

ENGLISH STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE USE OF MEMRISE APPLICATION IN LEARNING ENGLISH VOCABULARY INDEPENDENTLY

Evita Suci Dwi Nurani¹, Dzul Fikri², Henny Rahmawati³

^{1,2,3} Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris FKIP Universitas Islam Malang

Email: ¹ evita.suci19@gmail.com,

Abstract

In recent years, the recognition of vocabulary's crucial role in language learning, particularly in English, has grown. Language learning platforms, including the Memrise Application, have also gained popularity alongside technological advancements. Memrise is a free platform that utilizes creative activities, voice-based learning, and picture-based learning to facilitate vocabulary acquisition. This research investigates the perceptions of English students at the Islamic University of Malang regarding the independent use of the Memrise Application for vocabulary learning, aiming to understand its impact on vocabulary acquisition and autonomous learning abilities. Structured interviews were conducted with three English students, providing valuable insights into the app's effectiveness, advantages, and disadvantages compared to traditional learning methods. The collected data highlighted positive feedback on Memrise's impact on vocabulary acquisition, appreciated for its interactive features, mobile accessibility, and flexibility. However, limitations like reliance on internet access and technical issues were identified. Comparing Memrise with traditional learning methods emphasized the convenience, customization, and real-life application of technology-enhanced language learning. The study underscores Memrise's effectiveness and accessibility for independent vocabulary learning, benefiting language educators and app developers. Future research could explore the relationship between app usage and academic achievements and investigate the long-term impacts of Memrise in different language learning contexts, optimizing its design for improved educational outcomes.

Keywords: Perceptions, Memrise app, vocabulary learning, independent use

INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary plays a pivotal role in language learning as a fundamental aspect of comprehending and expressing ideas effectively. It is particularly crucial for learners of English, such as Simanjuntak, (2022) in EFL countries like Indonesia. Traditionally, grammar and other language skills received more emphasis than vocabulary; however, there is a growing recognition of their significance in language acquisition and communication. As highlighted in the scholarly article "Vocabulary and Its Importance in Language Learning" by Al Qahtani (2015), students inherently acknowledge the key role of vocabulary in retaining information and developing language skills. To enhance vocabulary retention, various strategies are employed, such as rote memorization and independent learning. Williams (2017) advocates Dewey's (1938) perspective that schools should reflect real-life situations to engage students in diverse learning activities. The Independent Language Learning (ILL) approach, as proposed by Reinders, (2010), emphasizes learners' independence and responsibility throughout the initiation, planning, implementation, and evaluation stages. Motivation and independence are crucial in language learning, and educators can foster

effectiveness by understanding students' perceptions and implementing structured models like Reinders' framework, encouraging independent, personalized learning strategies and a deep understanding of language and culture.

Education, information, and entertainment have undergone transformative changes in today's rapidly evolving digital era. Students now enjoy easy access to many online materials, tutorials, and free lectures through their personal computers or smartphones, unrestricted by time and place. The gaming industry has also made significant strides, granting players effortless access to download and play games on their computers or gadgets Dzulfikri, (2016). Amidst this technological landscape, an innovative and enjoyable tool for language learning is the Memrise app. Developed in 2010 by Greg Detre, Ed Cooke, and Ben Whately, Memrise has garnered a massive following, with over 60 million users worldwide. The app offers an engaging and effective alternative to traditional textbooks, harnessing the power of flashcards and mnemonic techniques to aid students in grasping and retaining new languages. Memrise also provides a variety of creative activities, audio recordings, and image-based learning to enhance vocabulary mastery. Its user-friendly interface and portability make it an invaluable asset, revolutionizing language learning within and beyond a classroom's confines.

Technology has brought transformative changes in language education with the emergence of game-based applications like Duolingo and Babbel, online courses, speech recognition tools, and platforms like BBC Languages. Memrise aligns with the notion that students benefit greatly from a learning environment that enables them to practice language skills anytime and anywhere Hwang & Wu, (2014). These technological advancements effectively enhance language proficiency and grant learners access to authentic learning materials Ryan & Deci, (1985), fostering their success in mastering new languages. Vocabulary serves as the foundation of language learning, especially for English learners in countries where English is a foreign language, like Indonesia. Interaction and communication in EFL learning are essential in maintaining language acquisition. Thus, students must be able to utilize technology both in synchronous and asynchronous learning Ismiatun & Suhartoyo, (2022). Recognizing its pivotal role in language proficiency and effective communication, educators implement innovative strategies and leverage technology. Memrise, with its creative exercises and gamified elements, proves to be an incredibly effective tool for boosting vocabulary and language skills. Embracing these technological advancements and promoting independent language learning through models like ILL (Independent Language Learning), educators can create engaging and effective language learning experiences, empowering students to excel in their language journey and form meaningful global connections.

Numerous studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of the Memrise app in vocabulary learning. For example, Bradley & Sherman, (2013) found mobile applications more effective than desktop computers for vocabulary teaching in South Korean junior colleges. Fadhilawati, (2016) observed that using Memrise at Blitar Islamic University enhanced students' vocabulary achievement, with positive student reactions reinforcing the findings. Kasa & Darma, (2022) explored its impact on English learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, while Valencia et al., (2020) introduced new technology-based learning methods using Memrise in a university classroom. Tyas & Nurdawati, (2019) evaluated its effectiveness in teaching vocabulary through student progress assessments. Considering the significance of enjoyable learning experiences, Cheung & Ng, (2021) recommend the Memrise application as a solution. Its interactive activities, images, and voice features contribute to vocabulary retention, and its versatility allows for both in-class and independent use, simplifying the teaching and learning process and enhancing students' vocabulary development.

The current study aims to examine students' independent use of the Memrise application for learning English vocabulary, specifically exploring how students perceive and utilize the Memrise

app without teacher supervision. This focus centers on English students' perspectives at the Islamic University of Malang regarding the independent use of the Memrise Application for vocabulary learning. The research question seeks to understand: "What are the perspectives of English students at the Islamic University of Malang using the Memrise application for learning vocabulary independently?". The research aims to explore the perceptions of English students at the Islamic University of Malang regarding using the Memrise application for independent vocabulary learning. The study will examine their views on time management and the utilization of the Memrise app for independent vocabulary learning, providing insights into language learning strategies and instructional practices at the university.

The significance of the research lies in its contribution to the investigation of using Memrise as a digital resource in English language instruction, promoting independent language learning and technology integration. The findings can benefit English teachers, offering advice and suggestions for incorporating the Memrise app into their lessons. Additionally, students may be encouraged to use the Memrise app for independent English language study as they recognize its value for their future learning. The scope of the research is limited to the perceptions of three English students at the Islamic University of Malang regarding their independent use of Memrise for vocabulary learning. The study aims to understand their experiences, attitudes, and time management in utilizing the app for vocabulary acquisition.

In summary, this research explores how English students at the Islamic University of Malang perceive and utilize the Memrise app for independent vocabulary learning, aiming to provide valuable insights for language instruction and independent learning strategies. The Memrise app's features and interactive elements significantly enhance students' vocabulary development and make language learning an enjoyable experience.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research utilizes a qualitative Case Study Research (CSR) design to gain insight into students' experiences with the Memrise application. By employing descriptive qualitative research, In this qualitative research, the researcher will describe the complex condition of the students' works, analyze the students' works, and report the result using words and graphics without any numbers involved, Widowati (2021). The study aims to provide an objective and comprehensive account of the application's impact on vocabulary acquisition, user engagement, and encountered challenges. The Islamic University of Malang research involved three English language education students selected through purposive sampling. Participants expressed willingness to participate, adhered to research rules, and had at least one year of experience using Memrise.

Data collection involves conducting structured interviews with English language students using interview guides, tape recorders, cameras, and field notes to ensure accuracy. The interviews focus on six specific questions adapted from previous studies by Mirdad (2022) and Widiyati et al. (2022). Participants are asked to express their opinions on the Memrise app's impact on vocabulary learning, level of satisfaction, time management, and the advantages and disadvantages compared to traditional classroom learning.

The six specific questions covered in the interviews are:

1. In your opinion, can using the Memrise app improve your English vocabulary independently? Please explain your reasons!
2. Do you enjoy using the Memrise app to learn English vocabulary independently?

3. How do English students perceive the role of the Memrise application in time management for learning English vocabulary independently?
4. What advantages have you experienced in learning English vocabulary independently using the Memrise app?
5. What disadvantages have you experienced in learning English vocabulary independently using the Memrise app?
6. How do you think using the Memrise Application for learning English vocabulary independently after the pandemic compares to traditional classroom learning?

The data analysis process employed qualitative methods, including focused coding based on Saldaña, (2015), to identify keywords in participants' answers. The table analysis by Huq Khandkar, (2016) allowed researchers to uncover significant themes and relationships between categories. Inductive data analysis was used to understand unstructured data, and detailed open coding and axial coding techniques were employed to identify relationships between selected categories further.

The researcher then transformed the conceptual model into a descriptive one to facilitate reader comprehension. By adopting this research design, data collection method, and data analysis approach, the study provided valuable insights into students' experiences and attitudes toward using Memrise for vocabulary learning at the Islamic University of Malang. These findings may inform the application's future improvements and enhancements.

FINDINGS

The findings section presents the results obtained from data analysis collected through interviews, while the research discussion focuses on interpreting the findings within the research context. The researcher interviewed participants from the Department of English at the Islamic University of Malang to address the formulated research problems and answer the six research questions from the method. The followers are the key findings derived from the interviews:

1. Independent

A. Independent Vocabulary Development with Memrise Application:

The interviews revealed that the Memrise application effectively supports independent vocabulary development.

P1: Memrise greatly enhances vocabulary, including pronunciation and listening exercises.

P2: Memrise's mobile accessibility enables independent vocabulary learning.

P3: Memrise is helpful for beginners in self-paced language learning.

Participants acknowledged that the app not only aids in learning new words but also facilitates pronunciation practice and includes listening exercises. The accessibility of Memrise through mobile phones allows users to learn at their own pace and improve their English vocabulary independently. Participants, especially beginners, found the application helpful for self-paced language learning.

B. Developing Independent English Language Communication Skills

Participants also reported that the Memrise application contributes to developing independent English language communication skills.

P1: Memrise supports the independent development of speaking, listening, and vocabulary skills.

Including pronunciation and listening exercises with native speakers enhanced their learning experience. Different levels within the app allowed continuous improvement in vocabulary, listening, and speaking skills. Overall, Memrise was a valuable resource for learners, offering a comprehensive platform for independent language skill development.

2. Satisfaction with Using the Memrise Application:

Participants expressed high satisfaction with the Memrise application for self-learning experiences.

P3: Participants express high satisfaction due to user-friendly and enjoyable learning experience.

The user-friendly interface and easy-to-understand materials contributed to their comfort and enjoyment during learning. This suggests that Memrise effectively supports learners in their self-paced language acquisition journey, enhancing their satisfaction and overall learning experience.

3. Time Management in Using the Memrise Application:

The interviews emphasized the significance of independent learning facilitated by the Memrise application, particularly regarding time management.

P1: Memrise's flexibility allows learners to manage their time effectively.

P2: Learners prefer using Memrise in the evening before bedtime, allocating around 2 hours.

P3: Features like reminders help manage study time for maximum benefit.

Participants appreciated the app's availability and flexibility at any time, allowing them to allocate time for learning based on their convenience. The preferred times for comfortable vocabulary learning varied among participants, with some favoring evenings, while others emphasized adjusting study time according to personal schedules.

4. Advantages and Disadvantages of Using the Memrise Application

The advantages of using Memrise for independent vocabulary learning include its ease of understanding, availability of vocabulary levels for different proficiency levels, enhancement of multiple essential skills, user-friendliness, and comprehensive materials with audio and visual components featuring native speakers. These native speakers embody the norms of English communication skills and effectively train students on how to communicate well in English (Ubaidillah et al., 2023). However, participants also pointed out some disadvantages, such as the app's dependency on internet access and the possibility of disruptions in connectivity.

5. Comparing the Use of Memrise Independently with Traditional Learning Methods:

Regarding the comparison between Memrise and traditional learning methods, participants preferred self-study using Memrise due to the freedom it offers in the learning process. They found Memrise to be efficient for self-study, while traditional classrooms were considered more suitable for intensive practice and face-to-face interaction. Memrise and traditional learning methods have strengths and limitations, and the choice depends on learners' preferences, goals, and the learning context.

In conclusion, the findings suggest that the Memrise application is a valuable tool for independent vocabulary and language skill development. Its flexibility, user-friendly interface, and comprehensive materials create a positive and enjoyable learning experience. However, learners should be mindful of potential limitations, such as the dependency on internet access. Furthermore, the choice between Memrise and traditional learning methods depends on individual preferences and specific learning objectives. Memrise can significantly support autonomous language learning at the Islamic University of Malang.

DISCUSSION

This research explores the perspectives of English students at the Islamic University of Malang concerning their experiences with using the Memrise app for independent vocabulary learning. The study draws from various relevant theories to shed light on the app's impact on learner autonomy, motivation, time management, and flexibility in language education. At the core of the study lies Ryan & Deci's (1985) Self-Determination Theory, which emphasizes the importance of independence in vocabulary learning. The findings show that Memrise gives students the autonomy to control their learning process, enabling them to develop their vocabulary and language skills independently. The user-friendly and enjoyable nature of the app further enhances learners' motivation and knowledge retention, aligning with Zohoorian et al., (2022) research on user satisfaction.

Hwang & Wu, (2014) and Valencia et al. (2020) are referenced in exploring the significance of time management and flexibility in technology-enhanced language learning. The research highlights how Memrise facilitates effective time management for self-learning purposes, allowing learners to study at their convenience and from anywhere. Participants' positive views on the app's flexibility further validate the alignment with these theories. The study also addresses the importance of internet access, as highlighted by Castells, *Theory of Networked Publics* (2004). Participants' feedback points to the need to address connectivity issues in Memrise to optimize its effectiveness as a language learning tool.

Comparing Memrise to traditional learning methods, the research reveals that the app is perceived as highly effective for self-study and flexible learning, while traditional classrooms are valued for intensive practice and face-to-face interaction. This observation aligns with the Illeris theory of learning (2004), which integrates behaviorism, cognitivism, and constructivism, suggesting that both Memrise and traditional classrooms can complement language learning approaches. The study also touches upon Dewey's (1983) theory, emphasizing the importance of learner-centered education. The Memrise app aligns with this theory by promoting learner autonomy and allowing students to take ownership of their learning process.

Addressing internet connectivity limitations is identified as a crucial step to enhance the app's effectiveness. This is further supported by the insight that a slow internet connection can hinder effective learning Nazilah et al., (2021). The research findings have significant implications for educators, learners, and app developers in the field of language education. By embracing technology, educators can leverage apps like Memrise to empower students in their learning journey and cater to individual learning styles. Learners can benefit from increased flexibility and motivation in language learning. App developers can take note of the connectivity issue and work towards optimizing the app's performance.

In conclusion, the research highlights the positive impact of the Memrise app on independent vocabulary learning, learner autonomy, satisfaction, time management, and flexibility. By considering the insights from this study, educators, learners, and developers can contribute to the advancement of language education through technology. Future research can explore the long-term effects of using Memrise and refine language learning tools for even better educational outcomes.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

In conclusion, the research findings show that the Memrise app is positive received and effectively facilitates independent learning of English vocabulary. The participants enthusiastically praised the user-friendly interface, comprehensive content, and flexibility, significantly contributing to learner satisfaction, efficient time management, and increased autonomy in the learning process. The app's success can be attributed to its diverse learning methods, which provide engaging

flashcards, games and quizzes that make vocabulary learning fun and highly effective. In addition, the live feedback feature is another strength, which empowers students to monitor their progress and maintain motivation throughout their learning journey. Moreover, Memrise's high customizability empowers students to tailor their learning experience, enhancing engagement and relevance. Educators can leverage the positive benefits of language learning apps like Memrise to enhance language learning outcomes while addressing connectivity challenges. Traditional classrooms can complement these apps with face-to-face interaction for a more well-rounded learning experience.

Based on the research, suggestions for teachers include incorporating Memrise into language instruction, creating interactive activities, and providing guidance and support. Students can utilize Memrise to enhance vocabulary acquisition and set specific learning goals. Future research could explore the impact of gamification elements on motivation, effectiveness of spaced repetition algorithms, and transferability of vocabulary knowledge. By considering these suggestions, educators and learners can effectively use technology to improve vocabulary instruction and language learning outcomes. Further research can contribute to developing and enhancing language learning apps like Memrise, providing valuable insights into student motivation and the impact of technology on language acquisition. Now, to compare the academic performance with the effectiveness of using Memrise, a study can be conducted where students are divided into two groups: one group uses Memrise to learn English vocabulary independently, while the other group follows traditional vocabulary learning methods. After a specific period, both groups' academic performance can be evaluated through vocabulary tests, writing assessments, and overall language proficiency evaluations. By comparing the results, researchers can analyze the correlation between using Memrise and language learning outcomes, providing a deeper understanding of the app's effectiveness in improving academic performance.

REFERENCES

- Alqahtani, m. (2015). The importance of vocabulary in language learning and how to be taught. *International journal of teaching and education*, iii(3), 21–34. <https://doi.org/10.20472/te.2015.3.3.002>
- Castells, m. (2004). Informationalism, networks, and the network society: a theoretical blueprint.
- Cheung, s. Y., & ng, k. Y. (2021). Application of the educational game to enhance student learning. *Frontiers in education*, 6. <https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2021.623793>
- Dzulfikri, (2016). Application-based crossword puzzles: players' perception and vocabulary retention. *Studies in English language and education*, 3(2), 125. <https://doi.org/10.24815/siele.v3i2.4960>
- Fadhilawati, d. (2016). Learning and reviewing vocabulary through memrise to improve students. Vocabulary achievement *Jares*, 1(2), 33–46.
- González valencia, h., isaza gómez, g. D., idarraga, m. A., & rodríguez villaquiran, m. (2020). Integrating the virtual platform memrise as a teaching tool for english vocabulary in foreign language students of second semester at a university. *Latinoamericana de estudios educativos*, 16(1), 259–284. <https://doi.org/10.17151/rlee.2020.16.1.12>
- Khandkar, S. H. (Tahun). Open Coding. *Journal of Computer Science*, 10(2), 45-56. Diakses dari <https://pages.cpsc.ucalgary.ca/~saul/wiki/uploads/CPSC681/open-coding.pdf>
- Hwang, g. J., & wu, p. H. (2014). Applications, impacts and trends of mobile technology-enhanced learning: a review of 2008-2012 publications in selected *SSCI journals*. *International journal of mobile learning and organization*, 8(2), 83–95. <https://doi.org/10.1504/ijmlo.2014.062346>
- Illeris, k. (2004). Contemporary theories of learning: learning theorists In their own words.
- Ismiatun, f., & suhartoyo, e. (2022). An investigation on the use of social strategies in online efl learning. *Education and human development journal tahun*, 7(1). <https://doi.org/10.33086/ehdj.v7i1.2314>
- Kent david bradley, & brandon sherman. (2013). Pilot study for use of memrise application by korean junior college students studying efl vocabulary in a blended learning context. *Stem journal*, 14(3), 169–192. <https://doi.org/10.16875/stem.2013.14.3.169>
- Natalia kasa, d., & widya darma, i. (2022). Applying memrise app to improve student's vocabulary in online learning during the covid 19 period at joykids private lesson. *Jedarr: journal of education and research*. <http://jurnal.ikipwidyadarmasurabaya.ac.id/index.php/jedarr>
- Nazilah, b. M., tyas, p. A., & umiyati, w. (2021). Indonesian efl students' voice on the first language usage in classroom. *Enjourme (english journal of merdeka) : culture, language, and teaching of English*, 6(2), 78–86. <https://doi.org/10.26905/enjourme.v6i2.6701>
- Nova windari simanjuntak, m. (2022). Students' perception toward memrise application as media in learning vocabulary.

- Reinders, h. (2010). Towards a classroom pedagogy for learner autonomy: a framework of independent language learning skills. *Australian journal of teacher education*, 35(5), 40–55. <https://doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2010v35n5.4>
- Widowati, D., & Dosen Muslim Indonesia-Sulawesi Selatan, P. (2021). Promoting EFL learners' critical thinking on reading comprehension. *Indonesian Journal of Learning Studies*, 3(1), 1-12. doi:10.31227/ijls.v3i1.267.
- Ryan, M., & Deci, L. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. *American Psychologist*, 55, 68-78. doi:10.1037/0003-066X.55.1.68
- Saldaña, J. (2016). The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers (3rd ed.). *SAGE Publications*.
- Tyas, e. W., & nurdiawati, d. (2019). Eka wahyuning tyas, dede nurdiawati the effectiveness of memrise online application on vocabulary mastery of the tenth grade bdp students of smk al-furqon bantarkawung. In *dialektika journal pbi* (vol. 7, issue 2). www.memrise.com
- Ubaidillah, m. F., elfiyanto, s., rifiyani, a. J., & lee, h. Y. (2023). Indonesian efl teachers' identity construction in a global englishes era. *Jeels (journal of english education and linguistics studies)*, 10(1), 199–235. <https://doi.org/10.30762/jeels.v10i1.1082>
- Williams, m. K. (2017). John dewey in the 21 st century. In *journal of inquiry & action in education* (vol. 9, issue 1).
- Zohoorian, z., noorbakhsh, m., & zeraatpisheh, m. (2022). Efl learners' vocabulary achievement and autonomy: using memrise mobile application. *Indonesian journal of efl and linguistics*, 7(2), 233. <https://doi.org/10.21462/ijefl.v7i2.487>

Malang, July 24, 2023

Dr. Dzul Fikri, S.S., M.Pd
NIP/NPP. 140105197532133