

Enhancing Vocabulary Mastery: Students' Perspectives of Marbel Learn English as a Learning Tool

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Abstract. This study aims to explore students' perceptions of the Marbel Learn English application as a learning tool for improving English vocabulary. Using a qualitative research approach with a case study design, this study involved 15 seventh-grade students from a junior high school in Serdang Bedagai. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation and analyzed using thematic analysis techniques. The findings indicate that students generally have a positive perception of the application due to its ease of use, interactive features, and gamification elements that enhance engagement. The use of Marbel Learn English positively impacts vocabulary retention, independent learning, and contextual understanding of words. However, challenges were identified, such as the structured learning progression that requires students to complete challenges before advancing to new levels, which some students found restrictive. These findings suggest that Marbel Learn English has great potential as an effective vocabulary learning tool, but further improvements in flexibility and vocabulary diversity could enhance the learning experience. This study provides valuable insights for educators on integrating mobile applications into vocabulary learning and offers recommendations for developers to refine the application's features for better student engagement and learning outcomes.

Keywords: Digital vocabulary acquisition, Interactive learning tools, Mobile-assisted language learning, Student engagement in learning apps, Technology-based learning

1. INTRODUCTION

These days, English is widely considered the global common language and an important skill for both jobs, education, and communicating with others internationally [1]. Throughout the world, people are working on their language skills more since becoming fluent in English relies mainly on getting a strong vocabulary [2]. It has been demonstrated through recent research that being knowledgeable about words can show how well a student is performing in school and speaking [3]. At the same time, technological advances have influenced teaching and welcomed a new period for online courses. Because more technology is being used in education, the global e-learning market is predicted to hit \$375 billion by 2026 [4]. A growing number of people use mobile learning apps since they provide flexibility and accessibility and allow each user to create their learning programs.

While it is true that mobile learning is spreading and the worldwide e-learning market is moving forward, much remains to be done so that these tools reach every part of the world equally [5]. Many agree that understanding and using the English language is significant in Indonesia, yet improving this teaching area remains a struggle [6]. Based on the 2020 EF Index, Indonesia's English skills were considered pre-basic [5]. This explains why creative ways of teaching and studying English are needed in the nation [7]. Different colleges and schools in Indonesia do not use technology-enhanced language learning (TELL) to the same extent or with the same level of success [8].

The previous studies about apps based on android for enhancing the students' speaking and to stimulate them to practice more English [9]-[11]. The use of YouTube in education to help students learn flexibly and increase interest in students. Vocabulary is the skill of learning a second language or linguistics [12]-[14]. Learning vocabulary is essential for students looking to improve their communication abilities since it serves as the foundation for expressing ideas, comprehending difficult texts, and engaging in meaningful conversations. In this age of globalization, understanding English is essential for international communication [15]-[17].

This study observe about new apps-based on android, called "Marbel Learn English" shows promise, very little is known about it in research documents [18]. The gamification components of "Marbel Learn English" are also examined in this study, along with how they affect students' motivation and involvement in learning new words [19]. Theoretically, this study also expands the understanding of the relationship

between students' perceptions, engagement, and vocabulary acquisition through mobile learning and provides local knowledge on the effectiveness of learning applications in the Indonesian context that takes into account local educational, cultural, and technological factors [20]-[22].

In addition, many studies have examined the general impact of technology on language learning. The study found that the use of mobile-assisted gamification significantly improved students' vocabulary learning outcomes compared to conventional methods [23], [24]. Additionally, students in the experimental group reported that gamification not only enhanced their learning outcomes but also provided a more enjoyable and motivating learning experience" [25]. However, few have specifically focused on students' perceptions of using mobile apps for vocabulary enhancement. This gap is significant given that student perceptions can significantly influence the adoption and effective use of educational technology. In addition, this study focused on first-grade junior high school students because, at this level, students still experience difficulties in understanding English lessons, especially vocabulary. With different previous educational backgrounds, students have different English vocabulary abilities, and students' perceptions are fundamental in developing their language skills. Based on the identified gaps in current research and the study's objectives, the following research questions have been formulated:

1. What are students' perceptions of using "Marbel Learn English" as a learning media for vocabulary improvement?
2. How does "Marbel Learn English" impact students' vocabulary learning experience?
3. What challenges do students face when using "Marbel Learn English" for vocabulary learning?

The rapid advancement of technology has significantly transformed the field of language learning, particularly through the integration of Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL). MALL offers learners greater flexibility, accessibility, and personalized learning experiences than traditional Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL). Implementing mobile learning applications has revolutionized vocabulary acquisition by incorporating interactive and engaging features. These applications integrate multimedia resources, quizzes, and gamification, which have been shown to enhance vocabulary retention and learner motivation [26]. Studies prove that mobile learning is valuable for students since it gives them flexibility, simple-to-use features, and quick responses, helping them control their learning [4].

Several studies have shown that MALL helps learn vocabulary for students in many educational places. According to Lei, MALL improves learners' views on learning words and boosts their self-control. Much like [27] states, MALL helps students improve their vocabulary when combined with a scientific approach. Research at schools across Indonesia also noted that MALL helps students improve their vocabulary, suggesting that technology is valuable for learning languages, even where resources are scarce [19]. Additionally, Van and Thanh reviewed how freshmen view MALL and noticed that using it added to their vocabulary and motivated them more. Laaribi suggests that personalized learning contributes to MALL by increasing motivation and achievement among learners.

While MALL provides many benefits, putting it into practice has several challenges. Various studies note that some people do not have access to technology, some do not have digital literacy, and using mobiles for non-educational reasons can distract them. Development in digital learning still faces challenges in Indonesia due to some problems with technology, along with teachers and students not being ready at the same level [28]. The "Making Indonesia 4.0" plan introduced by the Indonesian government highlights the value of technology in teaching. MALL works effectively in language learning because of Krashen's Input Hypothesis (1985). It is argued that language learning happens when people understand it in context. Using MALL, learners can access language materials at the right proficiency level independently and situationally through mobile applications. Interactive and multimodal learning makes MALL work with Krashen's idea of comprehensible input, which in turn helps students pick up new words. Therefore, it is important to research how effective mobile apps like Marbel Learn English are for Indonesian students when learning new vocabulary. Exploring students' opinions on MALL can help improve mobile technology use for foreign language education.

Building a strong vocabulary is key in learning, such as speaking, listening, grammar, and writing. The more practicing the more mastering, and the it needs repetition as much as they can [14], [28], [29]. Even so, traditional approaches that require constant repetition may be boring and inefficient for remembering words for a long time [4], [30], [31]. To solve these issues, mobile applications provide opportunities for learning vocabulary through interactive, enjoyable, and personal lessons.

Marbel Learn English helps children learn vocabulary in English by using methods that excite them. Thanks to Educa Studio, the app uses animations, helps users pronounce words, and includes interactive tasks to help users remember words more easily. The app offers several categories, for example, animals, fruits, numbers, and many other objects, helping students memorize words in a step-by-step routine. Marbel

Learn English offers mini-games and quizzes to support recalling and using new words. The application is designed to be easy to use and includes fun activities, so students enjoy and are motivated by learning English through it.

Such applications apply different strategies to help people remember and recall words. Researchers have discovered that learners recall new words better when they encounter them in the form of images, sounds, and games [32]. Also, when words are repeated using the proper intervals, it becomes much easier to remember them for a long time [33], [34], [35]. Fithriani's study revealed that mobile-based games helped students improve their vocabulary more effectively than traditional ways of learning. Students in the group using gamified learning performed better on vocabulary tests than those in the control group. In addition, learners mentioned that using games made studying vocabulary less stressful because it was enjoyable and prompted them [36]-[38].

While mobile-assisted learning is helpful for studying vocabulary, there are still a few roadblocks. Learners may struggle with limited words, no use in applications, and unavoidable ads [33]. For these reasons, Marbel Learn English should be evaluated further to ensure it provides the proper support for learning new vocabulary. To contribute to studies on technology-enhanced language learning and suggest ways to enhance mobile apps for learning vocabulary, this research investigates what learners think and go through.

2. METHOD

Research Design

This study employs a qualitative research method with a case study approach to explore students' perceptions of using the Marbel Learn English application for vocabulary learning. A case study approach is appropriate as it allows for an in-depth exploration of students' experiences and perspectives within a specific learning environment. This research aims to analyze students' challenges while using the application as a vocabulary learning tool. To achieve this objective, the study integrates multiple data sources, including semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and documentation, ensuring the credibility of the findings through data triangulation [20].

Participant

The study involved 15 seventh-grade students from a junior high school in Serdang Bedagai, Indonesia. There were three classes, with five(5) students participating. Subjects were chosen to include people who were new to the Marbel Learn English application, wanted to answer questions in detail during the interview, and took part in vocabulary courses during the project. They needed to stay on the app for a week, using it from one to two times each day on average [39].

Data Collection Techniques

Researchers gathered information using three primary techniques: semi-structured interviews, observation in classrooms, and writing down documents. The goal of the semi-structured interviews was to know in detail how students feel about and use the Marbel Learn English application [40]. The interviewer explored many things, such as how easy it was to use the application, the advantages participants felt for learning vocabulary, which features facilitated the process, and what challenges they experienced. All the voices in the interviews were recorded, and the dialogues were transcribed word for word. It was important to observe students in class to see how they used the application. The researcher saw how students interacted with the different activities in the app, paid attention to how interested they were, and noticed whenever they faced challenges in their vocabulary studies.

The field notes helped provide additional detail for the interviews. The third method for collecting data was documentation, which included taking screenshots of student activities and collecting feedback on their app use.

Data Analysis

Braun and Clarke's (2020) six-phase framework was used for thematic analysis of the collected data. In the first stage, the researcher read and reread the transcripts, notes, and documents to get an initial idea. After that, the researcher looked for key patterns and coded the answers that matched them. Next, the research confirmed that the themes agreed with the data, and each theme was given a clear name to ease its interpretation. Ultimately, the themes were organized in a report that included important quotes from those who participated to make the data more solid. The reason for using thematic analysis was

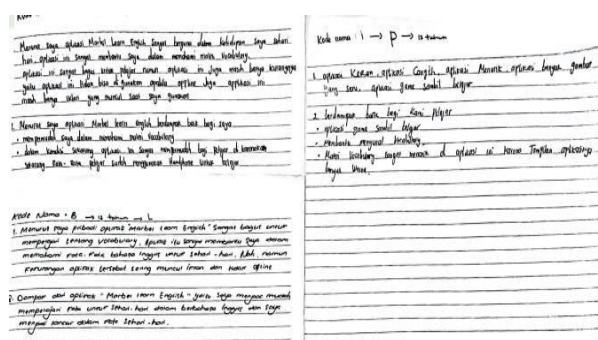
that it allows researchers to view qualitative data in an orderly manner without losing the flexibility to recognize recurring ideas in participants' words [26].

3. FINDINGS

Here, the study's results are reported utilizing information from semi-structured interviews, classroom visits, and records. Marbel Learn English as a vocabulary learning tool was explored through thematic analysis of what the students thought. The outcomes were divided into two main groups according to the study's questions: students' perspectives on the application and the effect it had on their word learning.

Students' Perceptions of Using Marbel Learn English

The research considers the views of 15 seventh-grade students by observing their experiences with the app. The study highlights the performance of Marbel Learn English and its impact on the learning process for students.



Picture 1. Application reflection results from students

Increasing Self-Confidence in Using English Vocabulary

Many students' self-confidence in using English words has increased after working with Marbel Learn English. Because the app is interactive and engaging, students are not pressured to practice new words. Learning from the app is different from using a textbook since it encourages independent learning. Thus, students become more interested in using English vocabulary in many situations, which helps them feel more secure about using the language. Most students admitted that the Marbel Learn English app has helped them feel more confident speaking English. They find that the unique features make it more interesting and cause less stress during the process than using only textbooks. Taking a dynamic approach motivates students to further improve their English skills.

Many students found the games and interactive challenges offered by the app enjoyable. As a result, kids learn more easily and can grasp new knowledge and information quickly and clearly. They can improve how they remember and apply their new vocabulary in daily life by practicing it in various exercises. This means the app is valuable and easy for users to retain English vocabulary. Even so, although most students used the app positively, others mentioned that few vocabulary options were provided. They hoped to be able to use more different words and add vocabulary related to different school topics so that what they gain from this app could benefit them in all of their studies. Based on this, while the app helps learn vocabulary, getting more subjects' words on it would allow it to be more helpful for students overall. Consequently, it might function as a learning aid that improves everyday words and helps students understand advanced terms used in schools.

Most of the students saw Marbel Learn English as a beneficial resource for learning new vocabulary. They reported that the main factors influencing how they perceived the application were ease of use if they were engaged, various gamification features, and the challenges they experienced while using it. Many commenters stated that the application's interface was simple for everyone to understand and use. Students reported that the app was easy to navigate, with well-organized categories and intuitive controls that allowed them to access vocabulary exercises effortlessly. This highlighted that the success of mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) depends mainly on usability and accessibility. Those involved claimed that using the app's approach allowed them to study vocabulary words efficiently.

Ease of Use of Application

One of the students, Student A, revealed that the Marbel Learn English app is very easy to use. In the interview, he stated that he could quickly find the vocabulary materials needed without experiencing any difficulties. He added that this application does not require teacher assistance so that he can learn independently anytime and anywhere.

“The app is very easy to use. I can find vocabulary lessons quickly, and I don’t need a teacher to help me. The instructions are clear, and the activities are fun, making learning more enjoyable. I feel more confident practicing new words on my own without feeling pressured.”

(Student A, Interview, 2025)

With this statement, it is clear that Marbel Learn English is designed to be user-friendly and simplify studying materials for students. Since everything is simple to find, students can learn more effectively and enjoy the process. Moreover, not having to look for suitable vocabulary gives students more time to work on their improvement. Being accessible allows students to improve their English skills by actively learning independently whenever they wish. Explore the Education Museum with a fun and interactive gaming experience!

The presence of quizzes, rewards, and interactive activities in Marbel Learn English has kept students motivated while studying vocabulary words. They help students enjoy learning new words conveniently and with less stress. It was clear to the researcher that the game-like parts of the app caught the students’ attention because they enjoyed getting a sense of achievement and feeling excited when tasks were completed. This is according to earlier studies showing that mobile gamified teaching boosts students’ interest in learning. One person explained that:

“I really enjoy using this app because every time I complete a quiz or an activity, I receive points and rewards, which makes me feel like I am progressing and improving. It gives me a sense of accomplishment and motivates me to keep learning. Unlike regular classroom exercises that sometimes feel repetitive, this app makes vocabulary practice exciting. I always look forward to unlocking new levels and earning more points, which encourages me to practice more often. The competitive aspect also makes it fun because I like challenging myself to achieve higher scores and beat my previous records.”

(Student B, Interview, 2025)

It clarifies that students start using the app more often, thanks to the gamified elements, which boost their efforts to learn more words. The rewards and badges motivate students to work towards their learning goals and keep improving. Moreover, because these features are competitive and aim for specific results, students become more excited about learning new words. According to various sources, gamification integrates fun aspects and boosts student motivation by aiding in their understanding and recall of information. This study’s results demonstrate that the way the app is set up makes practicing more enjoyable for students. Moreover, the variety of lessons and tools available in Marbel Learn English made it easier for students to learn and remember new words.

Using interesting games and useful vocabulary tools has encouraged students in Marbel Learn English to increase their knowledge of English. This interactive program has made students more willing to participate in learning their new language.

Impact of Marbel Learn English on Students’ Vocabulary Learning Experiences

This second question was about the application’s contribution to students’ exploration of new vocabulary. Researchers found that students showed better word memory, were able to study and learn alone, understood different words in context more, and also faced some difficulties. They noted that studying vocabulary regularly in different ways improved their ability to remember those words. This follows the theory for learning new words, which explains that hearing new vocabulary in various circumstances improves one’s ability to remember and recall it.

Improve New Word Recall Skills

When students use the Marbel Learn English app, they notice an improvement in learning new vocabulary. According to some, they could not keep new vocabulary in their minds earlier, but the

games made learning the language more straightforward and more effective. This is in line with what Student D said in the following interview:

“I used to forget new words easily, but now I can remember them because I practice them often in the app.”

(Student D, Interview, 2025)

Student D stated that previously, he often forgot the new vocabulary learned. However, after using the Marbel Learn English app, she found it easier to remember new words because she often practiced through various features available in the app. She emphasized that regular practice in the app helps her to strengthen her memory of the vocabulary she has learned. This statement shows that using the app not only helps students recognize new vocabulary but also improves their retention of the words through repetitive and interactive exercises. Thus, the app is important in supporting vocabulary learning more effectively and sustainably.

Previous studies have also emphasized that mobile learning applications enhance memory retention by providing interactive exercises reinforcing vocabulary knowledge. The findings from this study confirm that Marbel Learn English offers similar benefits, particularly in reinforcing vocabulary through repetition.

Increase Learning Independence

Some students also feel that using the Marbel Learn English app gives them the freedom to learn independently without having to wait for directions from the teacher. They can access the materials at any time according to their individual learning needs and pace. The application provided students with a sense of autonomy, allowing them to learn at their own pace outside the classroom. This is an important aspect of self-regulated learning, where students take control of their learning process. Many students expressed confidence in using the application independently, motivating them to continue learning new vocabulary.

“I don’t have to wait for the teacher to give vocabulary lessons. I can learn new words by myself anytime I want.”

(Student E, Interview, 2025)

This statement shows that this app allows students to have more control over their learning process. By accessing learning materials in a flexible way, students can enrich their vocabulary independently without being limited by classroom schedules.

Facilitate Understanding the Context of Word Usage

In addition to the ease of accessing the material at any time, students also appreciated the features that helped their understanding of new vocabulary. One aspect that is considered useful is the provision of examples of word usage in appropriate contexts. This helps students understand how and when a word is used correctly.

“I like that the app gives example words. It helps me understand when to use the word correctly.”

(Student F, Interview, 2025)

This statement shows that the inclusion of word examples in the app not only enriches students’ vocabulary, but also improves their understanding of the use of words in the proper context. Thus, the Marbel Learn English app not only acts as a tool for memorizing vocabulary but also as a learning medium that helps students apply words more effectively.

Challenges Faced by Students in Using Marbel Learn English for Vocabulary Learning

The third research question explored students’ challenges when using “Marbel Learn English” for vocabulary learning. The findings reveal several obstacles, including restrictions in learning progression, limited contextual usage examples, and occasional technical issues.

Learning Progression Constraints in Marbel Learn English

Despite the positive feedback, some students experienced problems when using the app. The main issue reported was the need for students to understand each type of vocabulary and complete challenges before being able to move on to the next level. On the one hand, this mechanism ensures that students really understand the material before proceeding further. However, some students find this system too restrictive, especially for those who want to learn faster. Previous research states that a challenge-based learning system can improve vocabulary retention, but too strict can reduce learning motivation. This is in line with the experiences of some of the students in this study, who felt that although this method helped them learn vigorously, the process sometimes felt inhibiting. One student revealed,

“I have to finish the challenge first before I can move on to the next material. Sometimes, it feels long, but on the other hand, I understand the vocabulary better.”

(Student C, Interview, 2025).

This finding suggests that while Marbel Learn English is an effective vocabulary learning tool, the option of flexibility in learning progression and adjustment of difficulty level can enhance students' learning experience.

4. DISCUSSION

According to the discussion of this study, using the Marbel Learn English application benefited students' vocabulary learning by improving their levels of engagement, motivation, and memory. The app was well received by students, who also noticed an improvement in their ability to use English words during daily talks. The games and quizzes helped maintain the students' interest and convinced them to practice more often. This study agrees with others suggesting that mobile gamification encourages students and improves language skills [8]. Since students prefer interactive parts in education, games must include competition, rewards, and quick feedback to help them concentrate [41].

The study revealed that students were most likely to use vocabulary categories for actions related to school, family, and basic colors. It demonstrates that students prefer to learn language skills that they can use regularly, as studies have shown that contextual learning helps people learn and recall new things with ease. In addition, some students wanted a larger selection of vocabulary words, mainly in subjects linked to studying. This result agrees with other studies that suggest using appropriate materials helps students enjoy learning and address each student's learning needs [8].

The application was appreciated by most, but some issues did impact the students' learning. Many learners mentioned that having advertisements disrupt their studies was a regular problem. Students often discovered that the exercises sometimes became repetitive because of the limited vocabulary involved. Additionally, depending on an internet connection was an issue for many students when they needed audio or images to use some features. Similarly, studies on mobile learning have mentioned the need for minimal distractions and making lessons available to all participants [8].

It was also found that students who often listened to the audio in the program showed greater speaking improvement than those who did not use sound. This is supported by past studies that state that using both hearing and sight for learning a new language improves accuracy in its pronunciation. Furthermore, students who kept repeating the quiz challenges could remember words for a more extended period, proving that taking extra challenges is very useful in learning. Based on the preference for quizzes, students might benefit from learning how to mix various learning approaches to improve their vocabulary.

This research finds that using mobile applications designed for gamification supports junior high school students in building their vocabulary. While the tool works well, incorporating new content, making it easier to use, and improving how it is displayed could lead to even better results. Researchers might further study how adaptable content can help each student learn a better and more varied vocabulary.

5. CONCLUSION

The Marbel Learn English application helps users acquire new words because it features engaging games, is simple to use, and includes different learning activities. Many students noticed that they could now use English vocabulary more easily in their daily lives, and most enjoyed learning this way more than with the traditional methods. According to research that says mobile-based gamification helps

effectively in language learning, regular quizzes and word games keep students more engaged. Also, the sound materials greatly assisted in improving their pronunciation and proved how audio aids enhance one's vocabulary knowledge and ability to use it. Marbel Learning English is not easy for some students because they must invest time and effort in learning every kind of vocabulary and completing challenges before moving ahead. This technique aims to make information easier to learn and remember; still, a few students consider it overly limiting, especially those who want to learn faster. While using challenges helps to improve vocabulary, a strict setup could make students lose interest and enjoy learning less. In essence, Marbel Learn English helps improve vocabulary acquisition, and adjusting the app's flexibility and difficulties could provide learners a better experience. Still, additional studies are needed on adapting courses and materials based on how well each student understands the material. Also, working on technical challenges and adding new words might give students a better learning experience. Continued advancements in digital learning could give students more chances to improve their English through using mobile applications in schools.

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