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In this column, we explore the issue of teachers and technology—not just as it relates to CALL solutions, but also to Internet, software, and hardware concerns that all teachers face. We invite readers to submit articles on their areas of interest. Please contact the editor before submitting.

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Quizlet Live: The Classroom Game Now Taking the World by Storm

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Background

Smartphones consume a large part of university students' time, but are used primarily as tools for social networking and gaming. Therefore, smartphones can become a distraction, especially with the introduction of exciting new apps like Pokemon GO. However, students can be introduced to educational apps and shown how more productive use of their smartphones can help improve their academic studies (Cochrane, 2015).

By now, most teachers have already heard of or used Quizlet, the popular online education platform introduced in 2007. This was recognized by SimilarWeb (2016) as the fastest growing U.S. education site in 2015, with over 36 million average monthly visits. In Spring 2016, the Quizlet design team added a new game called Quizlet Live to their repertoire. The new in-class, team-based learning game randomly groups students into teams to compete against other teams using any of the millions of Quizlet vocabulary study sets. Using their computers or mobile devices, team members race to match all the vocabulary terms with their definitions, and the first team to match all 12 correctly wins. For about six weeks, Quizlet Live was beta tested with 50,000 teachers and 1,000,000 students with rave reviews from both teachers and students and was officially introduced in April. In this article I would like to share my own experience using Quizlet Live in my classrooms, which hopefully will assist other EFL teachers interested in doing the same.

Playing the Game

To begin the Quizlet Live game, the teacher clicks the purple "Live" button in any Quizlet study set with at least 12 terms and then displays the teacher's game screen on the classroom projector screen.

A minimum of six students with their computers or mobile devices go to the Quizlet Live webpage and type in the 6-digit *join* code along with their first name. Students are encouraged to type in their real first name so that they will be able to easily find their other teammates. If there is more than one student with the same first name, they can also add the first initial of their last name.

As students join the game, their names will be displayed along the right side of the Quizlet Live webpage. The system randomly groups students into teams of 3-4, with each team given an animal name. Animal team names have been translated in Quizlet Live into a handful of languages, including Japanese, so if the study set you are playing the game with has either terms or definitions in Japanese, the animal team names are written in katakana (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Screenshot of Quizlet Live team names.

The beauty of this arrangement is that it allows students to make new friends and to collaborate and communicate with other students whom perhaps they have never even talked to before. Because

learners of all levels can contribute to the victory of their team, the team dynamic of Quizlet Live provides a fun, competitive environment which can be a positive experience for all students, compared to other games which might embarrass lower-level learners (Quizlet, n.d.). This instant, random selection of team members also prevents students from having to wait to be chosen in any embarrassing popularity contest.

Students then move around the class to find their other team members as displayed on the screen. After the teacher starts the game, teams race to match all the terms with their definitions. Students are required to collaborate, as only one student per team has the correct answer displayed on their device. The first team to match all 12 terms correctly in a row wins. However, one wrong answer will send a team back to the start. Thus, unlike some other games, Quizlet Live encourages accuracy over speed, rewarding teams that take their time, reach consensus by consulting their teammates, and consistently choose correct answers.

Meanwhile, a color-coded leaderboard on the classroom projector screen (Figure 2) displays the real-time progress of each team as they race toward 12 correct answers. Immediately after the game finishes, Quizlet Live displays a review feature for the teacher to highlight vocabulary terms that were most frequently matched correctly and incorrectly, providing excellent feedback on which terms students should review for the next class. There is also an option to shuffle teams, which I usually do after a few games are played, to give students another chance to socialize and meet even more students. More details, including two videos on how to use Quizlet Live, can be found on their website.

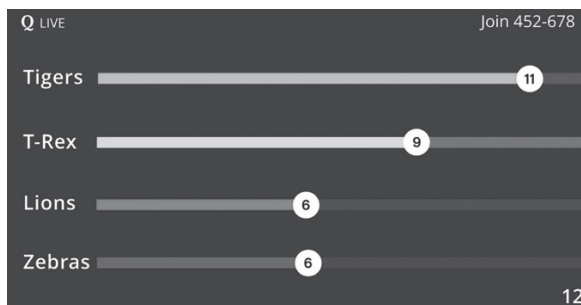


Figure 2. Quizlet Live leaderboard (Quizlet, n.d.).

Student Feedback

I have used Quizlet Live primarily with four of my technical English classes of third-year university engineering students, and the feedback has been overwhelmingly positive. Only a few students expressed regret on minor matters, such as their team never winning or their having trouble joining the game due to technical issues related to connecting to the university’s spotty Wi-Fi network. Many students commented that they enjoyed the game so much, they wanted to play it more frequently than we did.

A post-game, five-question survey using a four-point Likert scale (N=96) confirmed the students’ enjoyment of Quizlet Live (Figure 3). The percentage of students who agreed or strongly agreed that the game helped them memorize the technical vocabulary was 95.8%. Over 94% said that it helped them get a better score on the Program-wide Test on Reading (PWT-R), a department-administered technical vocabulary test. 94.8% said it made the classroom learning atmosphere more exciting. 75.0% said it motivated them to study English harder in the future. Finally, 93.7% said they enjoyed learning English with their mobile device.

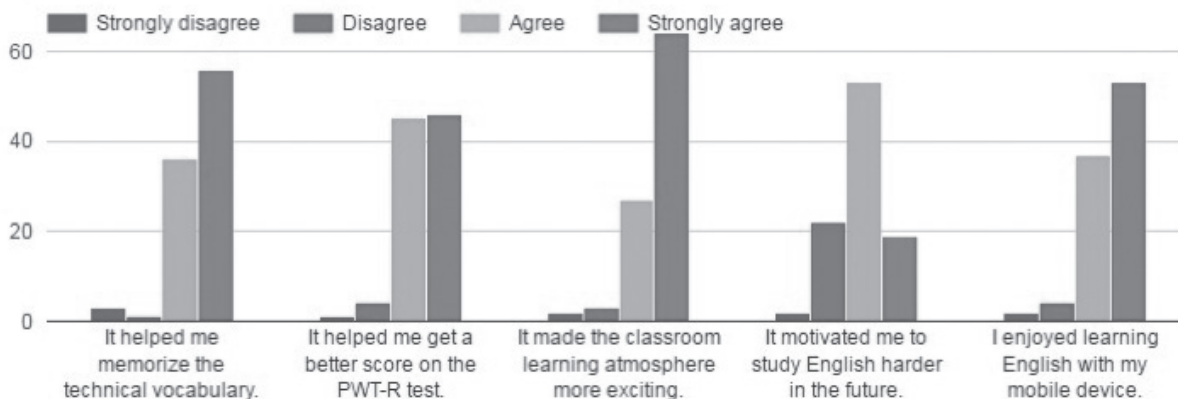


Figure 3. Quizlet Live student survey results.

In a final separate question, students were asked to share their overall satisfaction with the Quizlet Live game on a scale from 1 to 10, with 1 being “No good; a waste of time” and 10 being “Grrreat!” Over 84% of the students gave the game an 8, 9, or 10 rating (Figure 4).

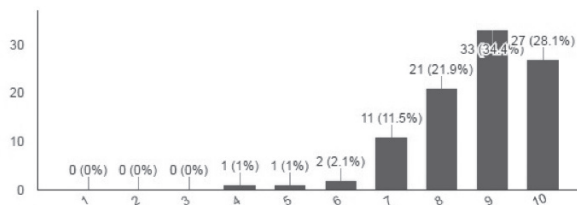


Figure 4. Quizlet Live overall student satisfaction.

Conclusion

Quizlet Live was designed to bring fresh energy into the classroom, and not only helps students enhance vocabulary skills, but learn teamwork and communication skills as well. By combining studying with an exciting social game, Quizlet Live motivates students to start seeing autonomous study as a way to prepare for the game and thereby increases the effectiveness of their classroom participation (Quizlet, 2016). This fun, interactive learning experience in turn appears to have the spill-over effect of creating a positive attitude shift among many students that they can be successful in their language learning and not view it as such a daunting task.

My experience with Quizlet Live and the Quizlet learning tool in general compares favorably with Lander's (2015) study of 485 foreign language students at a medium-sized private university in southern Japan. In this study, Lander (2015) found that a simple online tool like Quizlet can not only improve test scores and vocabulary acquisition through technology, but also change the mind-set of language learners from a negative to a more positive stance in a comparatively short period of time. It has been a real thrill to see my university students use this new game because they truly love it! I can honestly say I have never seen this same degree of excitement for a classroom language game during my entire quarter-century of teaching Japanese learners of English. Quizlet Live is, in effect, the Venn diagram intersection of mobile language learning, vocabulary retention, and student motivation. Although so far I have experimented only with my university engineering and science students, because vocabulary acquisition is an integral element of most language classes, I will likely be soon introducing the exciting Quizlet Live game to my other EFL classes as well. To get

started using Quizlet Live in your classrooms, visit the Quizlet website today.

References

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Editor's Note: With the fall semester underway, Quizlet Live provides a way for teachers to assess their students' progress through the materials in a fun and engaging way. Calls for proposals for JALTCALL 2017 and PanSIG 2017 are open soon, so consider submitting a proposal to share your ed-tech experiences with your fellow teachers at these wonderful events. Also, many of you will attend this year's JALT International conference this month and will come home with many new tools for your language teaching kit. Add Quizlet Live to your toolbox to keep your students—and your classrooms—Wired!

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