

7th Grade Students' Perceptions of Zep Quiz for Gamified Vocabulary Learning

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ABSTRACT

Vocabulary mastery often becomes a hurdle for junior high school students, particularly when the teaching methods lack variety. This study aims to describe the learning problems faced by seventh-grade students, the implementation process, and their perceptions toward the use of Zep Quiz as a gamification media in vocabulary learning. A descriptive qualitative approach was employed, involving 38 seventh-grade students as the sample, with five students selected for interviews. Data were collected through questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, vocabulary tests, and documentation. Questionnaire data were analyzed descriptively, while interview data were analyzed using thematic analysis based on Miles and Huberman's interactive model. The findings revealed that students primarily struggled with remembering new words and using them in proper contexts. The teacher implemented Zep Quiz as a supplementary tool for practice and assessment, which ran interactively in the classroom. Overall, students held positive perceptions. They felt more motivated, more active, and found the learning process enjoyable. The average vocabulary test score reached the high category. Nevertheless, some students reported technical issues such as unstable internet connections, and a few felt pressured by the point system and time limits. Additionally, several students still relied on traditional memorization strategies for long-term vocabulary retention. This study recommends integrating Zep Quiz as a complement to, rather than a replacement for, conventional teaching methods.

Keywords: *Gamification, Junior High School, Students Perceptions, Vocabulary Learning, Zep Quiz*

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INTRODUCTION

English is recognized as an international language widely used for global communication, making it essential in education. Vocabulary serves as a fundamental element linking spoken and written language, contributing to overall language competence, comprehension, and literacy development (Dewi, 2024). A strong vocabulary mastery is essential for effective communication and language proficiency, allowing individuals to express thoughts clearly in both spoken and written forms (Azzahra & Kembaren, 2025).

Junior high school vocabulary instruction frequently encounters a number of difficulties. Limited student motivation caused by traditional teaching approaches is one of the major issues. When teaching vocabulary in the classroom, teachers often experience tension due to pupils' lack of focus, excessive use of their native tongue, and uncooperative behavior. Learning vocabulary is frequently done in a tedious manner, such as memorizing lists of words, which is uninteresting for students. Additionally, the lack of variety in learning materials, such as visual or interactive aids, prevents students from becoming more engaged and excited about learning vocabulary. According to (Azhra et al., 2024) using quiz-based applications in vocabulary instruction can help students more easily understand and

remember new words. Similarly, (Ulya et al., 2025) found that gamified learning using Wordwall increased students' enthusiasm during the vocabulary learning process.

According Dewi (2024) technology has become an essential component in enhancing the effectiveness and quality of learning. Beyond providing easier access to information, it fosters greater interaction and collaboration among learners and enables more objective assessment of learning outcomes. Furthermore, Putra (2023) found that digital platforms such as Quizizz can be effectively implemented even in paper-mode to support vocabulary learning. Similarly, Hizbullah and Fithriani (2025) argue that technology integration allows teachers to innovate their teaching methods to better engage students.

According to Kau et al., (2025) gamification refers to the application of game elements such as points, badges, and leaderboards in non-game contexts to increase students' motivation and participation in learning. These elements create an interactive and enjoyable learning environment. In line with this, Hizbullah and Fithriani (2025) argue that gamified vocabulary learning through mobile applications triggers intrinsic motivation among teenage learners and makes learning activities more engaging and enjoyable. Similarly, Azhrah et al., (2024) found that quiz-based gamification applications help students more easily understand and remember new vocabulary while increasing their enthusiasm during the learning process.

Fahmi and Purnawan (2025) reported that Blooket, a gamification platform, enhances student engagement and vocabulary acquisition through its fast-paced quiz structure. Similarly, Ulya et al. (2025) found that Wordwall-based gamified learning is perceived by students as enjoyable and supportive of vocabulary recall. In addition, Azzahra and Kembaren (2025) demonstrated that Baamboozle games improve EFL students' motivation, vocabulary acquisition, and active participation in the classroom. Hizbullah and Fithriani (2025) state that junior high school students belong to the digital native generation, which is highly familiar with technology. Therefore, technology serves as an effective tool to support their learning process. The use of digital media in vocabulary instruction accommodates students' visual and interactive learning preferences, as (Hizbullah & Fithriani, 2025) further explain that the preference of digital natives for playing digital games has led to the emergence of gaming as a learning tool that integrates educational content with interactive activities.

However, while extensive research has examined gamification platforms such as Quizizz, Kahoot, Wordwall, Blooket, and Baamboozle for vocabulary learning in EFL contexts, limited attention has been given to Zep Quiz. Specifically, Azhrah et al., (2024) found that quiz-based applications help junior high school students understand and remember new vocabulary. Ulya et al., (2025) reported that Wordwall-based gamified learning is perceived by students as enjoyable and supportive of vocabulary recall. Fahmi and Purnawan, (2025) demonstrated that Blooket enhances student engagement and vocabulary acquisition through its fast-paced quiz structure. (Azzahra & Kembaren, 2025) showed that Baamboozle games improve EFL students' motivation and active participation in the classroom.

In contrast, Zep Quiz – a newer platform equipped with AI technology that enables automatic question creation and offers live competitive challenges with adaptive questions – has received far less scholarly attention. Wahid et al., (2025) explain that unlike other platforms that mainly rely on flashcards or conventional multiple-choice questions, Zep Quiz provides AI-powered features that allow teachers to simply enter a topic or upload learning materials to generate questions automatically. Solihat et al., (2026) found that gamified multiple-choice activities using Zep Quiz created an engaging and motivating learning environment for senior high school students. However, to date, no study has specifically investigated seventh-grade junior high school students' perceptions of Zep Quiz for gamified vocabulary learning in the Indonesian EFL context. This research gap is significant because junior high school students, as digital natives, may respond differently to AI-powered gamification compared to senior high school students, and their perceptions are crucial for understanding how such platforms can be optimally integrated into early EFL instruction.

Zep Quiz is one of the digital tools that has become popular in recent years, specifically designed to enhance the learning experience of students. Julia et al., (2025) explain that Zep

Quiz applies game-based learning features that support real-time interactive quizzes with engaging visual designs. Unlike other platforms that mainly rely on flashcards or conventional multiple-choice questions, Zep Quiz offers live competitive challenges, adaptive questions, and collaborative activities through prepared templates. Wahid et al., (2025) further describe that Zep Quiz is equipped with AI technology that enables automatic question creation by simply entering a topic or uploading learning materials. Julia et al., (2025) also note that these unique features distinguish Zep Quiz from other gamification platforms and warrant specific investigation in various educational contexts.

In understanding the learning process of students during classroom interactions using Zep Quiz, student perception is needed. Hizbullah and Fithriani (2025) state that perception is a comprehensive activity that involves organizing and interpreting stimuli received by individuals to give them meaning. With student perception, researchers can identify students' difficulties, interests, and learning outcomes. According Hizbullah and Fithriani (2025) feelings, thinking abilities, and experiences possessed by individuals are certainly not the same, and the results of perception may differ between individuals. Therefore, perceptions are not only positive but there are certainly negative ones depending on the students' experiences when using a particular learning medium. In the context of this study, understanding students' perceptions toward Zep Quiz is essential to evaluate whether the platform effectively supports vocabulary learning or presents certain challenges that need to be addressed.

METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach to explore how seventh-grade students perceive the use of Zep Quiz as a gamified platform for vocabulary learning. A qualitative design was considered appropriate because the research aimed to describe students' natural experiences, difficulties, and opinions without manipulating any variables. The study was carried out at SMP Negeri 4 Pekalongan, located in Central Java, Indonesia, during the even semester of the 2025/2026 academic year. The population consisted of 192 seventh-grade students across six classes. Following Arikunto's guideline, which recommends taking 10% to 25% of the population when it exceeds 100, the researcher selected 20%, resulting in 38 participants. These participants included 21 female and 17 male students between 12 and 13 years old. Proportional random sampling was applied to ensure fair representation from each class. For the interview phase, five students were chosen through purposive sampling based on their questionnaire outcomes, specifically representing three categories: two with highly positive perceptions, two with moderate perceptions, and one with less positive perceptions. This strategy was intended to gather diverse and in-depth information regarding students' experiences with Zep Quiz.

Data were gathered using four instruments: a questionnaire, a semi-structured interview guide, a vocabulary test, and documentation. The questionnaire contained 20 statements divided into four indicators (interest and motivation, understanding, implementation, and problems), using a four-point Likert scale. The interview guide consisted of 12 open-ended questions exploring vocabulary learning difficulties, the implementation of Zep Quiz, and students' perceptions. The vocabulary test included 10 multiple-choice items focusing on synonyms, antonyms, and word meanings. Documentation included photographs, screenshots, and learning records. Data collection followed five sequential steps: implementing Zep Quiz in the classroom, administering the vocabulary test, distributing the questionnaire, conducting interviews with selected students, and collecting documentation. The analysis followed Miles and Huberman's interactive model, which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Questionnaire and interview data were analyzed descriptively and thematically, while vocabulary test scores were processed using descriptive statistics to provide supplementary support for the findings.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Questionnaire Result

The questionnaire was distributed to 38 seventh-grade students to measure their perceptions of using Zep Quiz for vocabulary learning. The questionnaire consisted of 20 statements divided into four indicators as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Questionnaire Indicators

No	Indicators	Number of Statements
1	Students' Interest and Motivation	5
2	Students' Understanding	5
3	Implementation of Zep Quiz	5
4	Problems Faced by Students	5
Total		20

The questionnaire results revealed that students generally held positive perceptions toward the use of Zep Quiz in vocabulary learning. Regarding students' interest and motivation, 92% of students agreed or strongly agreed that Zep Quiz made vocabulary learning more interesting, while 89% reported feeling more motivated when using the platform. Notably, 100% of students agreed that learning vocabulary through Zep Quiz was enjoyable. In terms of active participation, 84% agreed that Zep Quiz encouraged them to be more active during lessons, and 87% felt excited when participating in Zep Quiz activities. Concerning students' understanding, 86% of students agreed that Zep Quiz helped them understand new vocabulary better. Regarding vocabulary retention, 79% acknowledged that the questions in Zep Quiz assisted them in remembering vocabulary. The visual design of Zep Quiz was perceived as supportive by 82% of students. Furthermore, 81% agreed that game features such as points, scoreboards, and time limits helped them maintain focus, and 83% stated that after using Zep Quiz, they could recognize word meanings more easily.

Regarding implementation, 88% of students agreed that the teacher explained the platform clearly, while 12% expressed difficulties. Concerning accessibility, 85% found Zep Quiz easy to access and use. Internet connectivity was reported as supportive by 74% of students, though 26% experienced technical issues. The time provided was considered sufficient by 79% of students, and 90% agreed that Zep Quiz was suitable for vocabulary learning. Regarding problems faced by students, 68% admitted having difficulty understanding the instructions at some point. Technical problems disturbed the learning process for 58% of students. However, only 32% felt pressured by the time limits, and only 29% found some vocabulary questions too difficult. Most importantly, 76% of students disagreed that they preferred traditional learning over Zep Quiz, indicating a clear preference for the gamified platform.

Interview Result

The interviews were conducted with five students selected purposively based on their questionnaire responses: two with highly positive perceptions, two with moderate perceptions, and one with less positive perceptions. The summary of the interview findings is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Summary of Interview Findings

Aspect	Findings
Vocabulary Learning Problems	Students had difficulties remembering and applying vocabulary in context.
Implementation of Zep Quiz	Students perceived Zep Quiz as interactive, attractive, and easy to use.
Students' Perceptions	Students felt more motivated, engaged, and interested in learning vocabulary.

Regarding vocabulary learning problems, one student (P1) stated, "I often forget the meanings of new words after a few days. Learning vocabulary is hard because there are so many new words to remember." Another student (P2) added, "The main problem is I cannot use the words in the right context, even though I know the meaning." When asked about memorization strategies, a student (P3) explained, "I usually write the words repeatedly and memorize them. That is the only way I know to remember vocabulary for a long time."

Concerning the implementation of Zep Quiz, a student (P4) mentioned, "The teacher gave us a quiz through Zep Quiz after explaining the material. We answered the questions using our phones." Regarding the platform's design, one student (P1) commented, "Zep Quiz is fun because there are points and a leaderboard. I like competing with my friends." However, another student (P5) expressed a different view: "The design is attractive, but it does not really help me memorize the words. I still need to write them down." Regarding usability, a student (P5) added, "I did not understand how to play at first because I had never used Zep Quiz before."

Regarding students' perceptions, one student (P2) stated, "I feel happy when learning with Zep Quiz because it is not boring like writing on the notebook." Another student (P3) added, "Zep Quiz makes me more active in class. I want to answer the questions quickly to get points." In terms of vocabulary comprehension, a student (P4) explained, "The pictures and questions in Zep Quiz help me understand the meaning of new words." However, another student (P5) noted, "Zep Quiz helps me understand, but I still need to repeat the words at home to really remember them." When asked about preference, one student (P1) concluded, "I prefer Zep Quiz because it is more exciting. But for memorization, writing is still better."

Interview Result

A vocabulary test consisting of 10 multiple-choice items was administered to 38 students after the implementation of Zep Quiz. The test covered synonyms, antonyms, and word meanings based on the vocabulary presented during the learning activities. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Vocabulary Test Result

Score	Frequency	Percentage
70	4	10.5%
80	15	39.5%
90	15	39.5%
100	4	10.5%
Total	38	100%

The results showed that the majority of students achieved scores ranging from 80 to 90. Specifically, four students (10.5%) scored 70, fifteen students (39.5%) scored 80, fifteen students (39.5%) scored 90, and four students (10.5%) achieved a perfect score of 100. The average score was 84.47, indicating a relatively high level of vocabulary performance. These results suggest that students were generally able to understand and recognize the vocabulary items introduced during the learning activities using Zep Quiz.

Discussions

The findings of this study revealed that students generally demonstrated positive perceptions toward the use of Zep Quiz in vocabulary learning. The results obtained from the questionnaire, interviews, and vocabulary test consistently indicated that the platform contributed positively to students' learning experiences. The integration of game-based elements into vocabulary instruction created a learning environment that was more engaging, interactive, and enjoyable compared to conventional classroom activities (Clynes & Deterding, 2011; Hamari et al., 2014; Plass et al., 2015).

The questionnaire findings showed that most students agreed that Zep Quiz increased their interest and motivation in learning vocabulary. Students reported that the game features, visual design, scoreboards, and competitive activities encouraged them to participate more

actively during the lesson. These findings suggest that the incorporation of gamification elements can enhance students' willingness to engage in learning activities. When students are actively involved in the learning process, they tend to demonstrate greater enthusiasm and attention, which may positively influence their learning outcomes.

The interview results further supported these findings. Most participants stated that learning vocabulary through Zep Quiz was more enjoyable than traditional learning activities because the platform reduced boredom and created a more dynamic classroom atmosphere. Students perceived the learning process as less monotonous and more stimulating due to the interactive nature of the platform. This finding indicates that the use of digital game-based learning media can help teachers create a learning environment that promotes active participation and sustained student engagement. In addition to increasing motivation and engagement, Zep Quiz was also perceived as beneficial for vocabulary comprehension. The questionnaire data revealed that most students believed that the platform helped them recognize word meanings, understand new vocabulary items, and maintain concentration during learning activities. Similar findings emerged from the interviews, where students reported that the visual and interactive features of Zep Quiz facilitated their understanding of vocabulary. These findings imply that gamified learning environments can support students' comprehension by presenting learning materials in a more attractive and accessible manner.

The vocabulary test results provided additional evidence supporting the positive perceptions expressed by students. The majority of participants obtained scores ranging from 80 to 90, while several students achieved perfect scores. The average score of 84.47 indicated that students demonstrated a relatively good level of vocabulary mastery after participating in learning activities using Zep Quiz. Although the primary purpose of this study was not to measure the effectiveness of the platform experimentally, the test results suggest that students were generally able to understand and recognize the vocabulary items introduced during the learning process. These findings are consistent with previous studies showing that game-based learning environments can positively support vocabulary acquisition and learning achievement (Hwang et al., 2017).

Despite these positive outcomes, several challenges were identified during the implementation of Zep Quiz. Both the questionnaire and interview findings revealed that some students experienced difficulties related to technical issues, particularly internet connectivity and device performance. In addition, several students reported challenges in understanding certain instructions during the activities. These findings indicate that the successful implementation of digital learning platforms is influenced not only by the quality of the learning media itself but also by external factors such as technological infrastructure and students' digital literacy (Bond et al., 2020; UNESCO, 2023).

Another important finding emerging from the interviews was that several students still preferred conventional memorization strategies, such as repetition and writing, for retaining vocabulary over a longer period. Although students acknowledged that Zep Quiz made learning more enjoyable and helped them understand vocabulary, they believed that traditional learning techniques remained important for strengthening vocabulary retention. This finding suggests that gamification-based learning media may be particularly effective for increasing engagement and supporting comprehension, while traditional strategies continue to play an essential role in facilitating long-term vocabulary acquisition.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that Zep Quiz contributed positively to vocabulary learning by enhancing students' motivation, engagement, participation, and vocabulary comprehension. However, the results also indicate that the implementation of game-based learning media should be accompanied by appropriate instructional support and complemented with conventional learning strategies to maximize vocabulary learning outcomes.

CONCLUSIONS

This study concluded that seventh-grade students experienced two main vocabulary learning difficulties: remembering new words and applying them appropriately in context. To address these challenges, the teacher implemented Zep Quiz as a supplementary tool for vocabulary practice and assessment through interactive classroom activities. The findings showed that students held positive perceptions of Zep Quiz, reporting that it made vocabulary learning more engaging, enjoyable, and motivating. Interview data supported these results, with students describing a more dynamic classroom atmosphere and reduced boredom during learning. Vocabulary test results further indicated relatively high achievement, suggesting that the platform effectively supported vocabulary development. Nevertheless, several challenges remained, including unstable internet connections, pressure caused by the point system and time limits, and students' continued reliance on traditional memorization strategies for long-term retention. This study provides empirical evidence that Zep Quiz can effectively support EFL vocabulary learning when integrated with conventional teaching methods rather than used as a standalone instructional approach. The findings offer practical guidance for teachers seeking to enrich vocabulary instruction through digital learning tools.

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