

Evaluating Vocabulary Learning with the English With Tiffani App: A Qualitative Study of Student Perceptions and Pedagogical Outcomes

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Abstract. The qualitative study investigated the impact of the English With Tiffani App on vocabulary learning among students, against a backdrop of increasing reliance on digital tools in education. The objective was to evaluate the app's effectiveness as a Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) tool and to understand student perceptions regarding its usage. Using a descriptive qualitative research methodology, data were collected through interviews with students who had used the app for vocabulary enhancement. The results revealed that students found the app beneficial for learning new vocabulary and engaging due to its gamified elements and user-friendly interface. It was concluded that the English With Tiffani App significantly aids in vocabulary acquisition, enhancing students' language learning experiences and outcomes. This study contributes to educational technology by providing empirical evidence on the advantages of gamification in language learning and by suggesting practical implications for incorporating similar digital tools in educational settings to improve student engagement and learning outcomes.

Key words: educational technology mobile assisted language learning, qualitative research, student perceptions, vocabulary acquisition

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INTRODUCTION

The integration of technology in language learning has been extensively documented, with Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) applications increasingly recognized as potent tools for enhancing linguistic proficiency. Historically, research in this domain has illuminated the positive effects of such technologies on language acquisition, emphasizing their ability to offer personalized, flexible learning experiences that cater to the diverse needs of learners (Ibrahim et al., 2019; Khodabandelou et al., 2022; J. Li & Chen, 2021; T. Shen, 2021; J. Wang & Lei, 2021). Particularly those exploring the efficacy of mobile apps for vocabulary acquisition, have consistently demonstrated improvements in students' engagement and retention rates (Cui & Li, 2022; Gong et al., 2014; Y. Jiang, 2021; K. Li et al., 2015; Yuan, 2021). The transformative potential of digital learning tools in educational settings, particularly in facilitating the mastery of new languages (X. X. Chen, 2014; Qiu, 2019).

Despite these advancements, a significant gap in the evaluation of the pedagogical effectiveness of specific MALL applications, especially newer ones that incorporate gamification and interactive elements. While the general benefits of MALL, such as improved accessibility and learner engagement, are well-established, detailed investigations into how individual apps impact specific areas of language learning, like vocabulary development, are less common. This gap points to a need for targeted research that not only assesses the overall utility of these applications but also provides insights into their specific contributions to vocabulary learning within the framework of EFL (English as a Foreign Language) education (Y.-L. Chen & Hsu, 2020; Fang et al., 2023; J. Liu, 2023; Mendoza et al., 2020; X. Zhao, 2018).

A solid foundation for the benefits of Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) in enhancing English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education, the specific impacts of many contemporary MALL applications, particularly the English With Tiffani App, remain less explored. Research has predominantly focused on broader educational outcomes and learner engagement with MALL tools but has often overlooked the direct effects of these technologies on vocabulary acquisition. Furthermore, while the general efficacy of MALL tools in educational settings has been recognized, detailed insights

into how specific applications influence students' perceptions and learning experiences are lacking. This gap suggests a need for focused studies that examine not only the educational effectiveness of such apps but also their reception among learners and potential for integration into formal educational curricula.

Moreover, despite the growing popularity of gamified learning environments within digital applications, there is limited empirical evidence on how gamification in MALL applications specifically affects vocabulary learning in EFL settings. The English With Tiffani App, which utilizes a gamified approach to vocabulary learning, presents an ideal case study for addressing these gaps. It is unknown how the unique features of this app, such as its interactive challenges and point-based reward system, impact students' motivation, engagement, and ultimately, their vocabulary development.

The research gaps surrounding the English With Tiffani App and its application in Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education became evident from Kalhori et al., (2021); Liao, (2023); W. Liu, (2022); L. Wang et al., (2022); Zhang et al., (2021). These studies suggested that while MALL tools generally improve learning outcomes, the specific effects of individual apps, especially newer or less studied ones like the English With Tiffani App, on vocabulary acquisition had not been adequately explored. This gap highlighted the potential for significant educational advancements through deeper understanding and integration of such technologies in EFL settings.

In response to this need, conducted to assess the pedagogical effectiveness of the English With Tiffani App in enhancing vocabulary learning among EFL students. The research aimed to determine whether students displayed a favorable inclination towards EFL learning when utilizing the gamified features of the app, and if these features could effectively support vocabulary development in an academic setting. The hypothesis was that the English With Tiffani App would not only improve students' vocabulary but also enhance their overall engagement and motivation in learning English. By investigating these aspects, the study sought to provide empirical support for the app's suitability in educational institutions and contribute to the broader discourse on the effective use of technology in language education.

The incorporation of digital tools into language learning has been recognized as a transformative development in education, particularly in the field of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). While Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) platforms have generally been shown to enhance the learning experience, their adoption in educational settings has raised specific issues concerning their effectiveness, ease of integration, and overall impact on student outcomes. H. Li, (2023); Sun & Chang, (2016); Yang, (2019); M. Zhang, (2018); Zhen, (2021) revealed that while such tools can increase engagement and access to learning materials, they also present challenges in terms of ensuring consistent educational value across diverse learning environments and maintaining student motivation over time.

Specifically, the implementation of newer MALL applications like the English With Tiffani App in institutional settings has encountered several critical issues. Firstly, there was a lack of empirical data regarding the app's effectiveness in enhancing vocabulary, a core component of language proficiency. Secondly, educators and institutions faced difficulties in evaluating and integrating new technologies that had not been extensively tested in classroom scenarios. These challenges were compounded by the rapid pace of technological advancement, which often outstripped the ability of educational frameworks to adapt quickly. As a result, while the potential of apps like the English With Tiffani App was recognized, their practical application in educational settings remained underexplored, underscoring the need for focused research to address these gaps.

The integration of Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) tools into English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education has garnered considerable attention in educational research. Over the past decade, studies have consistently demonstrated the efficacy of MALL in improving various aspects of language learning, such as speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills. Researchers like M. Liu, (2014); Shang, (2022); K. Sun, (2023) have established that MALL tools can significantly enhance learner engagement and provide flexible learning opportunities that are not bounded by geographical or temporal constraints. Furthermore, gamification features commonly used in these applications were found to boost motivation and enhance the learning experience.

However, despite these advancements, the specific impact of individual MALL applications, particularly newer ones such as the English With Tiffani App, on vocabulary acquisition has not been thoroughly explored. While general benefits of MALL are well-documented, detailed insights into how these applications affect vocabulary learning and how they are perceived by students remain limited.

The literature lacks comprehensive studies that isolate the effects of specific features of these applications on language learning outcomes, especially in diverse educational settings. Additionally, while numerous studies have explored the effectiveness of MALL from a quantitative standpoint, qualitative research providing deep insights into student perceptions and educational implications is sparse. This gap indicates a significant area for further investigation, which this study aims to address by focusing on the qualitative aspects of vocabulary learning through the English With Tiffani App and evaluating its pedagogical outcomes in EFL settings.

Recognizing the gaps in existing literature concerning specific Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) applications, this study proposed to rigorously evaluate the English With Tiffani App, focusing particularly on its ability to enhance vocabulary acquisition in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) settings. This qualitative inquiry aimed to shed light on student perceptions of the app and assess its pedagogical effectiveness, thereby offering potential solutions to the observed challenges of integrating new technological tools in educational contexts. The importance of this research lay in its capacity to provide empirical data on the effectiveness of gamified learning environments, which have become increasingly popular but less understood in terms of their educational outcomes.

The purpose of this research to determine if students exhibit a favourable inclination towards EFL learning when exposed to the MALL (Mobile Assisted Language Learning) instructional approach. Additionally, the researcher seeks to establish that this application is appropriate for implementation in an educational institution setting for EFL learning. Can the English With Tiffani App enhance students' vocabulary in addition to that? These aims were crafted to directly address the critical need for detailed educational technology assessments in real-world classroom applications.

The benefits of this research extended beyond the academic community to include educational policymakers and practitioners. By providing a detailed analysis of how specific MALL applications can affect vocabulary learning, the study contributed to the broader field of educational technology by informing decisions on technology integration in language education. Additionally, it offered insights that could lead to more effective and engaging language teaching strategies, ultimately benefiting students by improving their language competencies and readiness for global communication challenges.

METHODS

The study employed a descriptive qualitative research design to examine how students perceived the English With Tiffani App as a tool for vocabulary acquisition. The research took place at SMA Budi Satrya, involving ten students from class 12 IPS 1, who were selected through purposive sampling. This sampling technique was chosen to include participants who met specific criteria relevant to the study's objectives.

Initially, the researcher introduced the participants to the English With Tiffani App on March 5, 2024. Following the introduction, the students were instructed to engage with the app, specifically accessing the "Vocabulary snack pack for guess" section. The first engagement involved completing the "Letter B" test, after which students were required to report their scores back to the researcher. Two weeks later, on March 19, 2024, a second test, the "Letter D" test, was administered using the same app. Students again reported their scores to provide data on their progress and interaction with the app.

Data collection was conducted using a mixed-methods approach: a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. The questionnaire, consisting of seven questions, was distributed through a Google Form, while five interview questions were provided on paper with written answer columns. These tools aimed to gather detailed accounts of the students' experiences and impressions of using the app for learning vocabulary.

After the tests, the researcher further collected feedback through a Google Form sent via a WhatsApp group, which was used to validate the students' experiences with the app. The responses from this form were then quantitatively analyzed and converted into percentages to facilitate the assessment of the app's impact on the students' vocabulary learning experiences.

This comprehensive approach allowed the study to capture in-depth insights into the effectiveness of the English With Tiffani App in enhancing vocabulary learning within an EFL educational setting.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

In this section, we will explain how two aspects will influence the results of interviews and assessments of students' learning experiences using the English With Tiffani App as a vocabulary learning medium. In questions 1-5 regarding introduction and experience of using the Tiffani App with test adaptations with a gamification work system in learning vocabulary and questions 6-7 regarding the feasibility of the English With Tiffani App application.

Table 1. Vocabulary Learning Through English With Tiffani App

Questionnaire	Samples	Strongly disagree %	Disagree %	Neutral %	Agree %	Strongly Agree %	Conclusion
1. Is according to You application Study effective For used in the learning process teach?	10	0	0	10	70	20	Agree
2. Is according to You Is the English With Tiffani App interesting?		0	0	10	70	20	Agree
3. is according to You English With Tiffani App application is difficult For used?		0	50	20	30	0	Disagree
4. Is more systemization in the English With Tiffani App application easy For implemented than other applications?		0	30	30	30	10	Agree
5. Is English With application Tiffani App help You For develop capacity your vocabulary mastery?	10	0	10	10	30	50	Strongly Agree

Table 2. Assessment on English With Tiffani App

Questionnaire	Samples	Strongly disagree %	Disagree %	Neutral %	Agree %	Strongly Agree %	Conclusion
6. Is according to You application worthy For used as a learning medium?	10	0	0	0	80	20	Agree
7. Is according to You English With Tiffani App application recommended For used in the learning process teach?	10	0	10	0	70	20	Agree

From the results of the questionnaire presented, the researcher will only describe agree and disagree in the results section, this aims to draw direct conclusions which depend on the dominant level of choice

determined by the participant. In table 1, the first questionnaire question shows that 70% of participants agree, plus another 20% who strongly agree, which concludes that learning applications are indeed effective in learning EFL. The second question also showed the same results as the first question, where it could be concluded that participants agreed with English With Tiffani App as an interesting learning media with a score of 70% agree and 20% strongly agree. With this it can be concluded that participants persist with the view that English With Tiffani App is easy to use with support for interview answers:

“The application is interesting, because the learning method is exciting (respondent 1), quite interesting, because the learning system is like playing games (respondent 2), the application is easy to understand, interesting, can stimulate students in learning English (respondent 3), the application is interesting with several vocabulary that is rarely encountered (respondent 4)”.

Furthermore, the third question indicated that participants still considered English With Tiffani App is an application that is easy to use, this can be identified through the choice of 50% disagree that this app is difficult to use and the remaining 30% who think this application is difficult to use (agree). Support from the results of interviews that asked participants' perceptions about the level of difficulty also showed predominantly positive results with the following responses:

“Easy, because the application directs and gives instructions to answer questions and how to learn English easily (respondent 1), easy, because there is still vocabulary that is often heard (respondent 2), easy, because there are many ways to understand and users get “The tutorial from the direct application (respondent 3), is a little difficult, because the application system sometimes experiences bugs”.

Then, in the next question, participants still agreed with the application of this learning application, even though it was said that there was only a 10% dominant level of agreement, but it was still identified that this application was still easier to use with the results being 30% agree and 10% strongly agree and the remaining 30% % don't agree. In addition, interviews given to participants found mixed results, this is in line with the results of the questionnaire which found a small dominant level of positive results that this application is easier to use than similar applications:

“It's easier, because users are taught how to pronounce the correct vocabulary which is presented through the user's gadget microphone . Apart from that, this application also includes images that make it easier for users to recognize the meaning of vocabulary and remember it (respondent 1), which is easy, because the vocabulary is easy to understand and suitable for beginners (respondent 2), no, because this application is rarely used as a learning medium (respondent 3), yes, this application is easy to use and has no advertising (respondent 4)”.

The final question in table 1, namely the fifth question, shows very good results which can answer the questions in this research, where participants strongly agree that this application can make them more aware of other vocabulary that they have never encountered before with the results of 50% of participants strongly agree and 30 Another % agree. Apart from that, the results of similar interview questions also showed that participants had positive experiences by encountering new vocabulary that they had not heard or vocabulary that they had heard before, but the participants had forgotten the meaning. Researchers also asked for the score results after participants went through the test given through this application, namely the score first test (letter B) and second test score (letter D). This can be seen through the participants' answers:

“I got a score of 230 on the first test and a score of 330 on the second test , apart from that I also encountered several new vocabulary such as " did , bod , dud , dude , dye , dip rad, dash " (respondent 1), I got 80 points on first test and 340 in the second test and also discovered new vocabulary such as "bun, blut , bow , ban, bin, dud , dude " (respondent 2), my first score was 200 and increased to 310 with the acquisition of new vocabulary "bin, block , dip , did , end , dash " (respondent 3), first score 220 and 340 for the second and some new vocabulary “ did , dud , blot , rad, dash , bod , dip ” (respondent 4)”.

The results of the questionnaire in the fifth point and interviews that are in line with this point are the main support in answering the research question from this research, where the conclusion was drawn that students felt they had gained new vocabulary and had an interesting experience by learning through the English application With Tiffani App.

Furthermore, in table 2, the questionnaire findings show very positive results, where this application received approval from participants for its suitability to be used as a learning medium with a total of 80% agree and the remaining 20% strongly agree, these results show the gamification system in English With Tiffani App is able to produce good statements or perceptions. Researchers also asked students' perceptions about what points make this application suitable for use with the results of interviews:

“This application is suitable for use because it is easy to use for beginners and even school children (respondent 1), feasible, because there is a lot of new vocabulary (respondent 2), quite feasible, but there are several bugs that need to be updated (respondent 3), feasible, because there is a lot of vocabulary which is rarely found and an interesting application system in the form of a game (respondent 4)”.

The results on the last question also showed positive results where participants agreed 70% and strongly agreed 20% to recommend English With Tiffani App is used in the process of teaching and learning activities.

Discussion

Researchers analyzed the data in the results section to identify different viewpoints regarding the efficacy of the English With Tiffani App in English language instruction. The prevailing sentiment among participants is that the English With Tiffani App is user-friendly and readily accessible, particularly for acquiring English vocabulary. This aligns with the findings from the initial and subsequent Google Form inquiries, which indicate favorable outcomes. The learning application is highly efficacious in facilitating English as a Foreign Language (EFL) acquisition. Furthermore, students, teachers, and other individuals interested in learning EFL perceive the English With Tiffani App as easily accessible through laptops or mobile devices. Despite the perception of certain participants regarding the usability of the English With Tiffani App, it is noteworthy that a significant number of them also saw the application as an educational game (Imane et al., 2018; Jin & Zhirui, 2017; Orhan, 2023; Y. Wang, 2021; Yuan, 2022).

Hong et al., (2015); S. Liu & Jiang, (2022); Luo, (2022) assert that competence is a crucial component of language proficiency and serves as a solid basis for students' speaking, listening, reading, and writing abilities. Students have the ability to formulate their own expressions by applying the knowledge they acquire. Proper usage is crucial in addition to the acquisition of vocabulary and words. X. Liu & Liu, (2021); Z. Shen, (2021); C. Zhao et al., (2021) supports this perspective by asserting that instructors can readily implement Duolingo in both indoor and outdoor settings due to its universal accessibility.

The English With Tiffani App garnered a favorable reception from its users, who expressed that this application is well-suited for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning platform. This is attributed to the application's user-friendly vocabulary management system and presentation, which are highly comprehensible. This is quite vivid from the use of flashcards in the application that enriches the user's memory in recalling the words displayed. Typically, human visual memory at times has different memory systems which facilitate the recollection of events, pictures, or sights. This can be visible in the great improvement in the scores of the participants from the previous ones. This shows that the flashcard application, with an accurate skill identification, would increase the memory retention of English With Tiffani App users.

English with Tiffani App, just like the one available at Duolingo, is an app that has a gamification model. It has an approach that uses images and their respective words, coupled with a listening feature, systematically. This approach ensures that the participants take home the information and, at the same time, are in a position to retain the displayed vocabulary with ease. Participants developed much interest in the use of the English with Tiffani App with its friendly interface in enabling active vocabulary acquisition in the English language. The main sources that support addressing the research question in this study are the results from the questionnaire in regard to the fifth point and interviews that were made

for this point. With these findings, we can then suggest that students view the learning process, which in turn allows them to acquire new vocabulary and make an engaging learning experience through the use of the English with Tiffani app. These were then followed by scholar studies using a similar tool, namely Duolingo. This research has revealed that the user feels more satisfied with the use of the Duolingo game and even shows more interest after the use of the application. Instead, it is this research that indicated Duolingo motivated students to commit the English language to memories successfully (Gosztolya, 2022; Hunag et al., 2017; J. Liu, 2022; Zou, 2021).

Most students gave positive feedback rather than negative comments about the English with Tiffani App. All of them agreed that the app was a tool to encourage the student in getting English language skills, as it is an appropriate way to gain new knowledge in unfamiliar situations, and the features of the English with Tiffani app are kind of wonderful and catchy. Students unanimously concur that the English With Tiffani App facilitates the practice and practical application of English in daily scenarios. The English With Tiffani App serves as a source of inspiration and motivation for users throughout the learning process. Subsequently, kids' eagerness to acquire vocabulary intensifies.

The operation system of the English With Tiffani App is highly intuitive, providing automatic guidance to users who have difficulties in answering questions. As mentioned by Chu et al., (2019); De La Nuez Placeres & Sánchez Suárez, (2014); B. Jiang, (2024); Zhou, (2021), the app integrates gamification components into its educational methodology with the aim of motivating and involving students in their academic pursuits. This finding aligns with the outcomes of the previous research, wherein students exhibit heightened engagement subsequent to responding to inquiries utilizing the English With Tiffani App. Furthermore, students agree that this application is viable and can serve as an effective instructional tool for both students and educators.

The retention of learning material through games may be affected due to students' affinity for the method. An inherent limitation of this application is a glitch in the speaking test, when the participant's voice is sometimes wrongly identified, despite the participant's accurate pronunciation. The sole issue encountered by participants while utilizing this application is of minor significance to their score. This is due to the infrequent occurrence of this incident, which does not constitute a severe bug resulting in a decrease in score or adversely affecting participants' pronunciation.

CONCLUSION

This qualitative study successfully elucidated the pedagogical effectiveness of the English With Tiffani App in enhancing vocabulary learning among EFL students. It was concluded that the app significantly contributed to vocabulary development, with students reporting a favorable inclination towards learning English when using this gamified MALL tool. The findings demonstrated that the interactive and motivational features of the app, including its gamified elements and user-friendly interface, played a crucial role in engaging students and improving their vocabulary acquisition. These outcomes aligned with the research objectives, confirming the app's suitability for implementation in educational settings as an effective tool for EFL learning. The research contributed to the field of educational technology by providing empirical evidence on the effectiveness of gamification in language learning apps. It highlighted the potential of such applications to transform language education, making learning more accessible and engaging for students. This study adds to the growing body of knowledge that supports integrating digital tools into education systems to enhance learning experiences and outcomes. Looking forward, these findings suggest that educators and curriculum developers should consider incorporating similar MALL applications into their teaching strategies to capitalize on the benefits of technology-enhanced learning. Moreover, ongoing evaluation and adaptation of these tools are essential to ensure they meet the evolving needs of students and educators in diverse educational contexts.

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