

## USING QUIZLET IN GENERATING LEARNERS' AUTONOMY IN LEARNING ENGLISH VOCABULARY

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ARTICLE INFO		ABSTRACT
Received:	04/3/2021	This paper presents some major findings of a recent study on the application of Quizlet in teaching English. One of the two objectives of this study is to see how autonomous learners are in learning vocabulary. 60 sophomore students from Thai Nguyen University of Economics and Business Administration took part in a 10-week experiment. In the first five weeks, the students were taught without Quizlet implementation, while in the five weeks of the second phase, Quizlet was relied on to facilitate vocabulary learning. Two survey questionnaires were delivered to the participants, before and after the experiment, to investigate their attitude towards learning vocabulary via Quizlet. The data analyses reveal that students feel more excited and eager to learn vocabulary; they became more active and more autonomous. Thus, it can be concluded that using Quizlet in teaching English vocabulary is beneficial to learners in the way that it can facilitate independent learning. Hopefully, these findings can encourage teachers, as well as learners, to use Quizlet more often in teaching and learning English, especially in the era of modern technology.
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### KEYWORDS

Quizlet  
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## ÁP DỤNG PHẦN MỀM QUIZLET NHẪM TẠO NÊN SỰ TỰ CHỦ CỦA NGƯỜI HỌC TRONG VIỆC HỌC TỪ VỰNG TIẾNG ANH CỦA SINH VIÊN

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THÔNG TIN BÀI BÁO		TÓM TẮT
Ngày nhận bài:	04/3/2021	Bài báo này trình bày một số kết quả quan trọng của một nghiên cứu gần đây về việc áp dụng Quizlet trong giảng dạy tiếng Anh. Một trong hai mục tiêu của nghiên cứu này là xem xét người học tự chủ như thế nào trong việc học từ vựng. Sáu mươi sinh viên năm thứ hai đến từ trường Đại học Kinh tế và Quản trị kinh doanh – Đại học Thái Nguyên đã tham gia vào nghiên cứu kéo dài 10 tuần. Trong năm tuần đầu tiên, sinh viên được dạy mà không có sự áp dụng của Quizlet, trong khi đó trong năm tuần tiếp theo của giai đoạn hai, Quizlet được đưa vào để hỗ trợ việc học từ vựng. Hai bảng câu hỏi khảo sát được chuyển tới các sinh viên tham gia trước và sau thực nghiệm để khảo sát thái độ học của sinh viên đối với việc học từ vựng qua Quizlet. Các phân tích dữ liệu cho thấy rằng sinh viên cảm thấy thích thú và háo hức hơn khi học từ vựng, hơn nữa, sinh viên còn trở nên chủ động và độc lập hơn. Như vậy, có thể kết luận rằng việc sử dụng Quizlet trong việc dạy từ vựng tiếng Anh là có lợi cho người học, hỗ trợ việc học độc lập. Hy vọng rằng, những kết quả này có thể khuyến khích giáo viên cũng như người học sử dụng Quizlet thường xuyên hơn trong việc dạy và học tiếng Anh, đặc biệt là trong thời đại công nghệ hiện đại.
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### TỪ KHÓA

Quizlet  
Người học tiếng Anh  
Tiếp nhận từ vựng  
Sự tự chủ của người học  
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## 1. Introduction

There is unanimous agreement that vocabulary plays a vital role in learning a second language (L2). According to Groot [1] vocabulary volume determines language learners' proficiency in reading, listening, speaking and writing. For instance, it will be much challenging for anyone to understand a non-specialized text without a vocabulary bank under 5000 words [2]. Therefore, promoting vocabulary learning has been a sustainable goal emphasized by any English training program, especially at basic levels. Though enriching lexical knowledge is important, vocabulary acquisition is challenging to a number of language learners due to the fact that it is by far the most sizeable and unmanageable component in language learning [3].

Vocabulary - the biggest component of any language course - is classified, in a general sense, as words in a language [4]. Jackson and Amvela [5] describe vocabulary simply as the total words stored in a language [5]. Another dictionary, Oxford Learner's Dictionary (2016) lists three definitions for the word 'vocabulary', which are (1) all the words that a person knows or uses, (2) all the words in a particular language, (3) the words that people use when they are talking about a particular subject [6]. According to these definitions, it can be concluded that there are the person's vocabulary, the language's vocabulary and the subject's vocabulary. In this study, the researchers refer to vocabulary as English words that a student knows or uses.

Teaching vocabulary can be one of the most controversial parts of teaching English as a foreign language. Teachers should be concerned that there is a big difference between teaching vocabulary for second language learners and native language learners. Knowing the meanings of words means learning the language. Both teachers and learners may have this tendency because it looks fruitful and easy to manage. Word meanings may be contextually different from their literal meanings. Distinguishing this difference in meaning requires more than knowing just the literal meaning of words. It requires sentence comprehension, paragraph coherence and some other skills. Learners who just focus on memorizing the literal meaning of words have difficulty in understanding the contexts.

Along with vocabulary acquisition, learner autonomy is a concept that was used by the educator Holec in education since the early 1981s. In Holec's opinion, learner autonomy is the capacity of the learner to take care of his or her own learning [7]. Autonomy in language learning is determined by the development and exercise of a capacity for detachment, critical reflection, decision making and independent action attempt included a model of five stages of 'learner behavior - 'awareness', 'involvement', 'intervention', 'creation' and 'transcendence' - which could guide the sequencing of learner development activities in language textbooks [8]. In short, autonomy has a fundamental principle: learners take charge of their learning and become responsible for it. According to Holec [7], Little [8], Benson [9], Dickinson [10], learners are considered autonomous when they:

- \* Understand her needs and is clear about her learning goals;
- \* Maximize the opportunities to practice English either inside or outside the classroom;
- \* Not be dependent on the teacher all the time and not think the teacher is totally responsible for her learning.

There has always been a link between educational technologies and autonomy, insofar as they have often been designed for independent use. The most recent generations of new technologies appear to be having a fundamental impact on the landscape of autonomous language learning [11].

In Toyoda's research [12], the results indicate that when learners have sufficient technical knowledge, technology may have a beneficial influence on learner autonomy. She also stated that autonomy can only be advantageous if learners view technology as a useful tool.

Therefore, how to facilitate language learners to acquire more vocabulary is an interesting topic that attracts many researchers so far. Various approaches towards vocabulary teaching and learning have been introduced and implemented accordingly. In this technology era, digital

learning tools appear to be an excellent assistant for language learners. It can be recognized that numerous technical tools have been developed to motivate vocabulary learning and enhance retention. Among those, Quizlet is one of the most popularly used, which has been reported to be highly effective for language learners of different age groups.

Quizlet, at <https://quizlet.com>, is a game-based language learning tool created and publicly released over a decade ago. It was originally a website but then was developed to be a mobile application. Now learners can install Quizlet and conveniently use it in their smart phones.

The tool is immensely convenient for teachers as to create lessons, their only job is to prepare a list of the target words to enter, and choose the meanings and pictures suggested by Quizlet. The links to the lessons can easily be copied and send to learners so that they can join. Teachers can also share the lessons they design and use lessons available on Quizlet system.

Particularly, Quizlet incorporates a number of studying modes to facilitate word mastery, including *Flashcards*, *Learn*, *Write*, *Spell*, and *Test. Match* (a scatter game), *Gravity* game, together with the *Live* game mode for more attractive and interactive lessons are also among the activities designed. Particularly, sound files to guide pronunciation for the intended words through listening are automatically attached. By this token, Quizlet appears to be comprehensive and has a high potential to enhance the effectiveness of the vocabulary learning process and to improve the learning products as a consequence.

Aiming at analyzing and evaluating benefits to language learners of applying Quizlet to study vocabulary, Ashcroft & Imrie [13] used technology impact assessment to judge Quizlet flashcards feature. They gave a conclusion that the application can promote students' vocabulary learning experience by the digitalization of flashcards. The integration of those features was believed to turn Quizlet into a comprehensive platform for learning vocabulary

In a similar way, the efficiency of Quizlet in improving and developing English vocabulary by 9 university students was examined by Dizon [14]. After checking the assigned vocabulary for 10 weeks by using Quizlet, the post-test results showed considerable gains by the subjects compared to the pre-tests results. The researcher acknowledged that Quizlet can significantly enhance academic vocabulary acquisition. In addition, students found the learning process more enjoyable and advantageous, which inspired them to invest a certain amount of time in studying on their own with Quizlet outside of their classes.

After observing and interviewing 42 students who used Quizlet as vocabulary learning tool for four weeks, Kose, Cimen, and Mede [15] concluded that most of the students considered Quizlet effective especially in learning definitions, synonyms and pronunciation. Similarly, Lander [16] explored opinions of 830 low-level students about Quizlet after using it for a period of 9 months inside and outside classrooms. The results revealed that the students have shown a resounding approval of using Quizlet for learning vocabulary.

In addition, Anjaiputra & Salsabila [17] conducted a study to depict the advantages of Quizlet for vocabulary learning with 30 university students in Indonesia. They divided the learning into four continuous processes including substitution, augmentation, modification, and redefinition. Findings of the study showed that students realized the positive effect of using Quizlet in learning vocabularies. In addition to creating enjoyable learning, increasing their persistence and engagement in the learning process, Quizlet significantly generated students' autonomy.

This is relevant to Nation [2] who mentioned that autonomous learners are capable of taking control of their own learning. Besides, students' ability in controlling their progress, another indicator of learners' autonomy was also recognized. The researchers reported that students more often checked their scores in Score feature to observe the score progress. This finding was similar to Kálecký [18] who claimed that Quizlet was useful in helping students to control their learning progress.

From our observations in my classes and my colleagues' classes, students in Thai Nguyen University of Economics and Business Administration (TUEBA) usually feel bored in

vocabulary lessons because they have not changed their learning habits. In informal discussion, we found that most students were practicing in traditional ways with paper and pens. They learnt new vocabulary items on paper, trying to learn by heart or relied on their teachers' explanations rather than taking the active roles in learning. Students claimed that it was hard for them to remember the new words and they seemed to easily get bored with their homework activities, which were, very often, reading aloud to practice pronunciation and doing the matching, or drawing exercises in their workbooks. This factual situation encouraged us to introduce Quizlet in my classes under expectation that it would become a remedy for vocabulary learning, provide students with new learning experience, keep students' motivation of learning, and enhance students' vocabulary retention and autonomy. This research was conducted to investigate the impacts of Quizlet on vocabulary acquisition and its potential to increase students' autonomy.

The research aimed at investigating the influence of Quizlet in motivating learners based on the findings to make some suggestions on using Quizlet to not only enhance language proficiency but also boost learners' autonomy. Therefore, the question to be answered is "How does Quizlet application affect students' autonomy?"

The following parts provide information regarding the methodology that the research followed, including detailed information about the subject, data collection instrument, the procedure for data collection and data analysis. The major finding and suggestions for later uses of Quizlet are reported in the final parts.

## **2. Methods**

### **2.1. Sample choosing**

The research was conducted with the participation of 60 non-English majored students of the same class. They were at different levels of English proficiency, ranging from elementary to pre-intermediate. They followed the same syllabus and number of class hours per week and used the same classroom with the same teacher. The 60 students received the same 10-week treatment in which they studied with a traditional method in the first five weeks and with the use of Quizlet in the other five weeks.

### **2.2. Data collection instruments**

Two survey questionnaires were delivered to the student participants, one before and one after the application of Quizlet. In the pre-intervention questionnaire, the researcher designed some questions related to students' vocabulary learning habits and the effectiveness of their usual learning methods. The post-intervention questionnaire consists of questions related to students' attitudes toward the advantages of Quizlet, and their change of learning interest and habits. A comparison between the pre-intervention and post-intervention data was made to find out the students' learning habits and their attitudes towards learning vocabulary. These changes and attitudes could be reliable indicators of the impacts of Quizlet on students' learning and of its capacity to promote learner autonomy.

### **2.3. Procedures**

The research period lasted for 10 weeks in total and was divided into two phases. In the first five-week phase, the students were taught with traditional method. That is, students studied vocabulary in a normal way in which the teacher introduced new words, provided them with pronunciations and meanings. During this phase, students learnt the first two units of the course which consist of 46 target words that they were expected to remember. In traditional approach, the students were asked to spend time practising vocabulary exercise in Students' Book and Workbook. The pre-intervention questionnaire was delivered to the students in the end of this phase to collect information about their learning habits. The data was then recorded for later use.

In the second phase which also lasted for 5 weeks, the students learned vocabulary in a normal way in class and at home they were asked to practise with exercises on Quizlet. During this time, they were expected to be able to learn 58 new words in the next 2 units. They were required to review the targeted lexical items by completing the compatible Quizlet lesson after every class session. Similar to the first phase, in the end of this phase, the students were also asked to fill out the post-intervention survey. Response to survey questionnaires regarding their learning habits and attitudes towards vocabulary learning were also analyzed.

### 3. Results and discussion

#### 3.1 Students' self-studying learning habit

Table 1 presents the students' change of self-studying learning habit.

**Table 1.** Students' change of self-studying learning habit

<i>Frequency of self-studying in general</i>	<b>Survey</b>			
	<b>Pre-intervention</b>		<b>Post-intervention</b>	
	<i>No. of responses</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>No. of responses</i>	<i>%</i>
I study <i>all</i> lessons.	9	15	18	30
I study <i>most</i> lessons.	12	20	22	37
I study <i>some</i> lessons.	27	45	17	28
I <i>never</i> study any lessons.	12	20	3	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100</b>

The data in table 1 showed that there was an increase of students who studied all lessons to 30%. Similarly, the number of student studying the most lesson experienced an increase to 37%. It can be seen that the percentage of those who spent time studying most lessons accumulating new words after the intervention of Quizlet makes up the first largest, 37% which is 17% higher compared with that of those before utilizing Quizlet. On the contrary, the number of students who studied some lessons reduced by nearly 20%, from 45% at first to 28% after the implementation period. Most notably, the figures for students who never spent any time on studying any vocabulary lessons at home fell from 20% to 5% only. The higher frequency of learning after the introduction of Quizlet implies that this tool made students more willing to learn by themselves.

#### 3.2. The students' frequency of doing vocabulary learning activities

To clarify the differences of the periods before and after the introduction of Quizlet, Figure 1 compares the mean values in terms of each individual criteria. The increase of the mean values in the second period implied the rise of students' frequency in learning.

As shown in Figure 1, students' habits of vocabulary learning moved towards positive direction since all of the figures in the second research period are higher than in the previous one. For all of the questions surveyed, students' responses confirmed that they became more autonomous and cooperative in learning. More specifically, the number of students did vocabulary homework, did extra vocabulary exercises increased. Besides the course books, students also found and learned vocabulary from other sources. They were also more active in making questions to their teachers to ask for their help when they had difficulties with new words. In addition, students became more cooperative with other classmates when learning vocabulary. Also, more students tried to use the words learnt in communication practice than the period before. Last but not least, more students were clearer about their learning goals since they started to set their own goals in learning vocabulary. The most significant changes were the frequency of students' habits of making questions to their teachers, the times they did their

homework and extra exercises as well as their awareness of setting their own goals in learning. From the figure, it can be concluded that students' autonomy in vocabulary learning has changed compared to the period before.

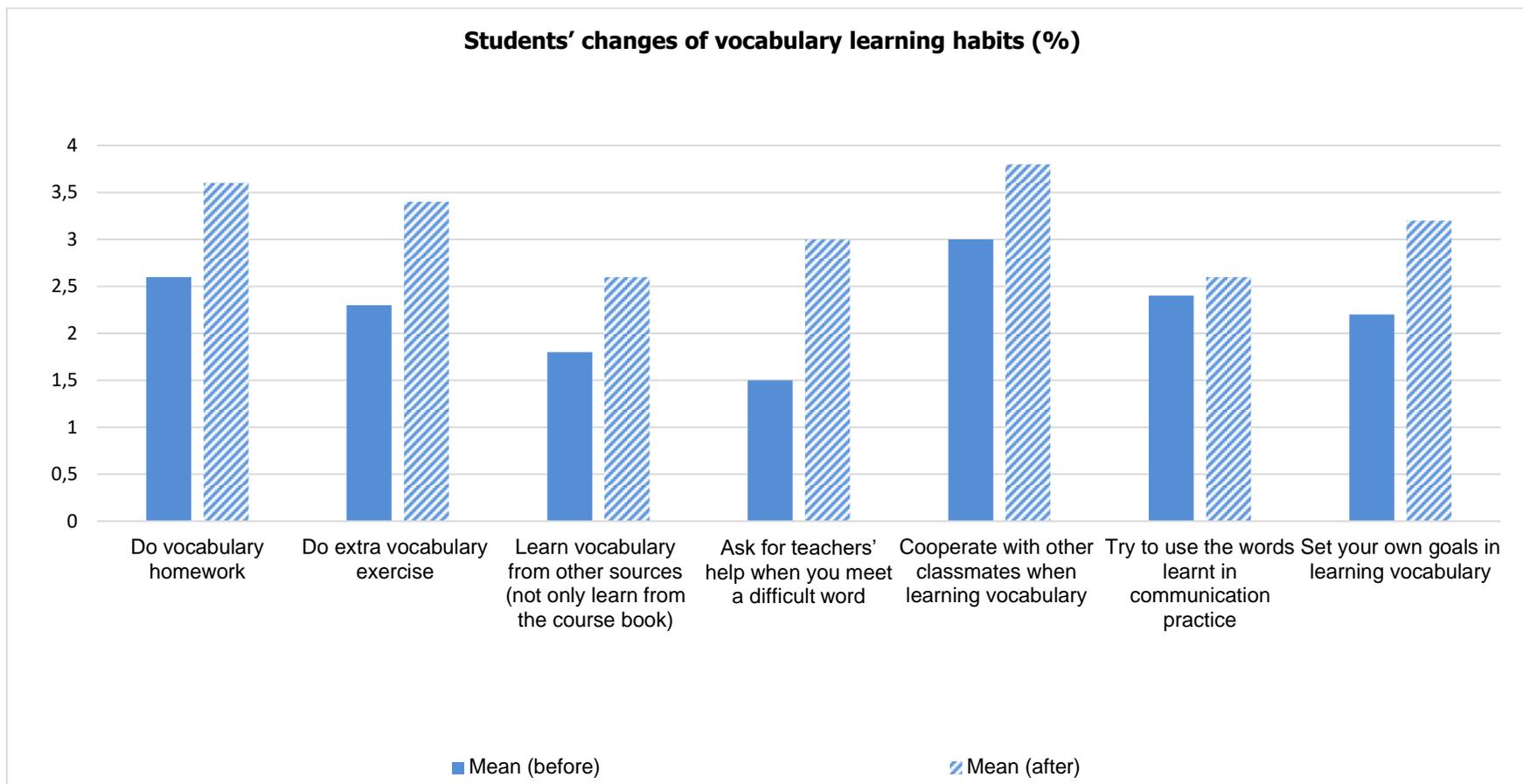
### 3.3. Students' attention to learning vocabulary

**Table 2.** Students' attention to learning vocabulary

Students' attention to learning Vocabulary	Survey			
	Pre-intervention		Post-intervention	
	No. of responses	%	No. of responses	%
Take no care of his/ her own learning	19	32	8	13
Take little care of his/ her own learning	11	18	7	12
Take moderate care of his/ her own learning	21	35	23	38
Take much care of his/ her own learning	9	15	22	37
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 2 portrayed students' changes of attitudes towards vocabulary learning before and after the implementation period. Overall, Quizlet had an impact on inspiring students to study vocabulary. To be more specific, before applying Quizlet, most pupils showed moderate interest in learning new vocabulary accounting for 35%, followed by 32%, the figure of students showing no care for studying new words. Interestingly, nearly one-fifth percent of learners had little care for their studying novel words.

Moving onto the post Quizlet intervention, there has been remarkable changes. To illustrate, it is surprising that the highest percent, 38% of students showed their moderate care for learning vocabulary increasing 3% after using Quizlet. It can be seen that the percentage of those who had much passion for accumulating new words after the intervention of Quizlet made up the second largest, 37%, which was 22% higher compared with that of those before utilizing Quizlet. Finally, it is quite striking to note that the percentage of those who had no interest or little interest pre and post Quizlet intervention depicts a decline. In other words, more students were aware of the significance of studying new words. This means Quizlet is a tool in stimulating students' passion towards vocabulary learning. In detail, pre-Quizlet intervention, 32% of learners showed no care for learning new words, which declined 19% to 13% after using Quizlet, and from 18% of those who had little passion for obtaining novel vocabulary pre-Quizlet intervention soared to 12% after Quizlet application.



**Figure 1.** Students' changes of vocabulary learning habits

#### 4. Conclusion

After Quizlet's implementation, the students participated more actively in the learning activities. They showed great interest in learning vocabulary. To be more specific, students spent more time learning vocabulary than they used to. It means that students had good attitude with the application of Quizlet. Consequently, their vocabulary acquisition was better than before.

With the data completed and analyzed, the study provided several important findings. One of the findings is that students had the higher level of participation in learning vocabulary as well as doing vocabulary exercises. They spent more time learning at home through Quizlet application. They also did not meet many difficulties in remembering meaning, spelling, and context any longer. To perform most of their daily activities, new generations of learners are used to using Internet-connected mobile devices. In addition, Quizlet offers a great learning experience that can provide active learning both within and outside the classroom. In the classroom, the *Live* learning mode offers successful collaborative exploration for students who are obliged to share knowledge and exchange answers to the vocabulary questions with a competitive spirit with other groups of students thus learning become an active cooperative process. Moreover, the *Study* sets of Quizlet are designed to meet the need of autonomous learners and the use of Quizlet in the helped students generate their autonomy. Since Quizlet is easily accessed, they could use the app inside and outside the classroom. The ease of access improved students' chance to learn independently. The finding shows that most of the students voluntarily learned vocabularies using Quizlet. Learners can perform various learning tasks, measure their vocabulary acquisition, and gamify the process of vocabulary learning. These features of Quizlet and the results of this research and other studies suggest that Quizlet can be considered a strong candidate for both teachers and students for vocabulary instruction and learning.

For successful application of Quizlet with students, some recommendations should be taken into considerations. First, it is advisable that Quizlet also be used as a regular class activity, which enables teachers to control their students' learning, to provide assistance in a timely manner, to prevent students from skipping any lessons, and to ensure that all students receive the same treatment. When Quizlet is used as home assignments, brief training and careful instructions should be provided in advance so that students are clear about what they are supposed to do. Besides, since Quizlet automatically creates an array of learning activities for each lesson, it is recommended that teachers should consider the amount of vocabulary to be covered in a lesson so that it suits students' average capacity.

The findings of the study agree with the previous studies that Quizlet has the potential to positively influence the teaching and learning of vocabulary and helps enhance and promote learner autonomy for tertiary students of non-English majored. The findings of the studies therefore can be a source of information for teachers of English at tertiary levels to look at and predict the impacts of Quizlet use on their own students. Teachers who would like to make use of this app for vocabulary teaching can also follow the advice on how to include Quizlet outside their classrooms to provide students more learning opportunities.

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