

**Nafisatul Lutfi**

is currently teaching English at STMIK AKAKOM Yogyakarta. She obtained her Master's Degree from Gadjah Mada University and completed her undergraduate study in English Language and Literature Department at Yogyakarta State University. Her subjects of interest in writing are American Studies, TESOL methodology, specifically on the implementation of technology in foreign language teaching.

**The Integration of MALL to Enhance  
Students Speaking Skill: An Autonomous  
Learning Model**

**Nafisatul Lutfi**

**STMIK AKAKOM Yogyakarta**

**[nafienevan@gmail.com](mailto:nafienevan@gmail.com)**

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**Abstract**

Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) is a new approach for students to learn language through the use of mobile technology. Learning a language should not only happen in a class setting activity but also happen outside the class in which the students take charge of their learning. Hence, it requires students' autonomy in learning the language. Students are now able to carry out their learning without depending on the teachers, which then leads to a sustainable and independent learning process. Quizlet, a web application, is introduced in this paper as an alternative solution to improve students' speaking skill through an autonomous language learning activity. This paper used an action research method combined with a questionnaire to analyze the implementation of Quizlet in an autonomous class setting at STMIK AKAKOM Yogyakarta. 30 students were involved in the study. The practical, usability, and sustainability aspects become the focus of this research. The data gathered from the action research shows that an autonomous learning activity still requires teachers to be the facilitator, and the questionnaire shows positive feedback from the students regarding the usability and sustainability of their language learning using the application.

**Keywords:** Mobile Assisted Language Learning; Autonomous Learning; Speaking Class

## Introduction

The enactment of AEC (ASEAN Economic Community) in Indonesia opens up the gate of internalization. The use of English as a basic means of communication becomes more crucial since the competition escalates to be more globalized. English First research result shows that Indonesia has a low level of English proficiency with an EF English Proficiency Index (EPI) score of 51,58, ranking at number 51 out of 88 countries (Education First, 2019). It becomes a concern for all English teachers to be more innovative in creating a new method of teaching, which can improve students' proficiency.

Furthermore, sustainable learning allows students to learn English independently anywhere. This way of learning will improve their speaking skills. It requires more hours of engagement with the target language, which classroom activities cannot always fulfill. One of the ways of supporting this independent learning method is by integrating the use of technology, as in integrating Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL).

Indonesia is a country with a huge number of mobile subscriptions. It has

around 355.5 million subscriptions, covering 133% of its population, and 84% of them are broadband with 3G and 4G connection (Kemp, 2019). It shows the potential for MALL application in Indonesia. The strong mobile connection enables teachers to encourage students to use various applications available to improve their language skills outside the class. It is also suitable to improve students' speaking skills since it requires more engagement time with the target language. Despite the many Language Learning Applications downloaded online, students still do not know which one is good and how to use them for learning properly. In this case, educators can play an important role in introducing the tool and teach the students how to use it so they can independently use the tool outside the class.

Many researchers have dealt with the integration of MALL in English classes. They are Fazeena, Ekanayakan, and Hewagamage (2015), Koole (2009), and Miangah and Nezarat (2012). The others give theoretical explanations and references on MALL practices in general without mentioning a specific tool used. A specific application, namely Quizlet,

has been used to improve students' English vocabulary acquisition in several countries such as in Malaysia (Azman, Shuraimi, & Yunus, 2018), Japan (Dizon, 2016) and Turkey (Korlu & Mede, 2018). However, their researches are still according to a teacher-led activity that did not improve students' autonomy in language learning. In Indonesia, Supardi (2016) has attempted to combine autonomous learning using Quizlet, albeit only discussing how to use the application theoretically without real application in an autonomous class setting. The research seeks to answer if MALL, the integrating Quizlet application, can improve students' speaking skills by encouraging them to use it in an autonomous learning class activity. The novelty of this research lies in its practical aspects rather than the theoretical ones.

### Literature Review

#### Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL)

MALL or Mobile Assisted Language Learning is considered a broad approach in which researches have studied. It results in different perceptions of the authors and researchers on the basic nature of the MALL and in different

definitions of MALL. Some regard this simply as m-learning, a method of learning a language using lightweight devices, specifically handheld, such as PDA, iPod, pager, or mobile phone. Traxler in Fazeena et al. (2015, p.2) defines mobile learning into a "learning delivered through the use of mobile technologies or devices" to simplify the meaning. In its simplest form, it specifically put more emphasis on the aspect of the learning experience instead of the teaching aspect (Traxler, 2007).

According to Miangah and Nezarat (2012, p.309), learning using mobile devices“ is characterized by its potential for learning to be spontaneous, informal, personalized, and ubiquitous.” This learning broadens the aspect of learning into a much individualistic one. The learners can take control of their learning whenever and wherever they want, in any manner they prefer, without the involvement of others. Furthermore, Koole (2009, p. 30) adds that despite the practicality of the learning method, there are also some factors determining the learning experience using mobile devices. They are “the physical characteristics and the learner’s skill or knowledge and experience on using the devices for

learning.” The first one relates to the device’s ability to perform its task. The second one relies on the user’s ability to use the device. Hence, this study aims to introduce a method of combining both aspects, i.e., the device and the learner’s skill into an autonomous language learning method by integrating MALL as in the forms of Quizlet application in a speaking class activity.

#### **Quizlet Application**

Quizlet is a flash card-based application with several features suitable for learning vocabulary in a fun and interactive way (Solhi, 2019). It is a free application that can be accessed by downloading it via Play Store or Appstore or opening the link Quizlet.com using a web browser. The application provides more than 200 study sets that can be accessed by anyone. Each set has the following features:

**FlashCards.** This feature enables the students to learn vocabularies with digital flashcards, which include pronunciation option. Students can also mark the words to study first as a priority.

**Learn.** It is a feature that helps the students to evaluate their progress in studying the sets. Students can choose the

type of questions, multiple-choice, or writing the correct answer.

**Spell.** This feature is best for listening practice. Students listen to some words or phrases, and they must write down the words in the mini test correctly.

**Write.** In this mode, students can write down the answer for each word and hear how the word is pronounced. The application will repeat the wrong answers to be studied later.

**Test.** The teacher can ask the students to do this test to evaluate the learning activity as a task, and marks are also recorded automatically in a class mode. The teacher can set the difficulty level to low, medium, or high.

**Match.** It is a game in which students match the word and its meaning in a limited time. The faster they finish, the higher the chance they can be the matching champion.

**Gravity.** It gives a challenging experience to the students since they have to save the earth from the falling asteroids with words in it. Students need to type the correct answer to the word or question to make the asteroid disappear.

**Live.** This feature is perfect for collaborative activity. Students are divided into groups and compete to win

first place in answering all of the questions.

The site provides two choices for a free account, teacher and student accounts. The teacher account enables the user to create classes and manage lessons which are not available in students' accounts. Both teachers and students can search various study sets from different subjects by writing the topic in the search column or create their own study sets and share the link to the others.

Despite the many features it provides, teachers can modify the flashcards and activity following their students' requirements. Barr (2016) considers fill-the gap activity as more effective in improving students' vocabulary acquisition. Solhi (2019) suggests that linking vocabularies with humorous pictures are more effective in improving vocabulary acquisition than words or description. Sanosi (2018), on the other hand, concurs that all features in Quizlet are applicable and effective in a language learning activity in the class. Considering the effectivity of each feature as mentioned by researchers above, this research lets the students choose the

mode or feature they like to use to improve their skill.

### **Autonomous Learning**

One of the most used definition of autonomous learning comes from Holec (1982) as cited in Thanasoulas (2000) which emphasizes the notion of students' ability to choose and sets aims, purpose, and goals of learning, select the means of learning which includes the materials, methods, tasks and the criteria of evaluation to reach their goals. Instead of mentioning the autonomous learning activities, Benson (1997) as cited in Palfreyman and Smith (2003) takes the definition further by distinguishing three perspectives regarding autonomous learning, i.e., the technical perspective which relates to the learners' skills and strategies, psychological perspective which relates to the learners' attitudes and cognitive abilities and political perspective related to the empowerment of learners to control their learning. Both definitions relate to the importance for the learners to acquire the skills to be autonomous learners, such as the ability to plan, design, and carry out a learning process on their own. Although learner autonomy emphasizes the importance of students' independence in designing

their study, it does not mean that the teachers' roles are absent. Teachers should be facilitators to help students becoming autonomous learners (Thanasoulas, 2000). Moreover, not all students can acquire the skills required to be an autonomous learner. The fact that teachers need to learn the techniques to help students who are unable to acquire autonomous learning skills still becomes a concern (Ustunloughlu, 2009).

Bretts and Kercher (1999) propose a model of class activity to address the issue, which can be applied by teachers to encourage students' skills to be autonomous learners. They proposed five components included in their Autonomous Learning Model. The first is Orientation, which equips the students with knowledge regarding the meaning, support system, and basic information on the importance of intelligence and autonomous learning for their future. The second is the Development Stage, in which the students receive an introduction to tools and skills on how to manage their independent learning. The third is enrichment in which the students gain knowledge by applying it through real-world experiences. The fourth is a seminar by the students to demonstrate

the knowledge they have learned from ALM. The last is an in-depth study, the most difficult of all, in which the students synthesize everything they have learned and developed new knowledge on their own. The model designed was for a multi-year program in which all components are applicable for students to be life-long learners who are independent and self-directed (Betts, 1996). Even though the model was initially for gifted students, it is proven to be effective for improving students' language skills in Iran, as shown in Bazleh and Yarahmadzahi's research (2012). This research attempts to apply some of the components' basic activities in the form of a lesson plan to improve students' speaking skills. Due to the limited time, the research could only apply orientation, individual development, and enrichment components of the model.

### **Speaking Skill**

Speaking does not only means delivering meanings orally. It encompasses several aspects, such as pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary, and accuracy (Brown, 2001). Someone must be able to produce sounds in words clearly and correctly, speak without pausing and thinking, possessing various

words to express their meaning, and using proper grammatical rules to convey their messages in spoken language to fulfill those aspects. Mazouzi (2013) further explains that the speakers must be able to speak understandably both contextually (idea) and orally (pronunciation, stress, and intonation) so that the listeners understand what the speakers say. In brief, Nunan (1995) refers to speaking as the ability to say words orally, to communicate as by talking, to make a request, and to make a speech.

To improve students' speaking skills, teachers need to create a lesson plan to improve students' pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary, and accuracy, as mentioned by Brown (2001). Four elements need consideration when creating a lesson plan, according to Leong and Ahmadi (2017). The first one is performance condition, which includes the length, quality, and teacher's support during a class activity. Second is effective factors that encourage students to be more confident and not afraid to make mistakes. The third is improving students' comprehension through listening practices with familiar topics within students' surrounding so they are able to understand information,

request, or question addressed to them and communicated more effectively. The fourth is feedback in which students know if they have made a mistake and how to improve their speaking skills. In an autonomous language learning model, the teacher acted as the facilitator, concept creator, actor, or evaluator, guiding the students to gain knowledge and experience so they can learn more independently after the end of the lessons (Thanasoulas, 2000). This research aims to do such by creating, applying, and evaluating an autonomous learning-based class activity that focuses on introducing the students to learners' autonomy and the tools they can use to achieve it. The tool used in this research is Quizlet application.

### **Research Methodology**

This research used the Classroom Action Research (CAR) method to analyze the applicability of Quizlet in an autonomous classroom activity. The researcher chose this method since it can generate solutions for the learning problem faced by the students. The teacher acted as the researcher, teacher, data collector investigating the teaching and learning activity to improve the students' speaking skills by integrating

MALL in an autonomous learning model. The subject of the research was 30 students of STMIK AKAKOM Yogyakarta taking English 3 class in the odd semester of the 2018/2019 academic year. The students were selected due to their familiarity with technology since they were IT students, and the researcher taught this class so she could follow up with the progress of the class periodically.

The data resources were the students and the teacher herself collected by observing the implementation of the teaching activities and a questionnaire at the end of the class. Hence, there were two types of data, qualitative data from the observation and quantitative data from the questionnaire. The qualitative data from the observation was analyzed using the content-based analysis to create a conclusion based on the reflection and evaluation of the action. Whereas the data from the questionnaire were analyzed using descriptive qualitative methods to show the trends of the students' responses to Quizlet. The questionnaire data were divided into three main categories: Quizlet ease of access, English skill, and Quizlet, and Quizlet for language learning and displayed in a bar chart displaying the

trends of students' answers based on the Likert scale. The data went through three processes of validity, namely democratic validity, process validity, and dialogic validity, as proposed by Anderson and Herr (1999). By making sure that all of the parties involved in the research are active in giving feedback for the effectiveness of the action research gains democratic validity. When the researcher solved the research problem after conducting the action research, then it will gain the validity process. When other practitioners or researchers in the same field discuss the results of the action research, it will gain dialogic validity. The researcher discussed with the fellow English lecturers at the campus, Siska Lidya Revianty, S.Pd., M.Hum, and Andhina Ika S.Pd., M.Pd. Triangulation avoids subjectivity. It consists of time, space, investigator, and theoretical triangulation, as proposed by Burns (1999, p. 164).

There are four stages of action research, namely, reconnaissance, planning, action, and reflection (Kemmis & Mc Taggart, 1999). This research chose the component of improving students' speaking skills as its thematic concern (reconnaissance) by observing the

students' skills in the class. The planning was to create a learning activity that enables the students to learn to speak independently by integrating MALL in the lesson. The action consisted of two cycles in which the researcher reflects and reformulate the finding through the process of reflection, where the researcher observed all actions and formulated the solutions. The researcher conducted two cycles of activities. The first cycle was on Tuesday, 7 May 2019, and the second cycle was on 21 May 2019.

### **Findings and Discussion**

Depending on the model, action research can generate quantitative data and qualitative data. This research's findings consist of two parts: qualitative data from the action research cycle and quantitative data from the questionnaire on students' feedback for Quizlet. Below is the full explanation.

### **The Steps of Action Research**

There were two cycles conducted by the researcher to improve students' speaking skills through the integration of MALL in an autonomous class setting. The two cycles used the same lesson plan, but with different materials, the first dealt with the expressions of asking and giving suggestions only, and the second one

focused on the contexts. Before the action research, a reconnaissance or identification of the problem was first.

**Reconnaissance.** The observation conducted before the action results in several issues to address in the English 3 class of STMIK AKAKOM Yogyakarta. They were the students' lack of participation in the class and module-based teaching method. The teacher gave a lecture, and the students listened and did exercises. As a result, passive teaching and learning process, and the low level of speaking skills due to the insufficient time to practice their speaking and lacking vocabularies happened. Among those problems, one problem became the most significant that was the lack of students' involvement in the teaching and learning process.

**The Planning and Action.** A lesson plan contained the topic of asking and giving suggestions to solve the problem, as mentioned in the previous stage. The application used as Quizlet due to its complete features, which enable students of different types of learning to choose which way to learn the language or vocabularies. There are Flashcards, Learn, Write, Spell, Test features for studying, and there are Match, Gravity, and Live for

studying while playing a game. The action was following the lesson plan previously made, which went, as shown in Appendix A. Within the lesson plan, the stages of autonomous learning have the discussions.

### The Reflection for Cycle 1

The first cycle of the action was purely autonomous, in which the teacher gave the students a piece of paper highlighting on what they need to do in the class. Previously, the teacher had introduced the students on the nature of autonomous learning and a brief introduction to the application used in the class activity. The teacher merely observed the classroom, and students were free to do all of the tasks whenever they want.

The observation showed that the students were indeed busy with their handphones, but only a few students were accessing the Quizlet materials. The statistics at the application show that only 23 students were accessing the study set, and one student put the set in his folder. Out of the 23 students, nine students managed to finish the match champion quiz while the rest of them did not finish the quizzes. The other features, such as

gravity, learn, write, and the students did not use spelling. The top 9 scores were visible through the app statistics. When asked about the feedback, some of them replied that the task of writing was the most difficult since it should be very precise; otherwise, it was false.

The lack of participation was because some of them did not log in to the site, so the system did not record their names. During the practice section, some of the students managed to use some common asking and giving suggestions expressions from the study set. In conclusion, the first cycle was a failure in introducing autonomous learning to the students using MALL due to the lack of guidance from the teacher. Although it is autonomous, it does not mean that the teacher does not have any role in the learning process at all (Thanasoulas, 2000). Teachers should act as the “facilitator” in an autonomous class, in which they promote and ensure that the students get the specific skills for their sustainable learning in the future (Benson, 2006). Hence, the next cycle should involve the teacher as the guide for the students for each activity.

### The Reflection for Cycle 2

The second cycle was in a more organized manner in which the teacher guided the students in doing the task step by step and overview their progress one by one. The teachers gave the same lesson plan to the class, but this time with different study sets, observed and guided all activities. The teacher also created a class via Quizlet in which the students joined, and could observe their progress through the statistics on the study set. The progress of their activity in opening the Quizlet link was displayed in front of the class so the students could see who was actively involved in the quiz and who were not. The tool in Quizlet allows the creator to observe the students accessing the materials and even create a class. The difference here is that the study time was limited, and after that, there was a game using Quizlet Live, which lighten up the atmosphere.

The statistics on the app showed that all 30 students accessed the study sets. It could be observed through the “create the class” option on the home page of the app. Creating a class enables the teacher to observe the students’ progress and manage the class easier. Four students put the study set in their folder,

which means that they would open the set again next time. Based on the score statistics, the most favorite feature was still the match champions, followed by writing with four students who managed to finish the quiz. Two students finished the learning feature, and one student finished the spelling quiz. Since the limited time for accessing the features, some students did not manage to finish the quizzes. Hence, the statistics did not record their names. As for the Quizlet live, all students participated in it, as seen from the game profile. In this cycle, all students participated and collaborated in a group and do the live game.

From the second cycle, the students still require guidance in using the application. Once they are familiar with it, they enthusiastically use the app tools and participate in the group quiz. During the speaking session, they showed more consistency in using English compared to the previous one. Familiarity becomes the key to this autonomous learning method by integrating MALL in a speaking class. It supports Koole’s (2009) idea that “familiarity” with the tools is important. Thus, the teacher needs to introduce the tools in the early stages, coined as the Individual

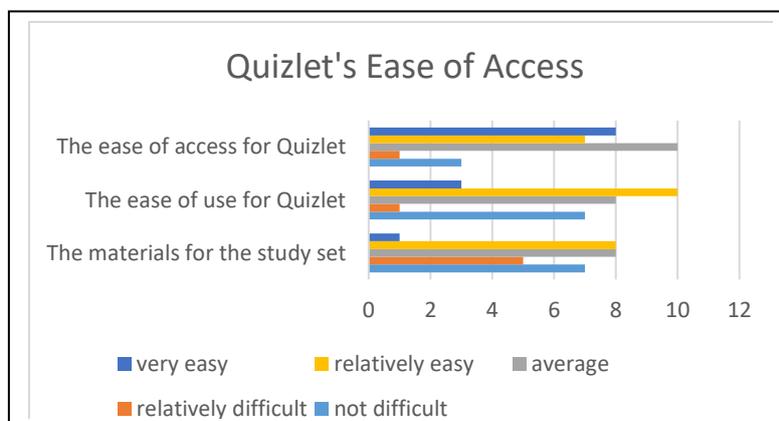
Development stage by Betts and Kercher (1999). In this stage, students learn how to use the specific tools to reach their learning objective, which becomes an essential stage to be an autonomous student.

### Students' Feedback

After the second cycle, a questionnaire on the effectivity of Quizlet for their learning and their plan on the app was distributed through google form via WhatsApp to the class. The questions had three main topics. The first was on

the ease of access for the app, on the language skill of the students before and after using the app and their feedback and plan on the app. A total of 29 students participated in the questionnaire. When asked about the ease of access of Quizlet, ten students stated that it was average, whereas eight students answered as very easy to access. As for the usage, most of the students answered relatively easy to use the app, eight students answer average, and only one student answered difficultly. The data is in the bar chart below.

Figure 1. Quizlet's Ease of Access



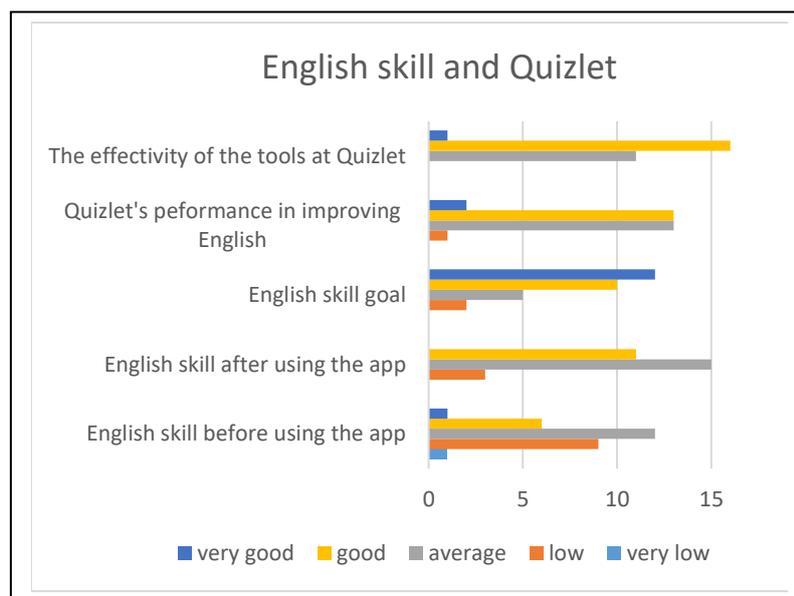
Regarding their English skills, 16 students answered that the effectiveness of the tools at Quizlet was good, 11 students answered average, and no student answered negatively. The performance in improving their English

was c positive with two students answered very good. Thirteen students answered good, and 13 students answered average, and only one student answered negatively. The improvement of the skill before and after using Quizlet is apparent

on the decreasing number of low-level students from 9 students before the application into only three students after the application. The data shows that the effectiveness of Quizlet in improving the students' skills is deemed positively by the students. It validates the action research on the process validity that relies on the "effectivity of the tools to solve the

research problem" (Anderson & Herr, 1999). It is students' activeness and performance in learning the English language. This positive attitude helps them to use the app more often outside the class, which supports a more sustainable and autonomous learning method.

Figure 2. English Skill and Quizlet

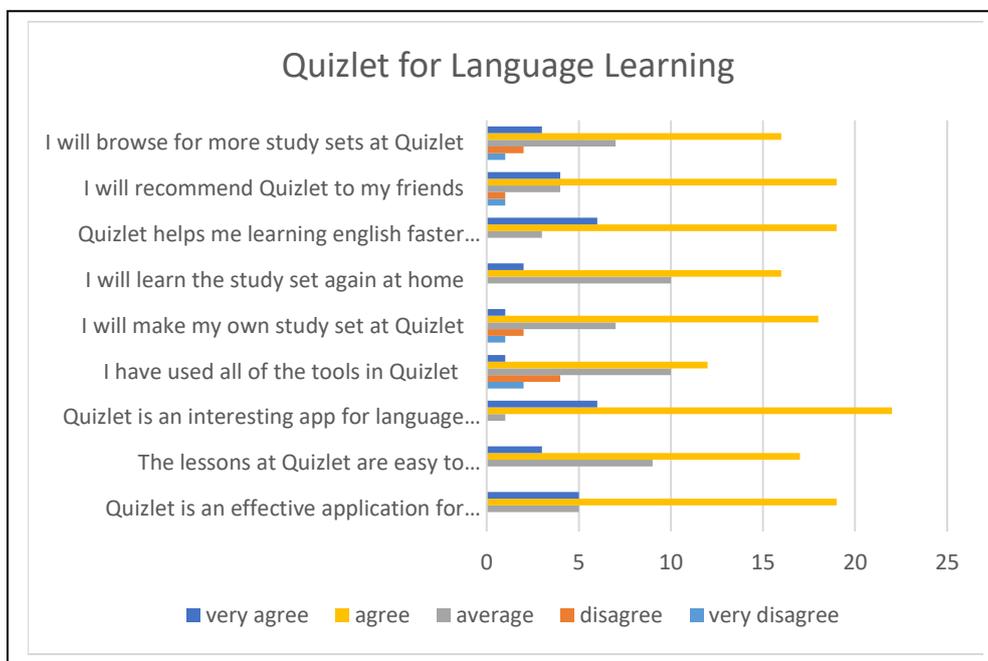


The third set of questions was about Quizlet as a tool for language learning. The set of questions seeks to know students' follow up after the autonomous activity conducted. Most of the answers to the statement show a positive attitude for the usage of Quizlet in their study plan. Sixteen students agree that they will browse for more study sets at Quizlet,

while 18 students agree that they will make their own study sets on Quizlet. It shows a willingness of the students to set the goal of learning, create the materials, and evaluate them by themselves. One of the seven main attributes of autonomous learners is "having insights into their learning styles and strategies"

(Thanasoulas, 2000). The rest of the data are in the bar chart below.

Figure 3. Quizlet for Language Learning



### Conclusion

The observation, reflection, and the questionnaire show that positive results come from integrating MALL into an autonomous speaking class activity. The students involved more in the process of learning and autonomously practiced learning in which they need to set their goals, means, and the whole process of learning. Their willingness to learn the sets again make another study set of their own. It also browses for some more sets to reflect their readiness to be an autonomous learner despite still in the basic language matter.

Despite all of the positive results, there are some issues to be addressed. The first is the requirement for the teacher to guide the students in the process of introducing the autonomous language learning to the students through the usage of a mobile application. The teacher needs to observe the students' progress as well, especially in the initial stage for the students to be able to learn a language more effectively. Follow-Up research needs to be conducted with a bigger sample and more applications to use in the class.

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## Appendix

### *Lesson Plan: Asking and Giving*

#### *Suggestions*

#### **Topic**

Asking and giving suggestions: a speaking exercise in an autonomous class

#### **Aims**

- \* Students understand the variations of asking and giving suggestion expressions contextually
- \* Students can pronounce the expressions properly
- \* Students can use the expressions in a discussion setting

#### **Age group**

Teenagers and young adults

#### **Level**

Beginner

#### **Time**

+/- 120 minutes (60 minutes X 2 meetings)

#### **Materials**

1. Asking and giving suggestions expression sheet/link
2. A quiz about asking and giving suggestions at Quizlet
3. Activity plan/topics for discussion in the class

## Introduction

This activity aims to introduce autonomous learning to the students with the help of Quizlet application.

It is important to introduce an autonomous learning model to the students before beginning to use this lesson plan. In his article, Getts (n.d) mentioned that teachers and students are supposed to be familiar with the 5 elements of autonomous learning methods.

For the class to be effective, the teachers must provide the students with links and files to download regarding the focus of the study. It will be better if the teacher provides some materials to be downloaded from their design since it can be adjusted with the class condition.

#### **Procedure**

- a. Introduce the students with the topic of discussions. Give a simple asking and giving for suggestions expressions for a startup. Write down some of the basic expressions on the whiteboard if required. (10 - 15 minutes)

*This is the introduction to the topic phase.*

- b. Make sure that each student has a handphone with a working internet connection. Ask them to explore the app used in this course.

*This is a warming up session, the students are introduced to the topic. Teachers can also start the phase of **Orientation** in this stage. Motivate and explain the children on how to learn on their own.*

- c. Tell learners they are going to do autonomous learning on the topic of asking and giving suggestions. Provide them with the handout or links containing the expressions used in asking and giving suggestions. (15 minutes)

*This is the **Individual Development** stage of the Autonomous learning model in which the students are introduced to the tools of technology and facilities they can use to learn the topic by themselves.*

- d. Introduce them to Quizlet. Ask them to create an account. Let them explore the app for a while. Show them the link to the quiz you have made concerning

asking and giving suggestions expressions and its contexts. (25 minutes)

*It is the **Individual Development** stage as well, in which technology is used, and the students can proactively use the features in the app to learn more things by themselves later.*

- e. Ask the students if they have understood the materials. Use Quizlet live to create a game. Ask the students to enter the code of the game. The tool will group them automatically. Start the game; make sure that they use English during the activity. (10 minutes)

*It is the **In-depth Study** stage in which the students can work in groups to solve problems*

- f. After the game, Choose one leader to lead the discussion. Give them the problems to be discussed. Start the discussion. Ask the leader to put a tick on the list of expressions used in the discussion (the one that you have been given at the beginning of the class). (30 minutes)

It also belongs to an *In-depth Study* stage in which the students can work in groups to solve problems in the real-life setting. However, it is considered as a lower level of in-depth study stage since the things assessed in this stage is merely the practical use of some expressions. The students

are welcomed to discuss various kinds of matter and explore their knowledge further in this discussion.

- g. Assess the class and wrap up. Make sure that everybody is using the expressions properly contextually and fluently. (15 minutes)