

INTEGRATING THE MEMRISE APPLICATION IN TEACHING AND LEARNING FRENCH VOCABULARY: AN EXPERIMENTAL STUDY AMONG SECOND-YEAR STUDENTS AT FACULTY OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES, HONG DUC UNIVERSITY

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Abstract: *This study investigates the effectiveness of Memrise in improving French vocabulary proficiency among second-year students at the Faculty of Foreign Languages, Hong Duc University. A quasi-experimental design was employed with 80 second-year students, consisting of an experimental group (n = 40) using Memrise and a control group (n = 40) receiving traditional vocabulary instruction. The intervention lasted six weeks. At the end of the intervention, The results of a comprehensive French vocabulary test assessing their vocabulary knowledge and ability to use words in context showed that the experimental group achieved a higher mean score of 82.6, compared with 71.4 for the control group. These results suggest that integrating Memrise into French vocabulary instruction may enhance students' vocabulary proficiency and contextual use of newly learned words. The findings highlight the potential of technology-assisted learning as a complementary approach to traditional foreign language vocabulary teaching and learning.*

Keywords: *Memrise, French vocabulary, contextual vocabulary use, technology-assisted language learning.*

1. Introduction

Integrating Memrise into French vocabulary teaching and learning is increasingly seen as an effective solution in today's digital education era. Built on principles such as spaced repetition and multimodal learning, Memrise helps learners retain vocabulary more sustainably through the integration of images, audio, and real-life usage contexts. In classroom settings, the application not only enhances self-directed learning but also increases students' engagement and motivation. However, to achieve optimal results, its use must be guided by clear pedagogical direction, ensuring that vocabulary is linked to communicative contexts and specific learning objectives. At the Faculty of Foreign Languages, Hong Duc University, English-major students who choose French as their second foreign language continue developing their vocabulary and language-use skills in *French 2* after acquiring foundational vocabulary in *French 1*. Therefore, the present study examines the use of Memrise in a six-week French vocabulary-learning intervention involving second-year English-major students. A comprehensive vocabulary test was administered to assess four aspects of vocabulary knowledge and use: meaning recognition,

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word completion, sentence completion, and contextual word use. The study compares the performance of students using Memrise with that of students following traditional vocabulary-learning methods, aiming to provide empirical evidence on the potential role of Memrise in developing French vocabulary proficiency and contextual vocabulary use.

Memrise is a widely used online language-learning application designed to help learners effectively memorize vocabulary and sentence patterns using methods grounded in cognitive science. Launched in 2010, Memrise offers a wide range of language courses, including French, with rich content suitable for learners at different proficiency levels. One of its defining features is the use of spaced repetition, which prompts learners to review vocabulary at optimal intervals to maximize long-term retention (Nation, 2001; Webb, 2007). In addition, the platform incorporates native-speaker videos, visual aids, and interactive activities to create a dynamic learning environment closely aligned with real-life contexts. The combination of verbal and visual input is also consistent with principles of multimedia learning (Mayer, 2009).

Memrise also integrates personalized learning pathways, allowing users to track their progress and adjust content according to individual needs. As a result, it not only supports classroom instruction but may also foster autonomous learning and sustain learner motivation. Such features are consistent with the principles of self-regulated and learner-centered learning, in which learners actively monitor and manage their own learning processes (Zimmerman, 1997).

The application includes a variety of features designed to support vocabulary acquisition and language skill development:

Lessons & Wordlists: Vocabulary and phrases are organized by topic, progressing from basic to advanced levels.

Spaced Repetition: The system automatically schedules reviews at optimal intervals to enhance long-term memory retention (Nation, 2001; Webb, 2007).

Native Speaker Videos: Short videos help learners become familiar with pronunciation, intonation, and real-world vocabulary use.

AI Chatbot / AI Partner: Enables learners to practice speaking and writing with interactive feedback to support communicative skills.

Diverse Exercise Types: Includes multiple-choice questions, fill-in-the-blank tasks, sentence ordering, and listening practice, providing opportunities for repeated retrieval and practice (Karpicke & Roediger, 2008).

Review Modes: Features such as quick review and difficult-word review help personalize learning and provide additional practice with less familiar vocabulary.

Progress Tracking: Built-in analytics allow learners to monitor their progress and support self-directed learning (Zimmerman, 1997).

Community Courses: Users can create or access vocabulary sets shared by others, expanding the range of available learning resources.

Taken together, these features position Memrise not merely as a vocabulary-learning tool but as an interactive, personalized, and context-driven learning environment. Its combination of spaced repetition, multimodal input, repeated retrieval, and contextualized language exposure provides a theoretical basis for supporting vocabulary acquisition and the ability to use newly learned words in context.

2. Preliminaries

2.1. Participants

The study involved second-year students majoring in English Language at the Faculty of Foreign Languages, Hong Duc University. Participants had French proficiency levels equivalent to A1-A2 under the CEFR framework. The study focused on a sample of 40 students from cohort K27, majoring in English Language and enrolled in the *French 2* course during the first semester of the 2025-2026 academic year. These learners were at an elementary level, having completed *French 1*, and already possessed a foundational vocabulary base sufficient for basic language use. For the experimental study, the 40 students in the experimental group used Memrise to support their French vocabulary learning, while 40 students in the control group followed traditional vocabulary-learning methods. The two groups were involved in the same *French 2* course content and were assessed using the same comprehensive French vocabulary test at the end of the six-week intervention.

2.2. Exercises Implementation Procedure

An experimental research method was carried out over a six-week period during the first semester of the 2025-2026 academic year. Students in the experimental group used Memrise to study pre-designed vocabulary lists based on thematic content aligned with the official classroom curriculum and the compulsory textbook for the *French 2* course. Study time was approximately 15-20 minutes per day. Instructors integrated classroom vocabulary instruction with Memrise-based activities according to the structured steps outlined above. Vocabulary topics were organized on a weekly basis and aligned with the thematic content covered in class. The instructor provided guidance on how to use Memrise and assigned learning tasks according to the vocabulary topics and learning objectives for each week. Students used Memrise alongside required and supplementary course materials. Upon registering on the application, they selected the intermediate level, allowing the platform to tailor lesson content accordingly. The intermediate-level content on Memrise was found to align well with the vocabulary load and thematic topics covered in the compulsory textbook *Tendances A2* used in the *French 2* course.

During the six-week experimental phase, the instructor also conducted weekly vocabulary quizzes to monitor the experimental group's learning progress. These quizzes were aligned with the vocabulary practiced on Memrise and the in-class textbook activities. The weekly assessments served as formative assessments and were not used as the main measure for comparing the two groups.

Integrating Memrise into A2 French Instruction: Leveraging these capabilities, the instructor selected and adapted features that best aligned with the proficiency level and course content of *French 2*, designed for students at approximately A2 level. The following steps describe how Memrise was integrated into French vocabulary teaching and learning during the six-week experimental period.

Step 1: Designing vocabulary content based on the French 2 curriculum.

Vocabulary content was designed based on the required textbook *Tendances A2*. Vocabulary topics were organized on a weekly basis and aligned with the thematic content covered in classe.

Table 1. Thematic vocabulary content derived from the textbook, corresponding to the practice activities conducted on Memrise

Week	Subject	With the book “Tendance	With MEMRISE	Words To learn
1	Loisirs	Unité 4 - Lecon 1,2	Le vocabulaire: Free time activities: 15 words Listen in context: I’ve love go to the cinema: 5	20
2	Nourriture Restaurant	Unité 4 - Lecon 3,4	Listen in context: Order at the Bar: 5 words et phrases Listen in contexte: Having breakfast: 9 words et phrases Listen in context : Can you make me a tea? : 11 words et phrases	25
3	Voyage	Unité 5 - Lecon 1,2	Studio Higher M5 – Holidays & Travel Travel Essentials: 30 words	30
4	Transports	Unité 5 - Lecon 3,4	Listen in context I took the Tram: 16 words et phrases Fresh from the Plane: 19 words et phrases	35
5	Achat Vente Magasin	Unité 6 - Lecon 1,2	Listen in context Buying clothes 1: 15 words et phrases At the Market 4: 25 words et phrases	40
6	Vêtements Mode	Unité 6 - Lecon 3,4	Short video: Buying clothes 3: 21 words et phrases Short video: I love your clothes 19 words et phrases	40

Step 2: Providing guidance and assigning learning tasks

The instructor provided students with guidance and explanations on how to use Memrise and assigned weekly learning tasks. The duration, content, and learning objectives were determined based on a structured outline of vocabulary topics organized by theme and week.

Step 3: Conducting weekly formative assessments

The instructor designed weekly vocabulary quizzes aligned with students’ practice on Memrise and the vocabulary content covered through the textbook activities in class. These assessments were administered as multiple-choice quizzes and were used primarily to monitor students’ learning progress throughout the six-week intervention. The implementation of weekly formative assessments through the Wayground platform. The instructor created a collection entitled “Vocabulaire_Memrise_A2,” which contains six vocabulary activities corresponding to the topics covered during the intervention, including Mode, Achats et Vente, Transports, Voyage, Nourritures, Loisirs. The quizzes were designed to align with students’ vocabulary practice on Memrise and the vocabulary content

introduced through textbook activities in class. Each assessment consisted of multiple-choice questions and was administered weekly to monitor students' vocabulary learning and progress throughout the six-week intervention. The sequence of activities demonstrates a continuous assessment process in which students' vocabulary knowledge was checked regularly after each instructional unit. This collection of weekly multiple-choice vocabulary quizzes on Wayground, covering the vocabulary topics practiced through Memrise and the textbook activities. These formative assessments were administered throughout the six-week intervention to monitor students' vocabulary learning progress.

Step 4: Collecting learning outcomes and conducting the final assessment

The instructor compiled students' weekly quiz results to monitor their progress throughout the intervention. At the end of the six-week implementation period, both the experimental group and the control group completed a comprehensive French vocabulary test. The final assessment was used as the main measure for comparing the vocabulary performance of the two groups after the intervention.

2.3.Data Collection

Following the six-week experimental phase, the research team collected and compared the vocabulary test results of the experimental and control groups. At the end of the intervention, both groups completed the same comprehensive French vocabulary test, which served as the main data collection instrument.

The test consisted of 50 questions with a total score of 10 points and covered the target vocabulary taught during the six-week period based on the *French 2* curriculum and *Tendances A2*. It assessed four aspects of vocabulary knowledge and use: meaning recognition (10 questions), word completion (10 questions), sentence completion (15 questions), and contextual word use (15 questions).

Meaning recognition items assessed students' ability to identify the meanings of target words, while word completion items examined their ability to retrieve and complete vocabulary accurately. Sentence completion items assessed students' ability to select appropriate vocabulary within sentence-level, contexts. Finally, contextual word-use items examined students' ability to apply target vocabulary appropriately in meaningful contexts.

The resulting test scores were used to compare the French vocabulary performance of students from two groups. It showed that the experimental group outperformed the control group in both vocabulary target and language proficiency. The experimental group achieved a mean score of 82.6, while the control group achieved a mean score of 71.4.

3. Main Results

3.1. Weekly Vocabulary Test Results of the Memrise Experimental Group

After each week of practicing vocabulary topics assigned by the teacher in line with the classroom curriculum and exercises on Memrise, students in the experimental group completed a vocabulary test consisting of multiple-choice questions on Quizizz to assess their learning outcomes.

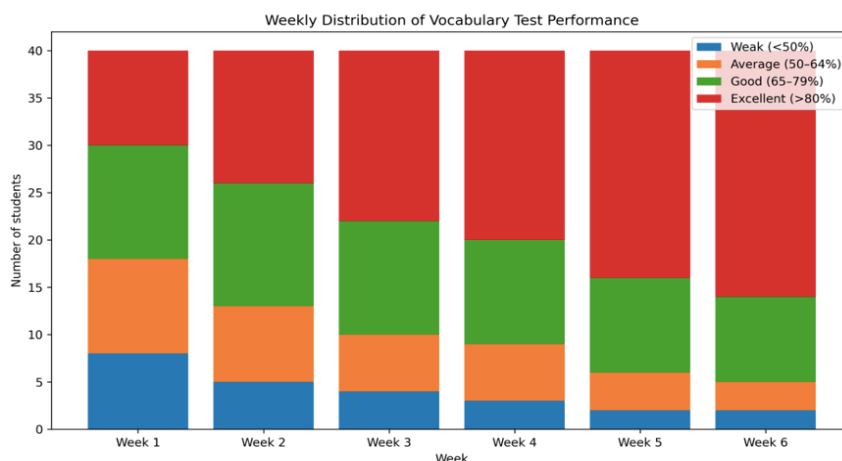


Figure 1. Weekly vocabulary test results

The results indicate a steady increase in the class average over the six weeks, rising from 68.5% in Week 1 to 82.6% in Week 6. The number of students achieving Excellent results increased from 10 to 26 students, while the number of Weak students dropped from 8 to 2. This trend suggests a positive development in students' vocabulary test performance during the six-week intervention.

Moreover, the marked improvement from Week 3 onward may be partly attributed to students becoming more familiar with the Memrise platform and developing more consistent study habits. The repeated exposure and review provided through Memrise may also have supported vocabulary retention. However, a small number of students continued to perform poorly, indicating possible differences in learning engagement, motivation, or individual study strategies. This highlights the need for more personalized instructional support.

3.2. Vocabulary Test Results after 6 Weeks: Comparison between Two Groups

After six weeks of integrating Memrise into French vocabulary lessons, both the experimental and control groups took a comprehensive vocabulary test covering all six topics to evaluate the learning outcomes of the intervention.

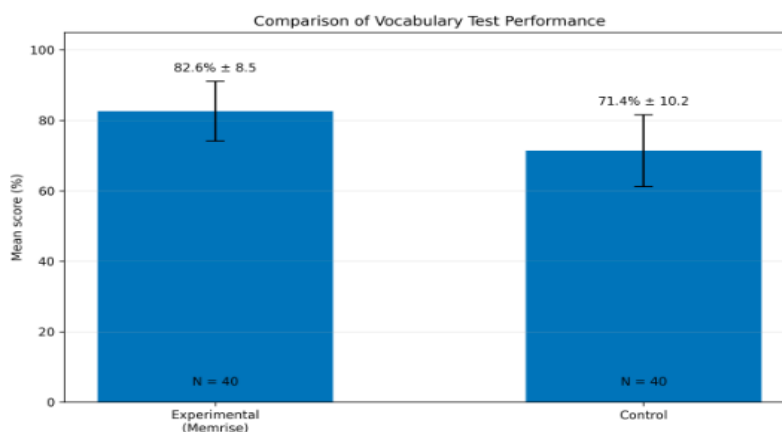


Figure 2. Weekly vocabulary test results

Figure 2 shows a clear difference between the two groups after six weeks of learning French vocabulary. The experimental group using Memrise achieved a higher mean score (82.6%) compared to the control group (71.4%), with a gap of 11.2 percentage points. In addition, the experimental group showed a lower standard deviation (8.5 vs. 10.2), indicating less variation in performance within the experimental group. In terms of distribution, 65% of students in the experimental group achieved Excellent results, compared to only 30% in the control group. Meanwhile, the proportion of Weak students was 5% in the experimental group, compared to 15% in the control group.

Overall, these descriptive results suggest that students who learned vocabulary through Memrise performed better on the comprehensive vocabulary test than those who followed traditional learning methods. However, because no pre-test was administered and no inferential statistical analysis was conducted, the observed difference should be interpreted cautiously and should not be taken as conclusive evidence that Memrise alone caused the higher performance.

3.3. Discussion

The findings indicate that integrating Memrise into French vocabulary teaching was associated with positive and consistent learning outcomes. Within the experimental group, the average score increased steadily over six weeks, accompanied by a notable rise in the proportion of high-achieving students and a reduction in low-performing students. This trend suggests improvement in students' vocabulary test performance during the intervention.

One possible explanation for this improvement is Memrise's use of spaced repetition and repeated retrieval. Regular review may provide learners with repeated opportunities to recall vocabulary and strengthen retention (Nation, 2001; Webb, 2007; Karpicke & Roediger, 2008). In addition, the application combines written vocabulary with audio, visual materials, and native-speaker videos. According to Mayer (2009), such multimodal input may help learners connect word forms, meanings, pronunciation, and language use, consistent with principles of multimedia learning.

The improvement from Week 3 onward may also reflect students' increasing familiarity with the platform and the development of more regular learning habits. In the present study, Memrise was not used independently of classroom instruction. Instead, students learned pre-designed vocabulary lists based on the *French 2* curriculum and *Tendances A2*, received guidance from the instructor, and practiced for approximately 15–20 minutes per day. Therefore, the observed outcomes may have resulted from the combination of the application's features, regular practice, teacher guidance, and alignment between Memrise activities and classroom content.

When compared with the control group, the differences become more pronounced. The experimental group achieved a higher average score than the control group (82.6% vs. 71.4%) and had a higher proportion of students achieving Excellent results. These findings are broadly consistent with previous research emphasizing repeated exposure, retrieval, and meaningful engagement as important conditions for vocabulary learning (Nation, 2001; Webb, 2007). The results also support the potential value of technology-assisted vocabulary learning in providing learners with additional opportunities for repeated practice beyond regular classroom instruction.

However, the findings should not be interpreted as evidence that Memrise is inherently superior to traditional vocabulary instruction. The intervention involved several interconnected conditions, including teacher guidance, curriculum-aligned vocabulary content, regular practice, and structured learning tasks. Moreover, the absence of pre-test data means that the study could not determine whether the two groups had equivalent vocabulary proficiency before the intervention. Thus, the results suggest an advantage for the Memrise group, but they do not establish a direct causal effect of Memrise.

The findings have several pedagogical implications. First, Memrise may be used as a complementary tool rather than a replacement for classroom instruction. It can provide additional opportunities for vocabulary review and retrieval outside the classroom, while teachers can continue to provide explanation, correction, and communicative practice. Second, technology-assisted vocabulary learning may be more effective when closely aligned with the curriculum. In this study, the vocabulary content on Memrise was based on the themes and vocabulary covered in *Tendances A2*. Third, teachers should provide clear learning objectives and monitor students' engagement with the application, as individual differences in motivation and study habits may influence learning outcomes. Finally, digital vocabulary practice should be combined with activities requiring students to use newly learned words in sentences and meaningful communicative contexts.

Overall, the findings suggest that integrating Memrise into French vocabulary instruction is a feasible and potentially beneficial approach in the context of the present study. Its effectiveness appears to depend not only on the technological features of the application but also on appropriate pedagogical guidance, curriculum alignment, regular practice, and learner engagement.

3.4. Limitations of the Study

Although the research yielded valid and reliable findings, there remain several limitations.

Firstly, the study involved a relatively small sample of 80 students from a single institution, with 40 students in each group. Therefore, the findings may not be generalizable to students in other universities or educational contexts.

The second limitation of this study related to the time of the experiment. The intervention lasted only six weeks. Although this period allowed changes in vocabulary test performance to be observed, it was too short to determine whether the observed outcomes would be maintained over a longer period.

Another limitation of this study is that pre-test data were not included. Therefore, it was not possible to establish whether the experimental and control groups had equivalent vocabulary proficiency before the intervention or to measure individual gains from before to after the intervention.

Fourth, although the comprehensive vocabulary test included items assessing contextual word use, this measure was limited to test-based performance. It did not directly assess students' spontaneous use of vocabulary in speaking or extended writing. Therefore, the findings should not be generalized to broader communicative vocabulary competence.

Students' out-of-class learning activities are shortcomings of this research. It could not be fully controlled. Learners may have used other vocabulary-learning resources or spent different amounts of time studying French outside the assigned activities, which may have influenced their final test performance.

Finally, the study did not include a delayed retention test. Consequently, it remains unclear whether the vocabulary knowledge demonstrated immediately after the six-week intervention was maintained over time. Future studies should consider larger samples, multiple institutions, pre- and post-testing, longer intervention periods, delayed retention tests, and additional measures of vocabulary use in speaking and writing.

4. Conclusion

This study examined the impact of using Memrise in teaching French vocabulary through a six-week experimental design involving an experimental group and a control group. The findings suggest that integrating Memrise supported students' vocabulary retention and use. The experimental group showed continuous improvement over the six weeks and outperformed the control group in average scores and the proportion of high-achieving students. These results suggest that spaced repetition and digital interaction may support vocabulary learning and retention. Despite these positive contributions, the study indicates that the effectiveness of learning tools may be influenced by individual factors such as engagement, self-discipline, and learning strategies. Therefore, combining technology with appropriate pedagogical guidance is necessary to maximize learning outcomes. Further research with larger samples, longer intervention periods, and additional measures of vocabulary use in communicative contexts is recommended.

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