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## Using mobile apps in teaching vocabulary in EFL classrooms

**Akromjonova Zamira Akromjonovna**  
[zamiraakromjonova@gmail.com](mailto:zamiraakromjonova@gmail.com)

Student,  
Uzbekistan State World Languages University

**Radjabova Gulnoza Giyosiddinovna**  
[rad.gulnoza@gmail.com](mailto:rad.gulnoza@gmail.com)

Associate Professor (PhD),  
Uzbekistan State World Languages University

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**Annotation** *Mobile apps have really changed how people learn languages, especially for English as a foreign language, which means that with phones everywhere, it has become easier than ever to learn new words outside of class. This paper is aimed to explore different apps that help with vocabulary acquisition, like those spaced repetition ones or games that make it fun. It is based on studies on mobile learning and compares them to old school methods. Apps seem to boost motivation and help remember words better, but there are issues too, like getting tired of screens or not everyone having good internet. In the end, mixing apps with regular teaching could make a big difference for EFL students.*

**Keywords** *Mobile apps, EFL, vocabulary, MALL, games, repetition*

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## Ingliz tilini chet tili sifatida o'qitish sinflarida lug'atni o'rgatishda mobil ilovalardan foydalanish

**Akromjonova Zamira Akromjonovna**  
[zamiraakromjonova@gmail.com](mailto:zamiraakromjonova@gmail.com)

Talaba,  
O'zbekiston davlat jahon tillari universiteti

**Radjabova Gulnoza Giyosiddinovna**  
[rad.gulnoza@gmail.com](mailto:rad.gulnoza@gmail.com)

PhD, dotsent,  
O'zbekiston davlat jahon tillari universiteti

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**Annotatsiya** *Mobil ilovalar odamlarning til o'rganish usullarini sezilarli darajada o'zgartirdi, ayniqsa ingliz tilini chet tili sifatida o'rganishda. Smartfonlarning keng tarqalishi tufayli sinfdan tashqarida yangi so'zlarni o'rganish har qachongidan ham osonlashdi. Ushbu ish lug'atni o'zlashtirishga yordam beradigan turli xil ilovalarni, masalan, interval takrorlashga asoslangan yoki o'rganishni qiziqarli qiladigan o'yin ilovalarini o'rganishga qaratilgan. Tadqiqot mobil ta'limga oid ilmiy ishlarga asoslangan bo'lib, ularni an'anaviy o'qitish usullari bilan solishtiradi. Ilovalar motivatsiyani oshirishi va so'zlarni yaxshiroq eslab qolishga yordam berishi mumkin, biroq ayrim muammolar ham mavjud, masalan, ekranlardan charchash yoki sifatli internetga hammaning ham ega emasligi. Xulosa qilib aytganda, mobil ilovalarni an'anaviy o'qitish bilan birlashtirish ingliz tilini chet tili sifatida o'rganayotgan talabalar uchun katta ijobiy ta'sir ko'rsatishi mumkin.*

**Kalit so'zlar** *Mobil ilovalar, EFL, lug'at, MALL, o'yinlar, takrorlash*

## Использование мобильных приложений при обучении лексике в классах английского языка как иностранного

**Акромжонова Замира Акромжоновна**  
[zamiraakromjonova@gmail.com](mailto:zamiraakromjonova@gmail.com)

Студент,  
Узбекский государственный университет  
мировых языков

**Раджабова Гулноза Гиёсиддиновна**  
[rad.gulnoza@gmail.com](mailto:rad.gulnoza@gmail.com)

PhD, доцент,  
Узбекский государственный университет  
мировых языков

**Аннотация** *Мобильные приложения значительно изменили то, как люди изучают языки, особенно английский как иностранный. Благодаря широкому распространению смартфонов изучение новых слов вне класса стало проще, чем когда-либо. Данная работа направлена на изучение различных приложений, способствующих усвоению лексики, таких как приложения с интервальным повторением или игровые приложения, которые делают обучение более увлекательным. Исследование основано на работах по мобильному обучению и включает сравнение с традиционными методами обучения. Приложения, по-видимому, повышают мотивацию и способствуют лучшему запоминанию слов, однако существуют и определённые проблемы, такие как усталость от экранов или ограниченный доступ к качественному интернету. В заключение можно отметить, что сочетание мобильных приложений с традиционным обучением может значительно повысить эффективность изучения английского языка как иностранного.*

**Ключевые слова** *Мобильные приложения, английский как иностранный, лексика, MALL, игры, повторение*

### Introduction

The development of mobile technology has significantly influenced language learning, especially in the field of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Mobile applications provide learners with flexible and accessible opportunities to practice vocabulary anytime and anywhere. Unlike traditional learning methods, mobile apps allow students to engage in short but frequent learning sessions, which can improve vocabulary retention and support independent learning. Dictionary applications are among the simplest but most useful tools for vocabulary

learning. Applications such as the Merriam-Webster Dictionary App and the Cambridge Dictionary App provide quick access to word definitions, pronunciation, and example sentences. Learners can easily check unfamiliar words while reading or listening without interrupting their learning process. According to Batia Laufer and Monica Hill (2000), digital dictionaries are used more frequently than traditional dictionaries and can help learners build deeper vocabulary knowledge through access to collocations and real-life usage examples (Laufer & Hill, 2000).

### Main part

Research has shown that mobile applications can effectively support vocabulary learning in EFL contexts. A meta-analysis conducted by Jack Burston (2015) demonstrated that mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) produces learning outcomes comparable to, and sometimes better than, traditional computer-based learning methods (Burston, 2015). One important factor that makes mobile apps effective is the possibility of frequent practice. Instead of studying for long periods occasionally, learners can practice vocabulary in short daily sessions. This approach supports the concept of distributed practice, which was originally described by Hermann Ebbinghaus (1885). Distributed practice helps learners retain information more effectively over time (Ebbinghaus, 1885). Another key factor is the quality of feedback provided by the application. Apps that explain why an answer is incorrect and provide additional examples tend to improve learning outcomes more than apps that only give simple right-or-wrong feedback. Research by Glenn Stockwell (2010) found that learners who received detailed feedback while using mobile vocabulary activities showed better retention of new words (Stockwell, 2010). Mobile apps can be even more effective when they are integrated with classroom activities. Teachers can connect vocabulary learned through apps with reading, speaking, or writing tasks during lessons. This approach allows students to apply new words in meaningful contexts rather than learning them in isolation. Despite these advantages, several challenges remain. One major issue is unequal access to technology. Not all students have smartphones or reliable internet connections, especially in rural or economically disadvantaged areas. Teachers should therefore consider using applications that allow offline learning or encourage students to share devices when necessary. Another challenge is the potential for distraction. Smartphones provide access not only to educational applications but also to

social media, games, and other entertainment platforms. Research by Adrian F. Ward and colleagues (2017) showed that the mere presence of a smartphone can reduce cognitive capacity and concentration (Ward et al., 2017). In addition, mobile apps may sometimes promote superficial vocabulary knowledge. Learners may remember the basic meaning of a word but fail to understand its connotations, grammatical patterns, or appropriate usage in context. Therefore, mobile apps should be considered a starting point for vocabulary learning rather than a complete solution.

Maintaining learner motivation is another challenge. Many learners initially use vocabulary apps enthusiastically but gradually lose interest when the activities become repetitive. Teachers can address this issue by encouraging students to keep vocabulary journals, review learned words in class, or demonstrate their progress through classroom activities. Teachers also play an important role in selecting appropriate applications that match students' proficiency levels. For example, the flashcard application Anki can be useful for beginners, while more advanced learners may benefit from reading-based platforms such as LingQ. Teachers should also train students to use these tools actively by creating their own sentences and applying new vocabulary in communication. Furthermore, mobile app learning should be connected to classroom instruction. Teachers can reuse vocabulary introduced through apps in speaking tasks, writing assignments, or group discussions. Many applications also provide progress statistics that help teachers monitor students' learning and identify areas where additional support is needed.

### Examples of Mobile Applications for Vocabulary Instruction

In contemporary English as a Foreign Language (EFL) pedagogy, several mobile applications are widely adopted by professional teachers to support vocabulary development. Among these, Quizlet and Duolingo represent two of the most prominent

and pedagogically relevant tools. Quizlet is extensively used in both secondary and higher education contexts due to its flexibility and teacher-centered design. The platform enables educators to create customized vocabulary sets aligned with specific curricular goals. Its primary learning modes – such as flashcards, matching exercises, and practice tests—facilitate repeated exposure to lexical items, thereby supporting retention through active recall. From a theoretical perspective, Quizlet aligns with cognitive principles of vocabulary acquisition, particularly the importance of retrieval practice and repetition (Nation, 2013). Moreover, its adaptability allows teachers to integrate vocabulary learning with broader instructional activities, including reading and writing tasks. Research indicates that digital flashcard tools such as Quizlet can significantly improve vocabulary retention when used regularly (Dizon, 2016). However, despite these advantages, Quizlet may encourage a focus on form-meaning connections at a relatively superficial level, as learners often prioritize memorization over contextualized usage. Consequently, its effectiveness is maximized when combined with communicative classroom practices.

Based on the foregoing discussion, Duolingo adopts a more learner-centered and gamified approach to vocabulary acquisition. The application incorporates elements such as points, levels, and progress tracking, which serve to enhance learner motivation and engagement. Importantly, Duolingo employs a spaced repetition system, a technique grounded in memory research that promotes long-term retention of vocabulary (Loewen et al., 2019). Additionally, the app provides immediate feedback, allowing learners to identify and correct errors in real time. From a pedagogical standpoint, these features support autonomous learning and encourage consistent practice outside the classroom. Empirical studies suggest that Duolingo can contribute positively to vocabulary development, particularly through repeated

exposure and interactive practice (Vesselinov & Grego, 2012). Nevertheless, the gamified nature of the platform may also present certain limitations. Learners may become more focused on task completion and reward accumulation than on deep lexical processing, which can result in limited understanding of word usage in authentic contexts. For this reason, Duolingo is most effectively utilized as a supplementary tool rather than a primary instructional method.

In summary, both Quizlet and Duolingo demonstrate significant potential for enhancing vocabulary learning in EFL contexts. While Quizlet offers structured, teacher-directed practice, Duolingo promotes learner autonomy and sustained engagement. Their combined use, alongside traditional instructional strategies, can contribute to a more comprehensive and effective approach to vocabulary development.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, mobile applications have greatly expanded the possibilities for vocabulary learning in EFL education. They allow learners to practice vocabulary anytime and anywhere, making learning more flexible and engaging. Research evidence suggests that regular use of mobile apps can significantly improve vocabulary retention, especially when learning is distributed over time and supported by meaningful feedback. However, mobile apps also have limitations. They may encourage surface-level vocabulary knowledge, and issues such as limited access to technology, distraction, and declining motivation can reduce their effectiveness. For this reason, mobile applications should not replace traditional instruction but rather complement it. The most effective approach is to integrate mobile apps with classroom learning activities. When teachers carefully select appropriate tools and connect them with meaningful language use, mobile applications can become a powerful resource for vocabulary development. Future developments in artificial intelligence and adaptive learning technologies

are likely to make mobile vocabulary learning even more personalized and effective. Therefore, teachers should continue exploring

ways to integrate these tools into language education in order to support more effective vocabulary acquisition.

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