

PRE-SERVICE ENGLISH TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF USING THE GIZMO APPLICATION TO ENRICH ENGLISH VOCABULARY

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ABSTRACT

Vocabulary is a fundamental component of language learning and is essential for developing effective communication skills. This study investigates the perceptions of pre-service English teachers regarding the effectiveness of the Gizmo application as a tool for enriching English vocabulary. Utilizing a descriptive qualitative approach, data were collected from 10 pre-service teachers in an English education program through the use of questionnaires and structured interviews. The results of the questionnaire were analyzed using descriptive statistics, while the interview data were analyzed using thematic analysis. Findings reveal four main themes: (1) Gizmo effectively enriches students' vocabulary by providing exposure to new and contextualized vocabulary, (2) it serves as a medium that fits students' individual learning needs, especially due to its flexibility and personalized vocabulary input, (3) the application offers interactive, fun, and helpful features such as quizzes and repetition that motivate learners, and (4) it increases learners' interest and confidence in using English vocabulary. Most participants expressed ingness in using Gizmo in their future teaching practices, while one participant felt the app was too basic for advanced learners. The study demonstrates that Gizmo has the potential to be a valuable digital tool in English language teaching, particularly in vocabulary enrichment. These findings are expected to provide valuable insights for educators, teacher trainers, and developers of language learning technologies, particularly in the context of mobile-assisted language learning (MALL).

Keywords: *Gizmo, Pre-Service English Teachers, Vocabulary Enrichment*

A. INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary is a fundamental skill and is essential for acquiring a second language (Hatuina; Putri, 2024; Yawiloeng, 2020). Vocabulary, as the capacity to successfully listen, speak, read, and write in a particular language, is significantly influenced by one's foundational knowledge of that language (Wangdi, 2022). Learning more vocabulary is an important part of language competence, as the ability to understand and convey meaning is closely related to the number of words known. In general, students' vocabulary skills in learning English in Indonesia are still lacking (Fachrunnisa & Nuraeni, 2022; Zannah et al., 2023), primarily due to factors such as a lack of interest, inadequate facilities, and negative peer influence (Machfudi & Afidah, 2022). Students experience difficulties in learning English, including problems in understanding the material, complex grammar that is hard to pronounce and remember, and a limited mastery of vocabulary (Nursyahida et al., 2024).

Enriching vocabulary is a challenge that university students must face, especially due to a lack of motivation to open and read dictionaries. It took a long time, so the process of achieving the

learning objectives was less effective (Harahap, 2024; Mangare et al, 2021). Low vocabulary knowledge poses severe problems to its learners, which consequently impedes the learning of the English language. Raw and Ismail (2021) investigated the usefulness of online tools in enhancing vocabulary learning in the language classroom, focusing on five key aspects: vocabulary knowledge and retention, motivation in learning, active participation, immediate feedback, and self-regulated learning. In addition, teachers need to implement various strategies to support effective vocabulary learning (Wang, 2021).

Therefore, many teachers have adopted a variety of methods and strategies to enrich students' vocabulary, such as integrating technology and utilizing engaging media. One such approach is Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL), which combines the advantages of mobile technology and language learning methods to create a portable, interactive, and contextual learning environment (Kukulska & Silk, 2008). And the use of MALL has proven to be effective, as demonstrated by the success of language learning applications such as Duolingo, Free4Talk, Cake and Let's View (Indrasari et al., 2024; Rifdinal, 2021;

Tozluoglu, 2021; Wilson & Sutrisno, 2022; Wardani & Munir 2023).

Although previous studies have provided valuable insights into the potential of digital tools for language learning, no researcher has specifically explored the influence of the Gizmo application on vocabulary learning. One study showed that the *Smart TTS Game App* successfully improved students' English vocabulary through its unique word-search technique (Nasrum et al, 2023).

Another study found that the *BBC Learning English* application was highly effective in enhancing students' vocabulary mastery, with most participants describing it as adaptable, user-friendly, and engaging (Hamdani & Puspitorini, 2021). Similarly, the *Bright – English for Beginners* application was reported to significantly contribute to students' vocabulary development (Liando et al, 2021). These studies affirm the usefulness of digital tools in vocabulary acquisition. However, Gizmo, a language learning platform that offers interactive simulations and numerous interesting features, remains underexplored. Thus, this study aims to investigate the effectiveness of the Gizmo app in improving vocabulary mastery among pre-service English

teachers at one university in North Sumatra. Pre-service English teachers were chosen because a teacher must serve as a role model for their students in terms of language accuracy and fluency (Atmaca, 2018). This research is driven by the questions: "How effective is the Gizmo application in enriching English vocabulary according to pre-service English teachers?" and "Would they use this application in their future teaching?". The study's significance contributes to the understanding of the effectiveness of digital learning media, particularly the Gizmo application, in enhancing English vocabulary mastery. The findings of this study are expected to serve as a reference for pre-service teachers.

METHODS

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research methodology to investigate the effectiveness of the Gizmo application in enriching English vocabulary knowledge among pre-service teachers. This qualitative approach was chosen because it enables an in-depth examination of the experiences, perspectives, and challenges faced by pre-service teachers when using the application, thereby producing rich and detailed data in real-world settings. The descriptive method is appropriate as it enables researchers to

explore and understand the meaning individuals assign to a social or human issue in depth, with data analysis that is inductive and interpretive in a natural context (Creswell, 2012).

The participants of this study were 10 students majoring in English Education at a university in North Sumatra. These students were selected using a purposive sampling strategy, which involves the intentional selection of individuals and settings to gain a deeper understanding of the effectiveness of the Gizmo application, focusing on identifying participants who could provide rich and relevant insights for the study (Creswell, 2012). The selection criteria included: (1) eighth-semester students enrolled in the English Education program. These students have completed the School Field Introduction Program (PLP) and thus have observed and understood the issue of limited student vocabulary firsthand. (2) Students with prior experience using the Gizmo application. This criterion ensures that the participants represent the target demographic who would benefit from the use of Gizmo, while maintaining consistency in their language proficiency levels.

Data was collected using questionnaires and interviews to obtain a

comprehensive understanding of how the Gizmo application influences English vocabulary mastery.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire was used as a preliminary instrument to collect data on the general perceptions of pre-service English teachers regarding the use of the Gizmo application in enhancing vocabulary mastery. The questionnaire was designed using a structured approach, employing a Likert scale format to measure participants' attitudes and opinions systematically.

Interview

The interview was conducted as a follow-up to the questionnaire to gain deeper insights into individual views, experiences, and opinions regarding the use of the Gizmo application. A structured interview technique was employed, using a standardized set of predetermined questions to ensure consistency in the responses across participants.

This study was analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Responses were transcribed and coded to identify patterns and key themes. The entire process was conducted per research ethics, including participant anonymity and informed consent.

Ethical considerations are a crucial aspect of this study. Informed consent was obtained from all participants after explaining the study's objectives, procedures, and potential benefits. Participants' confidentiality was obtained from the university's ethics committee, and all data were securely stored and used solely for this research.

RESULTS

This section presents the research findings based on the responses of 10 pre-service English

teachers to a questionnaire related to the Gizmo application. The application was introduced by the researcher to the participants as an alternative tool for enriching English vocabulary. The respondents were asked to express their perceptions through 20 statements presented in the form of a Likert scale. The results of the questionnaire are analyzed and presented in the following table.

Table 1. Questionnaire Data

Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. Gizmo helped me discover and learn new vocabulary that I didn't already know.	30%	60%	10%	0%	0%
2. Using Gizmo makes me practice new vocabulary more often and regularly.	50%	10%	30%	10%	0%
3. I can provide vocabulary that suits students' needs in learning.	30%	60%	10%	0%	0%
4. The features in Gizmo make it easy for me to remember and master new vocabulary.	30%	40%	20%	10%	0%
5. I feel more confident using new vocabulary after learning through Gizmo.	0%	60%	30%	10%	0%
6. Gizmo makes it easy for me to test my understanding of new vocabulary.	30%	50%	20%	0%	0%
7. The vocabulary learning method in Gizmo is interesting and interactive, suitable for students.	40%	50%	10%	0%	0%
8. Vocabulary explanations in Gizmo are clear and easy to understand, helpful in teaching.	30%	40%	30%	0%	0%
9. The example sentences in Gizmo helped me understand the contextual use of vocabulary.	40%	60%	0%	0%	0%
10. The repetition feature in Gizmo is effective in helping me remember vocabulary.	50%	20%	30%	0%	0%
11. Using Gizmo makes me more motivated to learn new vocabulary.	10%	60%	20%	10%	10%
12. I can learn new vocabulary quickly using Gizmo.	10%	60%	30%	0%	0%
13. Gizmo allows me to learn vocabulary at the student's level.	40%	40%	20%	0%	0%

14. The quizzes in Gizmo help me gauge my and my students' vocabulary comprehension.	30%	502%	20%	0%	0%
15. I feel that my vocabulary has improved after using Gizmo.	30%	60%	10%	0%	0%
16. Gizmo is easy to use without being confusing.	30%	40%	0%	30%	30%
17. I can review the vocabulary I have learned through Gizmo.	40%	50%	10%	0%	0%
18. Gizmo provides a fun and interactive learning experience.	20%	80%	0%	0%	0%
19. I would recommend Gizmo to students to enrich their vocabulary.	40%	30%	30%	0%	0%
20. Overall, Gizmo is effective in enriching vocabulary.	50%	30%	20%	0%	0%

Source: Solin & Salmiah, 2025

The researcher obtained several important findings that reflect the experiences and perceptions of the students after being introduced to the Gizmo application. These findings were derived from the analysis of the questionnaire data completed by the participants regarding their views on the usefulness of the application. Based on the results, it can be concluded that the students hold four main perceptions of the Gizmo application: (1) enriching students' vocabulary, (2) a medium that fits students' needs, (3) interactive, fun, and helpful features, and (4) increasing students' interest and confidence, all of which are elaborated in the following explanation.

Enriching Students' Vocabulary

This theme is supported by data

from questionnaire items 1, 2, 12, 17, 19, and 20. In the first questionnaire item, which focused on how Gizmo helps users discover and learn new vocabulary, 30% of respondents strongly agreed, 60% agreed, and 10% were neutral. There were no responses indicating disagreement. In the second item, which emphasized the frequency and regularity of vocabulary practice using Gizmo, 50% of respondents strongly agreed, 10% agreed, 30% were neutral, and 10% disagreed, with no one selecting strongly disagree.

The twelfth item, which explored how quickly participants felt they could learn new vocabulary using Gizmo, showed that 10% strongly agreed, 60% agreed, and 30% remained neutral. None of the respondents disagreed. The seventeenth questionnaire, which asked whether students were able to review

previously learned vocabulary through the app, received 40% strongly agree, 50% agree, and 10% neutral responses.

In the nineteenth item, 40% of participants strongly agreed that they would recommend Gizmo to students to enrich their vocabulary, while 30% agreed, and 30% were neutral. No one selected disagree or strongly disagree. Lastly, the twentieth questionnaire item, which evaluated the overall effectiveness of Gizmo in enriching vocabulary, received responses as follows: 50% of respondents strongly agreed, 30% agreed, and 20% were neutral. These results demonstrate a generally positive perception of Gizmo's role in enriching vocabulary, with most respondents expressing agreement or strong agreement with the application's benefits in this area.

The statements from the interview respondents support the questionnaire results as shown below:

"Gizmo is great because it allows us to create our own Vocabulary list, and the interface is also interesting."(R1) *"Gizmo provides access to a wide range of vocabulary materials which are very helpful for learners regardless of their proficiency level."* (R5)

These statements confirm that the

app's design and function are beneficial in helping learners expand their English vocabulary.

Based on Students' Needs

This theme is constructed based on questionnaire items number 3 and 13. In item 3 with the keyword *"accurate and reliable,"* 30% of respondents strongly agreed, 60% agreed, and 10% were neutral. No one disagreed or strongly disagreed. Meanwhile, in item 13 with the keyword *"learning needs,"* 40% of respondents strongly agreed that the content in the Gizmo application suits their English learning needs, 40% agreed, and 20% responded neutral. There were also no respondents who disagreed or strongly disagreed. Therefore, these two items reflect that Gizmo is perceived as a medium that fits students' needs in learning English.

The following interview excerpts reinforce the findings from the questionnaire:

"This app helped me better understand the usage and meaning of certain words." (R2)

"We can adjust the vocabulary to be learned based on the learner's level or age. It's very flexible and effective." (R4)

This illustrates that the app offers features that allow personalization and

relevance to users' specific learning targets.

Interactive, Fun, and Helpful Features

This theme is based on items 4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 14, 15, 16, and 18. In item 4, 30% of participants strongly agreed that Gizmo helped them understand word meanings in context, 40% agreed, and 20% were neutral, and 10% Disagreed. Item 6, regarding the usefulness of games and quizzes in the app, showed 30% strongly agreed, 50% agreed, and 20% were neutral. Item 7 asked about how interactive features influenced vocabulary retention; 40% strongly agreed, 50% agreed, and 10% were neutral. In item 9, 40% of participants strongly agreed that Gizmo offered feedback that helped improve their vocabulary skills, 60% agreed. In item 10, 50% strongly agreed that the app provided an enjoyable learning experience, 20% agreed, and 30% were neutral. Item 14 showed 30% strongly agree, 50% agree, and 10% neutral when asked about the clarity of instructions in Gizmo.

In item 15, 30% strongly agreed and 60% agreed that the app made learning more enjoyable, while 10% were neutral. Item 16 revealed 30% strongly agreed, 40% agreed, 0% neutral, 30% disagreed, and 30% Strongly Disagreed

when asked about ease of use. Lastly, item 18, regarding whether Gizmo encouraged independent learning, showed 40% strongly agree, 30% agree, and 30% neutral. Altogether, the results show that students highly value the interactive and engaging features offered by Gizmo.

The previous questionnaire results align with the following responses from interview participants:

"I like the vocabulary section with exercises. It has a fun appearance and makes the learning more enjoyable."
(R3)

"This feature helps train our memory on the vocabulary we've previously learned." (R4)

These features make learning English vocabulary more dynamic and less monotonous.

Increasing Students' Interest and Confidence

This theme is supported by data from questionnaire items 5 and 11. The fifth questionnaire item focused on whether Gizmo made vocabulary learning more interesting. The responses showed that 0% of participants strongly agreed, 60% agreed, and 10% were neutral, with no responses indicating disagreement. This suggests that most students found Gizmo to be an engaging

tool that sparked their interest in learning new vocabulary.

The eleventh item evaluated whether the use of Gizmo increased students' confidence in using new vocabulary. Results showed that 10% of respondents strongly agreed, 60% agreed, and 20% were neutral. 10% disagreed and 10% strongly disagreed with the statement. These findings highlight that Gizmo not only makes vocabulary learning more enjoyable but also contributes positively to boosting learners' confidence in using the vocabulary they acquire.

The data from the interviews support the questionnaire results as follows:

"Gizmo can help teachers introduce basic English materials and can also be used as an evaluation tool through its quizzes." (R5)

"It's fun and motivating because we can choose and create the vocabulary we want to learn." (R1)

These comments demonstrate how the application's interactive design and autonomy-enhancing features positively impact learners' motivation and self-assurance.

Based on the responses from the five interview participants, it was found

that most respondents held positive views regarding the potential use of the Gizmo application in their future teaching practices.

Four out of five respondents stated that they would use Gizmo when they become teachers. They considered the application to be engaging, flexible, and adaptable to the diverse needs of students, particularly in vocabulary instruction.

"Yes, because it's interesting. We can also create our own vocabulary sets to learn." (R3)

"Of course, I believe Gizmo can help teachers introduce English to students who may struggle with understanding the material. It can also serve as a tool for quizzes or evaluation, thanks to the available features." (R4)

However, one participant considered Gizmo too basic for advanced users and preferred using other resources, such as corpus tools:

"I don't think so. Gizmo feels too kiddy for me; I prefer using corpus. For teaching, I would rather use websites than apps." (R2)

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that pre-service English teachers perceive the use of the Gizmo

application positively as a means of improving vocabulary mastery. The results obtained from both questionnaires and interviews show a consistent pattern across four main themes: enriching students' vocabulary, serving as a medium that fits students' needs, offering interactive and helpful features, and increasing students' interest and confidence.

The first theme, enriching students' vocabulary, indicates that the majority of participants agree that Gizmo helps them discover and retain new words effectively. These results support previous studies such as Raw and Ismail (2021), which emphasized how digital tools can enhance vocabulary knowledge and retention. The findings also align with Harahap (2024), who highlighted that students often face difficulty expanding their vocabulary due to low motivation to use traditional tools like dictionaries. Gizmo, with its user-friendly interface and customizable vocabulary lists, seems to overcome this issue by offering more engaging and accessible learning options.

The second theme, a medium that fits students' needs, highlights that participants feel Gizmo aligns well with their personal learning goals. This is important because vocabulary

acquisition varies depending on learners' proficiency levels and learning preferences. The feature that allows users to adjust content based on their level makes Gizmo a flexible tool that supports personalized learning, a factor also discussed by Wang (2021) in advocating for tailored vocabulary instruction.

The third theme, interactive, fun, and helpful features, shows how students appreciate the application's use of games, quizzes, and immediate feedback, which are key components of Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL). These interactive features not only enhance vocabulary learning but also maintain learners' engagement, as suggested by Kukulska and Silk (2008). Moreover, most participants indicated that the gamified elements of Gizmo contributed to a more enjoyable and motivating learning experience. This confirms the importance of integrating technology that provides both utility and entertainment value in the language learning process.

The fourth theme, increasing students' interest and confidence, suggests that the app does not only facilitates vocabulary acquisition but also boosts learners' motivation and self-esteem. Although some responses

showed neutrality or slight disagreement, most students agreed that Gizmo supports them in feeling more confident about using new vocabulary. These findings resonate with studies by Tozluoglu (2021) and Wilson & Sutrisno (2022), which emphasized how digital language learning platforms can positively influence learners' attitudes and engagement.

Interestingly, almost all interview respondents stated that they would use Gizmo in their future teaching practices. They recognized the platform's potential for vocabulary instruction and evaluation, particularly for beginner to intermediate levels. However, one respondent expressed reluctance, believing the app to be more suitable for lower-level learners. This critical viewpoint emphasizes the need for future improvements in Gizmo to include more advanced content or allow deeper integration with other professional tools like corpora or academic vocabulary databases.

Overall, the research findings underline the effectiveness of Gizmo as a vocabulary enrichment tool for pre-service teachers. The application's ability to provide personalized, engaging, and efficient vocabulary learning reflects the evolving needs of digital-era learners.

This suggests that when appropriately integrated into the curriculum, digital applications such as Gizmo can play a pivotal role in modern language education.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to explore the perceptions of pre-service English teachers regarding the effectiveness of the Gizmo application in enriching their English vocabulary. The findings, derived from both questionnaire and interview data, indicate that the majority of participants hold positive views toward the use of the application. Gizmo is considered not only effective but also enjoyable and well-suited to the learning needs of students, particularly in the area of vocabulary development. Participants reported that the application allowed them to study vocabulary in a flexible and personalized way. Gizmo's interactive features, such as customizable vocabulary lists, repetition exercises, and an engaging interface, made vocabulary learning more motivating and less monotonous. These elements contributed to increased student interest, confidence, and consistency in learning. The ease of access and the mobile nature of the application also supported autonomous learning, enabling users to

practice vocabulary anytime and anywhere.

Moreover, many participants expressed that Gizmo made learning more systematic and organized. The feedback features helped them track their progress and identify areas that needed improvement. As a result, they were able to reflect on their learning more effectively. The application's format, similar to educational games, also reduced anxiety, making vocabulary learning feel more like an engaging activity than a formal academic task.

In conclusion, the perceptions of pre-service English teachers in this study reveal that the Gizmo application is an effective and practical tool for vocabulary enrichment. It meets learners' needs through its interactive, flexible, and user-friendly design. The integration of such digital tools in language education can significantly enhance students' vocabulary acquisition and overall language proficiency. These findings suggest that incorporating well-designed educational technology into English language teaching has the potential to support and improve vocabulary learning outcomes in meaningful ways.

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