

THE USE OF DIGITAL APPLICATION IN ENRICHING ENGLISH VOCABULARY FOR 7-8 YEARS OLD CHILDREN

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<p>Keywords: English Language Learning; Vocabulary; Digital Applications; Elementary Students</p>	<p>Abstract: The study investigates the effectiveness of the “Learn English Words with SMARTTEACHER” application in enhancing English vocabulary among Indonesian children in elementary school. Employing a descriptive qualitative approach, data were collected from ten students who engaged with the app over a period, completing exercises like “Guess the Word” and “Guess the Picture.” The results reveal notable vocabulary acquisition, with the highest mastery in categories such as colors (100%), numbers (90%) and fruits (80%), while vegetables showed the lowest (60%). The study attributes these differences to varying levels of exposure and cognitive simplicity of each vocabulary type that combines visual aids, auditory cues, and interactive exercises, promoting engagement and motivation compared to conventional learning. The study recommends refining the app to better support challenging vocabulary areas and offers significant benefits, particularly in vocabulary retention and positive learner attitudes.</p>	
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INTRODUCTION

In the era of modern world, English has emerged as a key language for international communication in almost every setting, including business, technology, economy, and academic activities (Herlambang & Adri, 2024). As a result, English education has become an integral part of school curricula throughout the world, including in Indonesia. The main goal of teaching English at the elementary school level is vocabulary building and enrichment, and students' abilities in using target language both spoken or written are indicators of the success of mastering English language skills (Permana, 2020). However, many Indonesian elementary school students, who are generally beginners in learning English, face significant challenges in acquiring these skills. This difficulty is mainly caused by their limited vocabulary and understanding of English (Fatmawati, 2021).

Language learning is influenced by a complex combination of environmental, socioeconomic, and individual factors, according to field research (Rehan & Zaidi, 2023). Although it is important to prioritize the development of a child's mother tongue, introducing a foreign language such as English has been shown to be advantageous and necessary (Jaekel et al., 2022). In contrast to concerns about possible negative effects on language development, studies have shown that early exposure to a second language can improve children's cognitive abilities because language development is related to cognitive development (Miranti & Purwanti, 2020).



Elementary school students in grades 1 and 2 with an age range of 7-8 years are deemed to be sufficiently qualified to learn English as a foreign language. However, introducing a foreign language, especially English, will be a challenge for both teachers and students. This is caused by fundamental differences between the writing and pronunciation of Indonesian and English vocabulary.

The key to successful language acquisition lies in the use of appropriate teaching methods and activities that are interesting and age appropriate. This approach ensures that new vocabulary is easy for young learners to understand, remember and reproduce. The use of effective learning media plays an important role in this process, because it facilitates optimal and efficient learning outcomes (Putikadyanto et al., 2022). Learning English will be easy and fun if the introduction process is carried out through pictures, quizzes or educational games. First, digital media provides unlimited access to various learning resources, ranging from e- books, learning videos, language applications, to online discussion forums (Putranto & Puspita, 2023). These resources allow learners to access material according to their needs and learning styles (Marzuki, 2023a). Second, digital media can facilitate more interactive and interesting learning. For example, the use of videos and animations can help explain difficult concepts in a more visual and easy to understand way (Dharma Sanjaya & Rediani, 2022).

In recent years, the rapid progress of digital technology has revolutionized various aspects of life, including education (Dirmawati et al., 2024). The widespread availability of digital devices such as computers, tablets and smartphones, coupled with increased internet access, has created new opportunities for learning, especially in the field of English language education (Saipa Sidi, Iwan Rumalean, 2022); (Suharli et al., 2024). Digital media offers many advantages that can increase the effectiveness of English language teaching (Marzuki, 2023). The proliferation of educational apps in app stores has made learning more accessible and convenient in various fields, including education. These applications exemplify the concept of digital literacy, which includes the knowledge and skills needed to utilize digital media effectively (Suherdi, 2021). Digital literacy involves the ability to discover, evaluate, use, create, and exploit digital resources wisely, intelligently, and appropriately.

One application that has received attention in the realm of English learning is "Learn English Words with SMART-TEACHER." This Android application is designed to help users, especially children, expand their English vocabulary through an engaging and interactive platform. The app offers a variety of features, including categorized word lists, pronunciation guides, and progress tracking quizzes, all of which contribute to a comprehensive and enjoyable learning experience. Although the potential of these apps to improve English language learning is very promising, there are still gaps in our understanding of their effectiveness, especially in the Indonesian context. Specifically, this research will focus on the use of the "Learn English Words with SMART-TEACHER" application to enrich the English vocabulary of children aged 7-8 years. This focus is important for several reasons:

1. Age-specific effectiveness: Targeting the 7-8 years age group, this study will provide insight into how digital applications influence vocabulary learning at specific stages of cognitive development.
2. Indonesian context: This research will explore the specific impact of the "Learn English Words with SMART-TEACHER" application in the Indonesian educational context, filling a gap in the existing literature.



3. Curriculum integration: This study will investigate how such applications can be effectively integrated into existing Indonesian primary school curricula, providing valuable insights for educators and policy makers.
4. Motivation and engagement: Focusing on a specific age group, this research will explore how digital applications specifically influence students' motivation and engagement in learning English vocabulary compared to traditional methods.
5. Cultural relevance: This research will assess the extent to which the content of "Learn English Words with SMART-TEACHER" is culturally relevant for Indonesian students aged 7-8 years and how this affects learning outcomes.

By addressing this gap, this research aims to make a meaningful contribution to our understanding of technology-enhanced language learning and provide insight into effective strategies for improving English language education at primary school level in Indonesia.

METHOD

This research uses qualitative research methods, especially descriptive qualitative research. This research can be categorized as descriptive and focused. It is called descriptive because researchers emphasize notes with detailed, complete and in-depth sentence descriptions, which describe the actual situation to support the presentation of data (Sutopo, H. B. 2006). The data source used in this research was the results obtained from 10 students aged 7- 8 years as respondents. The selection of this age range is adjusted to the research focus set out in the introduction. The process of learning and doing exercises for each type of vocabulary in the "Learn English Words with SMART-TEACHER" application was implemented for respondents. Students will use the app over a specified period of time (e.g., 1 week) with a specified frequency of use (e.g., 30 minutes daily). The data collection technique was carried out using note-taking techniques. Data was obtained based on the scores from 2 types of exercises that follow each vocabulary in the "Learn English Words with SMART-TEACHER" application, namely Guess the word and Guess the picture. The collected data will be analyzed using qualitative content analysis methods. The analysis steps include coding data based on emerging themes, categorizing data based on types of exercises and aspects of language learning, and interpreting data to identify patterns and trends in student vocabulary learning. Through this research method, it is hoped that an in-depth understanding of the effectiveness of the application can be obtained. "Learn English Words with SMART-TEACHER" in increasing the English vocabulary of children aged 7-8 years, as well as its implications for English language learning at elementary school level in Indonesia.

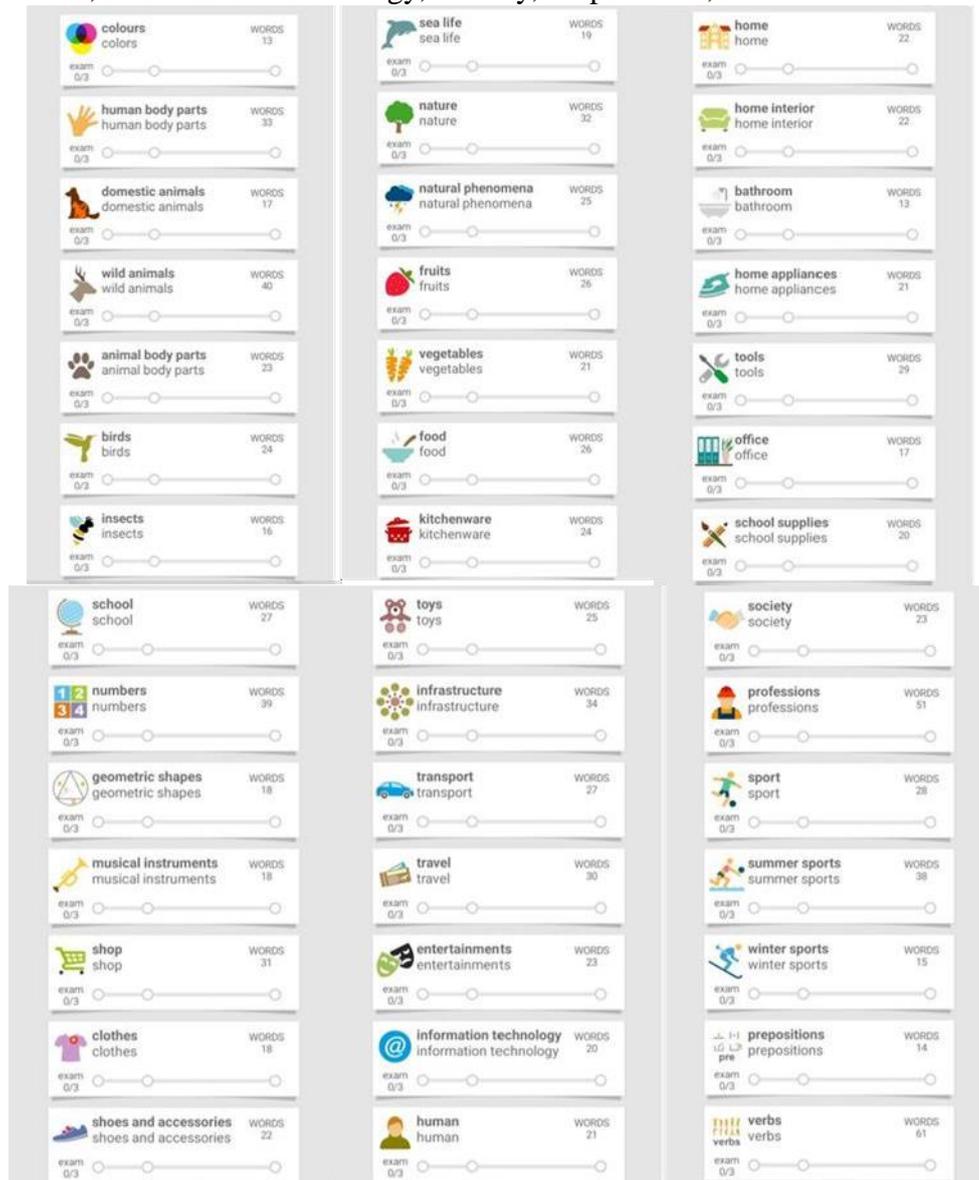
RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

In the process of acquiring English vocabulary through the "Learn English Words with SMART-TEACHER" application, students collaborate with their parents or guardians. This is done because parents have to download the application on their smartphone first and then teach students how to use it. The "Learn English Words with SMART-TEACHER" application provides 43 types of vocabulary, covering various topics from Alphabet to Verbs. Such as Alphabet, Numbers, Colors, Human, Body parts, Fruits, Vegetables, Domestic Animals, Wild Animals, Animal Body Parts, Birds, Insects, Sea Life, Nature, Natural Phenomena, Food, Home, Home Interior, Clothes, Shoes and Accessories, Toy, Kitchen, Bathroom, Home Appliances, Tools office, School Supplies, School, Geometric Shapes, Musical Instruments,



Shop, Sports, Summer Sports, Winter Sports, Professions, Infrastructure, Transport, Travel, Entertainments, Information Technology, Society, Prepositions, and Verbs.



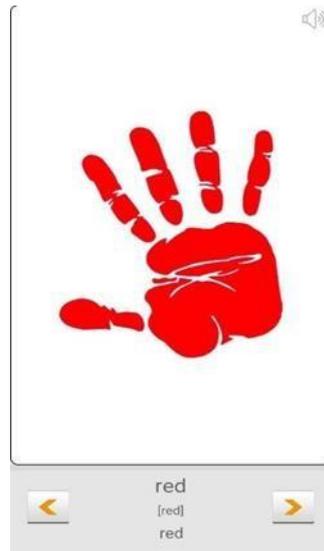
However, for this research, only four types of vocabulary were chosen as material for the learning process, namely, Numbers, Colors, Fruits and Vegetables. The selection of this material was adapted to the abilities of children aged 7- 8 years of absorbing new material that is not yet familiar to them. The results of the vocabulary mastery process through the "Learn English Words with SMART-TEACHER" application show encouraging results for children aged 7-8 years. The majority of selected respondents or students can use the application very well. They were able to go through two stages of learning to several exercises, namely Guess the word, Guess the picture, and Write the word.



Learning English using apps provides several advantages compared to traditional learning methods. Some of these benefits include:

1. Portability: Smartphones and their built-in applications are easy to carry anywhere, allowing for flexible learning.
2. Efficiency: Students do not have to carry books and stationery, reducing physical burden and increasing learning comfort.
3. Flexibility of time and place: They can study anytime and anywhere, increasing opportunities to study outside formal school hours.
4. Learning variety: Students can learn different aspects of the language from the same device independently, increasing independence in learning.
5. Cost efficiency: They don't have to pay repeatedly to install and use an app, making learning more affordable.
6. 24/7 Accessibility: The learning application can accompany them 24 hours a day, providing consistent learning support.

At the "Learn" stage, students can hear, read symbols, and imitate the pronunciation of each vocabulary word. There are 13 to 61 vocabularies for each type of vocabulary. After hearing the pronunciation of a word, students can imitate the pronunciation so that the pronunciation is correct. Apart from that, students can also remember vocabulary based on the pictures provided, where they directly experience the process of acquiring vocabulary. Students can proceed to the next vocabulary by clicking the navigation mark to the right. If you want to hear the vocabulary learned again, students can click the navigation icon in the top right corner.



The next stage is "Guess the Word", namely matching the picture with three vocabulary choices. Students must choose the word that matches the picture given. If the student chooses the correct word or not, the question will move to the next question. The difference is that if students choose inappropriate vocabulary, the error score in the upper right corner will increase. The screen display for "Guess the Word" is as follows:



The next stage is "Guess the Picture", namely matching the word with the picture. At this stage, students will be given several pictures that must be matched with the three vocabulary choices available. This stage is similar to the previous stage. If students select an image that matches the vocabulary given, the color of the vocabulary they click on will change. Otherwise, there will be no color change in the vocabulary, and the error score in the upper right corner will increase. Here's a look at the "Guess the Picture" stage.





The final stage is "Write the Word". At this stage, students will see a picture and must fill in the blank column with the correct vocabulary according to the picture shown. Correct word writing can be achieved by remembering the previous stage, namely "Guess the Picture". To see further vocabulary, students can click the navigation mark to the right. The following is a screen display for the "Writing" stage.



Based on the vocabulary acquisition process through the "Learn English Words with SMART-TEACHER" application, it is known that this application combines the four language skills, namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing, with the four language acquisition strategies, namely imitation, direct experience, remembering, and game. The good collaboration between these two aspects makes this application very easy for anyone to learn, including elementary school students aged 7-8 years. The convenience offered by applications such as "Learn English Words with SMART-TEACHER" with a modern approach to early language acquisition will provide significant results in vocabulary mastery. In addition, by utilizing various innate capacities in interaction with experiences of the physical and social world, the learning process becomes more interesting and produces deeper understanding. Innovative learning can make

abstract and boring language learning more interesting, lively and communicative. Based on implementation through the "Learn English Words with SMART- TEACHER" application, the results obtained show that of the 10 students who initially only knew some vocabulary from Numbers, Colors, Vegetables and Fruits, there was a significant increase in vocabulary mastery. This increase can be seen in the following table.

Table 1. Percentage of Vocabulary Mastery

Types of Vocabulary	Very Capable		Less Capable	
	%	Q	%	Q
Numbers	90	9	10	1
Colors	100	10	0	0
Fruits	80	8	20	2
Vegetables	60	6	40	4

Discussion

The research findings highlight the vocabulary mastery levels of 10 respondents using the Learn English with Smart Teacher program across four vocabulary categories. The respondents showed the highest mastery in colors, achieving a perfect score of 100%, indicating all participants were 'Very Capable' in this area. For numbers, 90% of respondents demonstrated strong proficiency, with only 10% showing a lesser capability. Fruits ranked third in mastery, with 80% of participants showing high capability, while 20% showed lesser proficiency. Vegetables saw the lowest mastery level, with only 60% of respondents marked as 'Very Capable' and 40% as 'Less Capable'.

This data reflects that certain vocabulary categories, like colors and numbers, are more easily mastered by learners in this program than others. The perfect mastery score in colors suggests that this vocabulary type may be simpler to retain or more frequently practiced, enhancing learning outcomes. Numbers also showed a high proficiency rate, potentially because of their common use in basic language learning contexts, which may strengthen retention. Fruits had slightly lower mastery, suggesting that while familiar, this category might present more variety, impacting consistent understanding. Vegetables, with the lowest mastery, might pose more challenges, possibly due to less frequent use or more complex terminology within this category.

A closer look at the varying mastery levels suggests potential areas for improvement in the teaching methods applied by Learn English with Smart Teacher. The perfect score in colors suggests effective teaching strategies that could be replicated in lower-scoring areas, such as vegetables. Techniques that enhance recall and usage of vocabulary words could be particularly helpful in areas with lower proficiency. In categories with mixed mastery, a review of the teaching tools or methods may help address gaps in understanding. Additionally, targeted practices for the less proficient categories may provide learners with the necessary reinforcement to reach higher mastery.

The difference in vocabulary mastery levels highlights the importance of evaluating and adapting instructional approaches to meet learners' needs. Since certain categories appear more challenging, the program may consider integrating more interactive or contextual learning strategies for vocabulary like fruits and vegetables. A balanced approach that includes visual aids, repetitive exercises, and real-life application might be beneficial in these lower-performing areas. Furthermore, fostering engagement through personalized and frequent



feedback could also help in reinforcing retention across all categories, especially for vocabulary types that learners find difficult.

Expanding on these findings, it may be beneficial for Learn English with Smart Teacher to incorporate differentiated instruction tailored to individual vocabulary challenges. For example, introducing thematic or scenario-based learning exercises could make vocabulary categories like vegetables and fruits more memorable by linking them to real-world contexts. Interactive methods such as games or group activities might also improve engagement and retention, especially in less mastered areas. Visual tools, like flashcards and illustrations, paired with auditory repetition could further reinforce learning, catering to different learning styles. A varied instructional approach can help learners overcome difficulties by appealing to their unique preferences and strengths.

Additionally, ongoing assessment and feedback could play a crucial role in helping students monitor their progress and areas for improvement. Frequent quizzes, self-assessment tools, and peer review sessions could enable learners to identify gaps in their vocabulary mastery early on. Encouraging regular self-reflection can help learners stay engaged and motivated, especially in areas where they may struggle. Teachers could also personalize feedback to address each learner's strengths and weaknesses, ensuring a supportive learning environment. Overall, by using adaptive teaching strategies and regular feedback, Learn English with Smart Teacher can better support learners in achieving well-rounded vocabulary proficiency.

CONCLUSION

The research demonstrates that the "Learn English Words with SMART-TEACHER" application significantly enhances vocabulary acquisition among young learners. Students showed marked improvement across various vocabulary categories, with notable success in colors and numbers. The study underscores the importance of integrating digital tools into English language education, particularly in Indonesia, where traditional methods may fall short. By providing an engaging and interactive learning experience, this application not only aids vocabulary retention but also promotes a positive attitude towards learning English. Future research should explore long-term impacts and the potential for broader curriculum integration.

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