application in learning English vocabulary. Second, interpretation data was collected to analyze the results of in-depth interviews with students about using the Essential Vocabulary Application in learning English vocabulary.

RESULTS

The following is the data from the questioners that have been filled in by the students in one of the secondary schools in North Sumatra.

No	Statement of Questionanres	Strongly Agree	Agree	Nutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	The “Essential Vocabulary” app is easy to use	90%	10%	0%	0%	0%
2	I feel it’s easier to remember English vocabulary after using this app.	20%	75%	0%	5%	0%
3	The quiz feature in this app helps me evaluate my understanding of the vocabulary I have learned.	0%	90%	5%	5%	0%
4	This app helps me understand the difference between adjectives, nouns and verbs.	0%	60%	30%	10%	0%
5	This app helps me understand how to use vocabulary in a sentence	60%	20%	20%	0%	0%
6	This app allows me to learn vocabulary more effectively than learning from the book.	50%	40%	10%	0%	0%
7	This app makes learning vocabulary more interesting and fun.	30%	55%	15%	0%	0%
8	I feel more confident using english vocabulary in daily conversation after using this app.	10%	30%	55%	5%	0%
9	I feel motivated to keep learning new vocabulary using this app	25%	65%	10%	0%	0%

10	Overall I am satisfied with the learning experience using this app.	30%	40%	15%	15%	0%
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Based on the questionnaire data above, the researchers found 5 categories of perception. The five categories are: Usability, effectiveness, interactivity, confidence and motivation and satisfaction.

1. Usability

The term usability appeared in this study because of questionnaire number one. The researchers categorized this questionnaire into usability. The first questionnaire shows that 90% of respondents strongly agree that this application is easy to use anywhere, 10% answered agree, and no respondents answered neutral, disagree, or strongly disagree. The questionnaire results are also reinforced by interviews with students as follows:

“This application is easy to use because it can be used offline or online” (S1).

“The material in this application can be downloaded, so when I don't have an internet package I can still learn from this application” (S3).

Based on the results of the interviews above, the Essential Vocabulary application is easy to use and students are happy because this application can also be used offline if they have downloaded the material previously.

2. Effectiveness

This effectiveness category was derived from questionnaire number two to six. These five items served as references for the researchers in categorizing them under effectiveness. The second questionnaire showed that 20% of the students strongly agreed that it was easier for them to remember the vocabulary after using this app, 75% of the students agreed, none of the students answered neutral, 5% of the students said disagree, and none of the students answered strongly disagree. The third questionnaire showed that none of the students strongly agreed that the quiz feature on the app helped them evaluate their understanding of the vocabulary they have learned, but 90% of the students agreed, 5% of the students answered neutral, 5% also answered disagree and none of the students answered strongly disagree.

The fourth questionnaire showed that none of the students strongly agreed with the statement, “This app helps me distinguish between verbs, adjectives and nouns.” 60% of the students agreed, 30% of the students were neutral, 10% of the students disagreed, and none of the students strongly disagreed. Then, the fifth questionnaire showed that 60% of students strongly agreed that this app helps them understand how to use vocabulary in a sentence, 20% of students agreed, 20% also said neutral, and none of the students answered disagree and strongly disagree in this fifth questionnaire. Furthermore, the sixth questionnaire showed that 50% of

students strongly agreed that this app allows them to learn vocabulary more effectively than learning from books, 40% of students agreed, 10% of students answered neutral, and none answered disagree or strongly disagree.

The survey results are supported by the results of interviews with students as follows:

“Yes, I think it is easier for me to remember English words through this application, because in this application there are pictures that refer to the vocabulary” (S4).

“After using this application, it is easier for me to remember vocabulary because there is a pronunciation of vocabulary in the application” (S5).

“After using this app, I know which are nouns, adjectives and verbs because the app gives symbols after the words” (S3).

“This app presents example sentences so I know how to use the vocabulary and everything is complete” (S2).

“The quiz feature is helpful in evaluating the vocabulary that has been learned because the quiz is interesting” (S1).

From some of the results of these interviews it can be concluded that this application is very effective as a medium for learning English vocabulary, because this application not only enriched students' vocabulary but also helped students how to pronounced the word, the difference between verbs, adjectives, nouns and how to made sentences using these vocabulary.

3. Interactivity

The seventh questionnaire is categorized into interactivity. This questionnaire showed that 30% of students strongly agree that this application makes vocabulary learning more interesting and exciting, 55% answered agree, 15% chose the neutral option, and no students disagreed or strongly disagreed. Statements from the interview results support the survey results:

“I really like this application because there are pictures in the application, so I don't get bored when using the application” (S1).

“In the application there are pictures, pronunciation of words and quizzes, I am very happy when learning using this application” (S5).

The interview results suggest that this application is very attractive to students because of its complete features, such as pictures, quizzes, and pronunciation. Students also said that they like learning through this app because it does not bore them.

4. Confidence and Motivation

This category is derived from questionnaire number eight and nine. These questionnaires are reasons for researchers to categorize into confidence and motivation. The eighth questionnaire showed that none of the students answered strongly agree with the statement “I feel more confident using English vocabulary in daily conversation after using this app,” 10% of students answered strongly agree, 30% of students agreed with the statement, 55% of students answered neutral, 5% of students answered disagree, and no students answered the option strongly disagree. Furthermore, the ninth questionnaire showed that 25% of students strongly agreed that they felt motivated to continue learning new vocabulary using this app, 65% of students agreed, 10% answered neutral, and none answered disagree or strongly disagree. The following interview results also reinforce the survey results:

“After using this app, I became diligent in learning and memorizing new vocabulary. That's because this app contains complete features such as synonyms and antonyms. Besides learning new vocabulary, I also know the synonyms and antonyms of the word ” (S2).

“I became enthusiastic about learning on this app and like to learn and memorize through the app rather than books or dictionaries” (S3).

The result of interview showed that the app could increase students' motivation and confidence to learn new vocabulary.

5. Satisfaction

The last questionnaire is classified as satisfaction. The last questionnaire showed that 30% of the students strongly agreed that overall they were satisfied with the learning experience using the “Essential Vocabulary” app, 40% of the students agreed, 15% of the students were neutral, 15% of the students answered disagree and none of them chose the strongly disagree options. The following are the results of interviews conducted with students in the classroom to strengthen the survey results that have been obtained:

“I am very satisfied when learning using this application because it is supported by complete material” (S3).

“This application really helps me in learning English, especially English vocabulary” (S4).

“Overall this application is very good and helps me when learning English, especially vocabulary, but there is no translation here so that I have to open the dictionary to know the translation” (S1).

Based on the results of the interviews, it can be concluded that the overall Essential Vocabulary application is good. It provides comprehensive material and various features. However, it lacks a translation function, although it does include images that help clarify the meaning of words.

DISCUSSIONS

The purpose of this study is to explore the perceptions of students of secondary level in using Essential vocabulary to learn English vocabulary. Based on the results of data analysis, the researcher found five students' perceptions about this application in learning English vocabulary. The first finding is usability. The students believe this application is easy to use because it can be used offline and online. This finding aligns with (JanusJewsky & Molenda, 2008), who stated that educational technology should be designed to improve learning effectiveness through digital tools and systems.

The second finding of the study is effectiveness. The study found that by using this application, the students can remember vocabulary more easily, and the students understand more about English vocabulary, such as the differences between adjectives, nouns, and verbs explained in the research results. This supports the argument of (Hao et al., 2021), which further highlights that technology has eased and facilitated learning, especially English language learning (vocabulary), for students to remember and understand the material or vocabulary. The third finding of this research is interactivity. Interactivity refers to the extent to which students can actively engage in learning through the app's features. Some students stated that the presence of pictures, sounds, and quizzes can increase their learning motivation, and the learning process becomes more interactive. This finding aligns with (Teng, 2023), who stated that multimedia applications improve vocabulary acquisition by providing a contextualized and engaging learning experience. With interesting features, the students become more interactive in learning English vocabulary. The next finding is confidence and motivation. Confidence and motivation are two things that are interconnected and mutually needed when someone is exploring or learning something. In this case, it is the essential vocabulary application. This application can provide confidence and motivation to students when learning English vocabulary. This is also in line with (Panagiotidis et al., 2023) stated that technology can increase student motivation.

The last one is satisfaction. Overall, pupils expressed excellent satisfaction with the application. The survey findings revealed that 40% of students agreed, with 25% strongly agreeing, that they were satisfied with their learning experience using the program. Interviews also revealed that students valued the comprehensiveness of the materials and features. However, some students complained that the lack of a translation feature forced them to use extra resources, such as dictionaries, to fully comprehend some words. Despite this little flaw, the students found the tool useful in increasing their vocabulary knowledge. (Rashid et al., 2022) stressed the importance of vocabulary in language development and efficient communication.

This study's results are similar to those of previous research conducted by (Zakiyah & Afriani, 2024). While both studies showed that using English vocabulary learning tools, such as Essential Vocabulary and Duolingo, could improve students' vocabulary awareness, both apps used engaging interactive features to help children remember and understand english vocabulary. In addition, this study found that these apps can increase students' willingness to learn because the learning methods are more fun. Both Essential Vocabulary and Duolingo allowed students to

learn independently, anytime, and from anywhere so they could adjust the learning rhythm to their specific needs. In addition, both studies found that these apps can increase students' confidence when using English vocabulary.

The results of this study are also the same as those of (Aprilani, 2021). Both of those applications showed that in terms of effectiveness, the students could remember vocabulary well because of the picture, quiz, audio, and flash card features. In addition, the results showed that both applications increased student motivation to learn because both applications provided an interesting learning experience. Finally, the results of these two studies both showed that the Essential Vocabulary and Quizlet apps offer interactive learning, and students are not easily bored when using these two apps.

However, the results of this study differ from those of (Rahman and Nabhan, 2023). The research on Essential Vocabulary showed that students could easily access the application both online and offline. It can be said that this application is flexible and can be used anywhere and anytime. In contrast, the Hello English application showed that some students have difficulty when first using the application and are confused at the time of registration and choosing options in the application. Hence, they needed help from friends or teachers when they wanted to register and use it for the first time. In terms of effectiveness, the results (Rahman & Nabhan, 2023) showed that the Hello English application could help students pronounce words correctly, while the Essential Vocabulary application helped students recognize verbs, nouns, and adjectives and construct sentences using the vocabulary presented in the application.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study reveal that the Essential Vocabulary application is a good learning medium for learning English vocabulary. The study's results found five student perceptions of using the application. The five perceptions include the ease of use of the application (usability), effectiveness in improving understanding of English vocabulary (effectiveness), available audio features, quizzes, and images (interactivity), increasing students' motivation and confidence when learning English vocabulary (confidence & motivation) and overall students are satisfied with their learning experience using this application (satisfaction). These findings indicate that the Essential Vocabulary app can be an effective, useful, and fun learning tool for students and teachers.

This study has several limitations. This study was only conducted in one class with a limited number of participants, namely 20 students. Then the limitation of the application is that it does not provide a translation feature, so some students find it difficult to use this application. Therefore, it is recommended for future researchers to expand and multiply participants to obtain more representative data. In addition, developing a more comprehensive English vocabulary learning application, including translation features, is also an important recommendation to improve the effectiveness of learning media in the future.

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