

Facilitating Cooperative Vocabulary Study with Google Sheets & Quizlet Live

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ABSTRACT

The approach outlined promotes efficient and enjoyable vocabulary study through teamwork and competitive play. A team reading activity is described. Then, students collaborate to identify new vocabulary for further study. Along with definitions and translations, the new vocabulary is recorded on Google Sheets, an online spreadsheet that allows multiple users to edit the same document. Vocabulary flashcards can quickly be created from the spreadsheet using the online application Quizlet, and reviewed immediately via Quizlet Live, a mobile-based team quiz game. Students report high levels of enjoyment, which motivates them to identify new vocabulary for the next iteration of this activity.

Keywords: CALL, Vocabulary, Google Sheets, Quizlet.

<https://prezi.com/view/QoWtwoVNH0zhoby7bmWJ/>

INTRODUCTION

This paper will describe a blended-learning activity focussed on vocabulary acquisition and reading. A team reading activity will be described, in which students cooperate to form a shared understanding of the study text. Students then cooperate to select unfamiliar vocabulary from the text to memorize. Using smartphones, they record new terms, along with translations and/or definitions in a shared online spreadsheet. In the next stage, this new vocabulary is drilled in an engaging online team-quiz which can be played on smartphones and tablets. A noteworthy feature of the method outlined here is the ease with which student-generated word-lists can be converted into a quiz, which can be played in the classroom almost immediately.

Encourage Team Cooperation with Quizlet Live

A major aim of this activity is to increase student motivation to memorize new vocabulary. This is mainly achieved via *Quizlet Live*, an online team quiz game, and one of the so-called *learning modes* within the online study application *Quizlet*. Quizlet enables users to create digital flashcards for study on a smartphone, tablet or PC. The Web-based application also includes a vast searchable database of user-generated flashcards, grouped into *sets*. *Quizlet Live* may be played with any set of flashcards which contain at least twelve unique

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term-and-definition pairs. To run the game, it is also necessary to have a teacher account, which is free, and six or more students with an internet-connected device such as a smartphone, tablet or computer. The teacher will also need a computer to run the game, as well as a projector and/or a large screen to show the instructions and leaderboard.

Whereas Quizlet provides a powerful means of studying vocabulary in an engaging way, it also plays an important role in creating optimal conditions for cooperation between students. In my classroom, I have found Quizlet to be effective in sorting students into teams and in getting them to interact with each other. By playing several rounds of Quizlet Live, students are put in a situation where they are naturally motivated to cooperate with their peers in friendly competition against other teams.

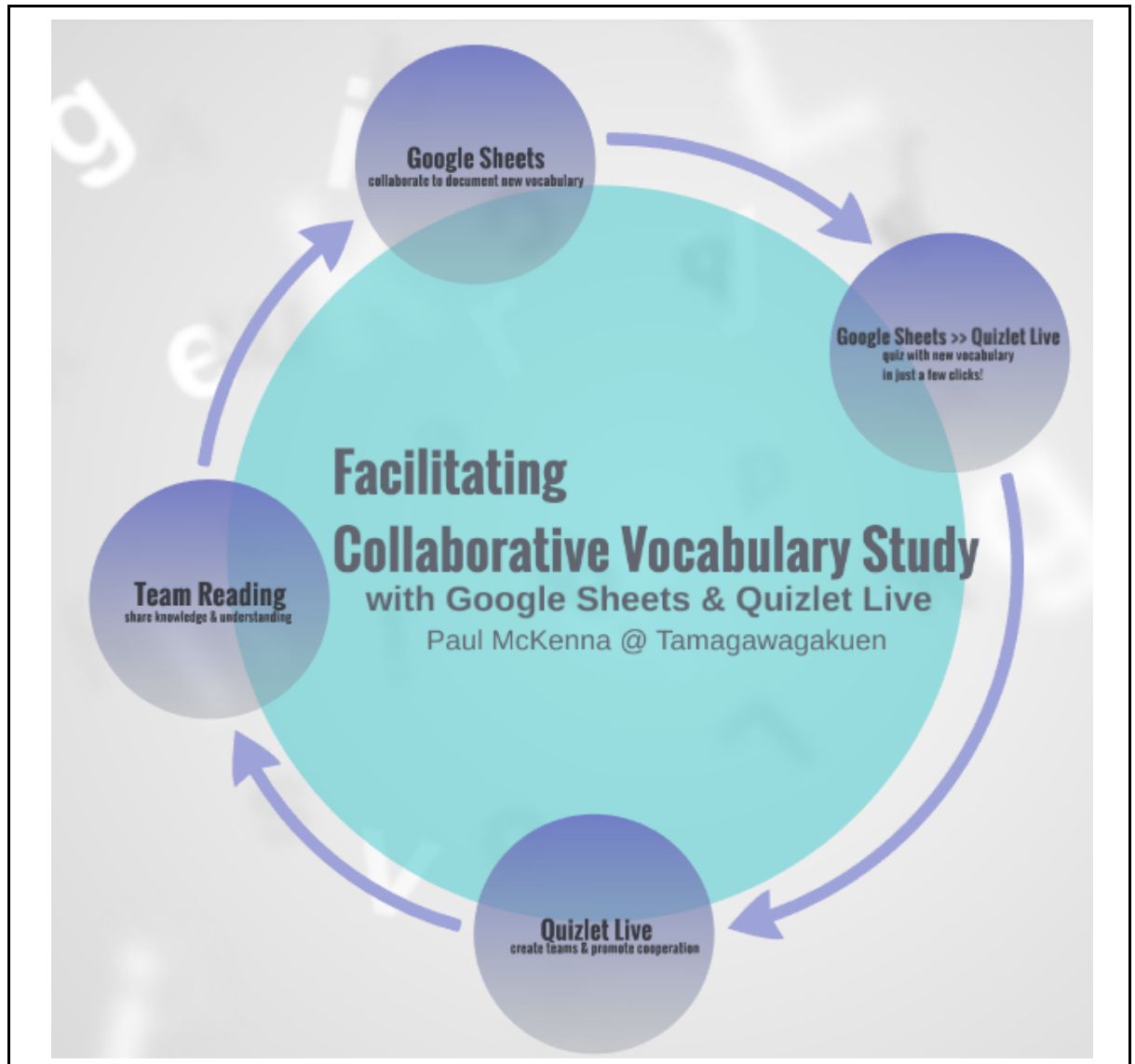
Team Reading

Remaining in the same groupings, the reading activity begins by having the students within each team assign themselves numbers from one to three or four, depending on the size of the team.

The idea behind this activity is to read the text out loud while the class reads along paragraph by paragraph (or other intervals if more suitable). If there is an audio recording of the text, this may be used. Occasionally I read the text, and give explanations or paraphrase as necessary. It is also possible to have students read the text aloud, however, bear in mind that some students may speak too quietly, slowly or monotonously, and this may cause other students to become bored and distracted. After the first paragraph, team-member number one has to 'share their understanding' with the group. This may be done in Japanese, and can be a straight translation or a summary of the main points. The other students in each team are encouraged to help if necessary. It can be effective to display a countdown timer on the overhead projection to create time-pressure and keep things moving along (I recommend Timer Tab). When each team has completed this phase of the activity (See Fig.1), the next section of the text is read and the process repeats with each subsequent team-member 'sharing their understanding' for subsequent turns.

FIGURE 1

Excerpt from *Facilitating Collaborative Vocabulary Study* presentation (McKenna, 2018) showing the cyclical process described in this paper.



Cooperating to Make a Wordlist via Google Sheets

After finishing reading, the text is divided into sections which are distributed amongst the teams. Students are requested to identify unfamiliar vocabulary for further study. They are requested to write the new terms, along with translations/definitions in a shared spreadsheet to two columns (1) listing the term and (2) the translation/definition.

The technology that enables this is Google Sheets, an online spreadsheet application similar to Microsoft Excel, and part of the Google Drive suite of office applications. A full description of Google Sheets is beyond the scope of this paper (for more information see “Google Sheets,” n.d).

The key point about Google Sheets is that multiple users can access and edit the same spreadsheet simultaneously. There are several ways of sharing the spreadsheet with students. One way, which does not require that students have their own Google account, is to share a

link with students and set permissions so that anyone with the link can edit the sheet. The URL generated when one attempts to share a Google sheet tends to be long and impractical to manually enter into an address bar, so it is recommended that the teacher converts the URL into a QR code (“QR Code Generator,” n.d), or other similar websites. One can enter any URL, and the site automatically generates a QR code in an image, which can be downloaded from the site. It is a good idea to save the QR code image on a page in the Google Sheet file itself on a separate sheet and re-use the same Google Sheet file each time that you carry out this activity.

When the Google Sheet has been shared, it can be projected on the screen so the teacher can monitor activity and make adjustments as necessary. When multiple users work simultaneously on the same sheet, a coloured border appears around the cell each user is on, which enables different users to avoid writing over each other. However, it can be a good idea to block out different areas of the spreadsheet with different colours and assign each team its own area. Having teams race against each other to write the most correct term/definitions, not only adds an element of play, but can speed up the process. Students seem to enjoy the novelty of seeing multiple people contribute to a wordlist in real time, and they can also identify each other's errors.

FIGURE 2

Screenshot of a shared Google sheet wordlist, showing terms and translations in adjacent columns.

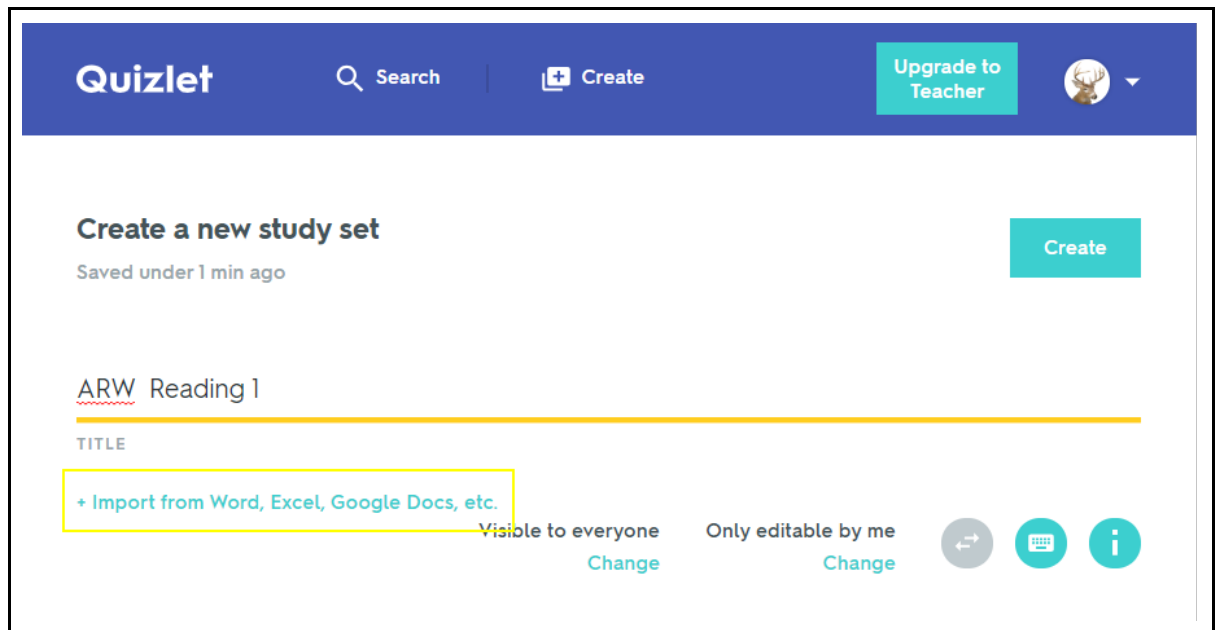
	B	C	D	E
1	Word	意味	Meaning	Typ
2	an acquaintance	知り合い	A person known to someone, but usually not a close friend	
3	empirical evidence	経験上	support gained by careful observation and/or scientific experiment	
4	diverse	多様性	differing; varied	
5	evolve	進展する	to develop or change slowly over time	
6	a narcissist	自己陶醉	conceited; having a lot of self-love and self-admiration	
7	a tie	絆	a relationship, a bond, a connection	
8	adolescents	青年期	12 to 18 years; a teenager	
9	nurture	育てる	bring up, care for, train, nourish	
10	empathy	共感	ability to imagine and understand how someone else feels	
11	outweigh	～にまさる	have more benefits than something else	
12	a viewpoint	見解	a perspective, an opinion, a way of see or understanding things	
13	a signpost	道しるべ	a transition that indicates a key move in the speech, a word that st	
14	reveal	明らかにする	make know; show; make public	
15	social networking	ソーシャルネットワ	use of technology to create or maintain relationships	
16	display	展示	exhibit; act out in the real world	
17	vital	至關重要的/きわめ	absolutely necessary or important; essential.	
18	a compromise	妥協	a agreement over differences in which each side gives up somethi	
19				
20				

Converting the Wordlist into a Quizlet Live Quiz

After enough vocabulary has been added to the wordlist, it is possible to create a set of flashcards within Quizlet in a few clicks. In Quizlet, when you create a new set, there is an option to *import from Word, Excel, Google Docs, etc.* (see Fig. 3). To import, select two adjacent columns from the Google sheet, where the first cell represents the term and the next cell in the row represents the definition (see Fig. 2). Each row will result in a flashcard, with the term on one side and the definition on another. After importing, a new set can be created, and the flashcards can be reviewed. With just a few clicks, the new set can be converted into a game of Quizlet Live, and students can review the new vocabulary in an engaging way.

FIGURE 3

Screenshot of *creating a new study set* within Quizlet showing the option to *import from Word, Excel, Google Docs, etc*



CONCLUSION

This paper has attempted to describe a set of activities that work together to harness the power of cooperative learning for reading and vocabulary acquisition. One powerful feature of this approach is that Quizlet is so enjoyable that students are motivated to actively seek out vocabulary for further study. Another feature is that the cooperative nature of the vocabulary gathering improves overall efficiency so that students spend more time drilling vocabulary and less time looking up words in the dictionary. Although more formal research needs to be undertaken, anecdotal evidence from written student comments, as well as my own observations of highly engaged students suggest that students find the team-reading activity useful and Quizlet Live highly enjoyable.

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