

## **THE IMPLEMENTATION OF *HELLOTALK* APPLICATION IN TEACHING VOCABULARY TO YOUNG LEARNERS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Vocabulary is an essential element in mastering English since this links to four language skills. The lack of vocabulary mastery becomes the main problem for students' motivation in learning English. This study attempts to investigate the implementation of HelloTalk application in teaching vocabulary. This also covers the examination of its advantages as well as the obstacles. This study utilized a qualitative approach and applied triangulation to verify the data. To gather the data, this study used observation to investigate the teaching vocabulary practices using HelloTalk application, and then conducted the interviews to address the advantages as well as the obstacles of the technology implementation. Miles and Huberman's model was used to analyze the data. It consists of data collection process, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The participants were six children around 11 years old from Kadudampit, Cianjur. A more comprehensive study involving more than two instruments and more participants is highly suggested to enrich the data. Notably, the premium version is also suggested to maximize the utilization of technology in teaching vocabulary.

**Keywords:** *Teaching Vocabulary, HelloTalk Application, Young Learners*

### **INTRODUCTION**

English is the international language learned by people all over the world. Learning English as a foreign language is very important for the student to interact with people from different countries. Teaching a language means teaching how to master that language in communication. English has been taught since elementary school, until senior high school as one of the nine compulsory studies and officially admitted by the Indonesian government. Based on the Indonesian curriculum 2013, students who learn English at school are expected to be able to communicate fluently. Students who have mastered sufficient vocabularies are more able to express their idea in the target language rather than those who focus more on grammar studies. Sufficient vocabulary mastery supports students with other language skills such as listening, reading, speaking, and writing. With this in mind, Sholahudin (2008) states that learning English ideally consists of four skills, they are listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Vocabulary is one of the competencies of the language and has an important role in teaching foreign languages because this element links to four language skills such as speaking, reading, listening, and writing. Richards and Renandya (2002) define vocabulary as a core component of language proficiency that provides much of the basis for how learners speak, listen, read, and write. Moreover, Ur (1996) emphasizes that vocabulary is one of the important things to be taught in learning a foreign language because it will be impossible to speak up without a variety of words. Vocabulary skill is often the main aspect of learning a foreign language. Limited vocabulary in the second language can obstruct good communication (Susanto, 2017). Furthermore, Alqahtani (2015) cited in Susanto (2017) argues that the mastery of vocabulary is very important for successful foreign language usage. Without unlimited vocabularies, foreign language learners cannot use the structure and the function which we may have learned for comprehensive communication. However, there are still many students that have limited vocabularies which mean to be the main problem on why the students have a lack of

pronunciation, spelling, and low motivation to learn English. Thornbury (2004) lists some factors that make some words more difficult to learn, consisting of pronunciation, spelling, length and complexity, grammar, meaning, range, connotation, and idiomaticity.

The implementation of digital media in teaching vocabulary can support students to be more enthusiastic in the learning process (Helmie & Susilawati, 2018). One of the examples is HelloTalk, HelloTalk is a conversation-based mobile assisted language application that claims to make cultural immersion, language learning, and easy, engaging, as well as intuitive practices. This application allows users to synchronously connect and chat with native speakers from all around the world. Conversation partners can communicate with each other via a variety of different mediums, such as written text, speech-to-text, recorded audio messages, video chats, and doodles. Rivera (2017) claims that this application is the 1st global language learning and culture exchange community, connecting you with native speakers of other languages (English, Japanese, Korean, Spanish, French, Mandarin Chinese, Cantonese, Portuguese, German, Italian, Russian, Arabic, and 100 more) for free.

Several studies have revealed that technology has taken an important role in the students' vocabulary mastery. The study by Izah (2019) focused more on the advantages of Memrise application as personal learning media to master vocabulary. On the other hand, Shi (2017), in the research of "Application of Multimedia Technology in Vocabulary Learning for Engineering Students", tested the effectiveness of the implementation of computer-assisted instruction (CAI) in individualized learning. Additionally, this study investigated whether CAI can improve vocabulary learning and memory. Quantitative research in the use of technology in teaching vocabulary was also previously established. Putri (2019), with the research title, "The Effectiveness of Using Kahoot Game to Improve Students' Vocabulary Comprehension" has quantitatively proven that there were differences in the score between the students who were taught by using Kahoot Game and the students who were taught by using the conventional method. In the same year, the relevant research was also conducted. Puspitasari (2019) examined Quizlet as media to enhance seventh graders' vocabulary mastery. The result shows that the students improved their skills during teaching and learning process by using Quizlet. It is proven by the data derived from this study.

The relevant researches previously listed prove that the implementation of technology is an alternative way to make the students more interactive and engaged in the vocabulary learning and teaching. In light of those studies, this present research attempted to examine HelloTalk application in teaching vocabulary to young learners. This is since HelloTalk is an easy-to-use app and has many features such as HelloWord, English Time, Hello English, Amy, Translation, English dictionary, notepad, and many more. More importantly, the use of HelloTalk application in teaching vocabulary to young learners is still rare. With this in mind, this study focuses more on examining HelloTalk application in teaching vocabulary to young learners, the merits, and the obstacles of such practices.

## **METHOD**

This research applied a descriptive qualitative approach with narrative synthesis. Qualitative research is an approach for investigating and finding the understanding of individuals or groups about a social or human problem (Creswell, 2014). Patton and Cochran (2002) characterize qualitative research "by its aims which relate to understanding some aspects of social life, and its methods which (in general) generate words, rather than numbers, as data for analysis" (p. 20). Qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials – case study, personal experience, introspective, life story, interview, observational, historical, interactional, and visual texts – that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals' lives (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

The instruments used in this research were observation and interview. The observation was used to answer the first issue of this research. Marshall and Rossman (1989) state that observation is the systematic description of the events, behaviors, and artifacts of a social setting. In this study, the researchers took a role as a complete observer. Complete observer is where the role of a researcher cannot be hidden (Setiyadi, 2006), and the participant completely acknowledges that the researcher is around to observe them. By doing this, the researchers could

directly investigate students' English learning process, their responses towards the technology use, and their vocabulary mastery (Helmie, 2019).

During the observation, firstly, the researchers asked the students to read the alphabet written on the blackboard to acknowledge their pronunciation skills. Secondly, the researchers asked them to guess several animals in English by showing PowerPoint slides. Those two activities were conducted to get the information of the students' initial vocabulary mastery. HelloTalk application was then introduced and students were guided on how to use this technology tool. Lastly, the students discuss the same materials by using the HelloTalk application in pairs, and then take a quiz to see the result of using the HelloTalk application in teaching vocabulary. After observation was conducted, the researchers continue to get in-depth information by doing the interview.

The interview was conducted to find out the advantages and the obstacles of the implementation of the HelloTalk application in teaching vocabulary. Interview is defined as a face-to-face meeting to ask and get particular information. In this sense, Kvale (1996) notes that an interview is a "conversation, whose purpose is to gather descriptions of the [life-world] of the interviewee" (p. 174), with a respect to interpretation of the meanings of the 'described phenomena' and it allows participants to give personal information in more detail. Employing the interview also allows the interviewer to ask for specific information (Creswell, 2014). Schostak (2006) adds that an interview is an extendable conversation between partners that aims at having an 'in-depth information' about a certain topic or subject, and through which a phenomenon could be interpreted in terms of the meanings interviewees bring to it. Furthermore, the interview used in this study was a guided interview which means the researchers prepare several questions before asking the respondents. Guided interview is the kind of interview that has been prepared by the researcher but in fact, the researcher may be more flexible in taking the information according to the situation and condition of respondents (Setiyadi, 2006). Therefore, the researchers prepared five questions to dig out the information related to the advantages and the obstacles of HelloTalk application use to teach vocabulary to young learners.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **The Implementation of HelloTalk Application in Teaching Vocabulary**

During the observation, several vocabularies related to animals were introduced to the students. From the observation, the researchers found some differences when they learned with and without using HelloTalk application, as seen in the table 1:

**Table 1.** Students' Initial Vocabulary Mastery.

<i>No.</i>	<i>Words in Indonesia</i>	<i>Words in English</i>	<i>Know</i>	<i>Don't</i>
1.	<i>Serigala</i>	Wolf	✓	
2.	<i>Kerbau</i>	Buffalo		✓
3.	<i>Jerapah</i>	Giraffe		✓
4.	<i>Buaya</i>	Crocodile	✓	
5.	<i>Kangguru</i>	Kangaroo		✓
6.	<i>Gorila</i>	Gorilla	✓	
7.	<i>Zebra</i>	Zebra	✓	
8.	<i>Badak</i>	Rhino		✓
9.	<i>Macan</i>	Tiger	✓	
10.	<i>Ular Cobra</i>	Cobra	✓	

As seen in Table 1, most of the students knew six out of 10 words, consisting wolf, crocodile, gorilla, zebra, tiger, and cobra. However, there were some students who knew a few numbers of words such as zebra, tiger, and cobra only. Another problem they had was pronunciation and spelling. Only the word "tiger" which was correctly pronounced by all students. After memorizing the words several times, four out of six students guessed all the words correctly even though they were still lacking in the aspect of pronunciation and spelling.

At the point of introducing the HelloTalk application, the students paid extra attention to the tutor's explanation since this was new to them. They have never used any technology tools

when learning English. This might become the reason of their boredom in learning English and the current mindset that English is hard to learn. In this session, the students were divided into three groups and did group discussion by playing game in the HelloTalk application with the same topic. When using the application, students were hard to operate it, but with the tutor's guidance, they exited the game since they felt it was very easy. On the other hand, one group had problems with the internet connection, so that the application did not run well.

The result shows that the implementation of the HelloTalk application has contributed to the improvement of the students' vocabulary mastery even though they are still lacking in the pronunciation and spelling aspects. This was proven from the quiz results. The first and third group got 16 points, whereas the second group got 17 points.

### **The Advantages of the Implementation of HelloTalk in Teaching Vocabulary**

From the interview session to the students, there are some advantages of the implementation of HelloTalk in teaching vocabulary, described as follows:

#### ***Easy to use***

After introducing and guiding students on how to use it, the students tried to use the application, they said that they like the application, because it was easy to use and the features of the application did not make them confused. They thought this application was similar to other applications. They were interested in the interface of the features. They said that this application has clear explanation and interesting pictures and story.

#### ***Having various features***

There are many features for learning languages in this application, especially English. We can determine students' proficiency in language skills. Henceforth, we can choose the appropriate level for them. They used the test or quiz features. They were amazed at the characteristics presented that make them easy to learn. Not only a test or quiz features, but also students can use dictionaries, translations, and talk or chat directly with people around the world.

#### ***Easy to remember the vocabulary***

This application is suitable for the students since it assist them to memorize words easily. They said that before using the application, they had difficulties in memorizing the words, but after using the application, it was even easier for them to memorize the words. Not only do they memorize the words, but also they can also remember the images, sounds related to the words, and even the spelling of the words.

#### ***Time efficiency***

It did not take a long time until they were able to easily complete the quiz or test. By using this application, the students were not only studying vocabulary, but also learning how to manage time. This application provides a timer appeared after the users start the quiz. The trial version of the HelloTalk application just offers five-minute attempt a day, so that they have to use it as efficiently as they can. Even though they were uncomfortable with the time slot, but they can learn how to manage the time during the quiz. They read the questions and instructions well, completed the quizzes thoroughly, and answered all questions fast by memorizing the words as well as the pictures.

#### ***Having interesting learning experience***

They became more engaged and active during the teamwork after using the application. They said that using the application to learn vocabulary was more enjoyable and interesting. The sounds and images made it easy for them to remember and learn the words quickly.

In summary, it has been shown from the interview results that the use of the HelloTalk application in teaching vocabulary has brought about some merits to young learners. It makes the students' learning process become more engaging and attractive. It also assists students to remember the vocabulary and manage the time.

### **The Obstacles of the Implementation of HelloTalk in Teaching Vocabulary**

The students' interview results also show some obstacles in using HelloTalk application, described as follows:

#### ***Internet connection***

In technology-based learning, the internet connection is the common issue. Overall, the students are into the application, but the students oftentimes complained about the stability of the internet connection. The application sometimes went error that caused the delay of moving on to the next questions, and also made them hard to move the pictures.

#### ***Paid application***

This application is not free of charge and only offers seven-day trial. The users must pay for it and that was a barrier for the students to use this application in the daily basis. It charges IDR939,000 per month, IDR429,000 per three months, and IDR2,199,000 for a lifetime use. This amount of charge is considered costly for the students from low-income parents. As a result, the students ended up using the free features provided in this application. They were unable to explore more from this application. In addition to this issue, the free version only offers five-minute quiz attempt a day, which means the users are only able to open the quiz once a day. They felt disappointed because they like to play the game on the quiz. They felt restricted in playing along with this application.

#### ***Time limitation***

During the team discussion by using the application, students has a limited time to accomplish the task due to the restrictions of the free features. As a result, the students felt rushed and uncomfortable.

#### ***Application error***

The students faced some errors in using this application. The application sometimes froze and could not be operated. The screen did not move when students touched it. The error also came from the quiz system, for instance, the answer was correct but the application said it was wrong. All of the problems occurred because of the unstable internet connection. Thus, if you want to use this application without any obstacles, make sure that you have a strong and stable internet connection.

#### ***Limited mobile data***

During the learning activities, the students were also distracted by the limited mobile data. They did not have enough mobile data, so that they were unable to open it freely because they were worried if they ran out of the data for the next online class. Spending eighty thousand a month for purchasing mobile data is excessively pricy for them.

Thus far, this section has shown that the students got some troubles in using the HelloTalk application for their vocabulary learning. The application has system errors that made students unable to operate it efficiently. Also, internet connection has become a common issue in utilizing this technology. The other issues are from the paid features that are excessively costly to afford by the students.

### **CONCLUSION**

The observation and interview results has brought about a fact that the use of the HelloTalk application can assist young learners to improve their vocabulary mastery, despite their pronunciation and spelling issues. Before using this application, the students could not memorize the words well and they needed a long time to memorize all of the words correctly. After using the HelloTalk application, they can memorize the words faster than before. This research also provides

the information regarding some advantages as well as obstacles of the HelloTalk application use from the students' perspectives, as thoroughly presented in the previous sections.

In conclusion, vocabulary is essential for learning a language because vocabulary is one of the basic components to master. Young learners are in need to have an extensive assistance in building vocabularies. In this sense, current technology, such as HelloTalk, can be utilized to assist the teachers to design a creative, interactive, and engaging vocabulary teaching, particularly for young learners.

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