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A Comparative Study of Teaching Vocabulary through Quizlet and Word Lists to EFL Adolescent Learners

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Abstract

The current study aimed to compare two techniques of teaching vocabulary to EFL adolescent learners, namely Quizlet and Word lists, to find out if any ofthem was more effective than the other. In other words, this study was designed to seek answer to the following question: IsQuizlet more effective than Word lists on learning vocabulary by EFL adolescentlearners?. In order to address the above question, two classes, each consisting of 30 EFL beginner learners, were randomly selected among 135students learning EFL in grade tenof a High School in Mekong Delta, Vietnam. Since both groups were homogeneous, the vocabulary test (pre-test) was given to the participants at the outset of the study. The first group was taught vocabulary using Quizlet, whereas the second group was taught using Word lists. After two sessions of instruction, the post-test (achievement test) was administered to both groups to see the effect of both instructional techniques. The obtained results through descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) indicated there was a significant difference between the group which was taught through Quizlet and the one which received Word lists. In other words, using Quizlet was more effective than Word lists in teaching vocabulary to Vietnamese EFL beginners. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected and some recommendations are given at the end.

Keywords: *Vocabulary teaching, Quizlet, Word lists, EFL adolescent learners*

1. Introduction

Vocabulary development is an essential component of language instruction. A lot of scholars concur that there has been relatively little study in the subject of vocabulary acquisition (e.g., Folse, 2004; Hunt &Beglar, 2005), and that the most successful method of vocabulary learning remains unknown (e.g., de Groot, 2006). Because of the critical function that vocabulary plays in language development, applied linguists have vigorously campaigned for it in recent years (Qian, 1999; Zareva, Schwanenflugel & Nikolova, 2005). Vocabulary is required for communication and meaning expression through productive and receptive skills. Moreover, there is a unanimous agreement that vocabulary is a very important aspect of second language (L2) learning.It is difficult for L2 learners to converse or simply express themselves correctly without a large vocabulary. Lack of grammar or syntactic understanding, on the other hand, may damage communication, but learners may still be understood.

According to McCarthy (1990), most language teachers believe that vocabulary is the single most important component of any language education. No matter how thoroughly a student learns grammar or how well the sounds of a foreign language are learned, communication in a foreign language cannot take place in any meaningful way without words to represent a wide range of meanings. As a result, teaching vocabulary is an essential subject worth researching.

Learners may be dissatisfied and lose confidence if they lack comprehensive vocabulary knowledge and procedures for acquiring new words (Nation, 2001). As a result, it is vital to familiarize learners with a variety of beneficial tactics for expanding their vocabulary acquisition and to educate them how to use these strategies. The purpose of this article is to provide two distinct ways for teaching vocabulary items to English language learners, as well as the findings of a research on the usage of Quizlet and word lists.

2. Literature review

2.1. Vocabulary teaching

One of the biggest issues that the majority of language learners have in the early stages of language learning is the inability to make an informed decision on the sort of vocabulary learning technique to use in their

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Volume: 5 Issue: 5 September to October 2022 https://www.ijsmsjournal.org

learning process. It is the job of teachers to assist their pupils in efficiently learning second language terms. Investigating various tactics and processes that instructors should utilize in the process of language instruction is thus an essential problem.

There are two kinds of vocabulary activities, according to Seal (1991): planned and unplanned. Unplanned vocabulary teaching activities involve learners asking for the meaning of terms and teachers attempting to clarify the meaning using various tactics such as body language, antonyms, synonyms, visuals, and so on. The teacher's job is to strive to make the message plain to the students. The instructor next asks questions about the troublesome terms to ensure that the students understand their meaning.

In planned vocabulary teaching, however, language teachers consider in advance what items to teach and how to teach them. Oxford and Scarcella (1994) have divided vocabulary learning activities into three categories: 1) decontextualized, 2) partially contextualized, and 3) fully contextualized. Decontextualized activities are those vocabulary items which are removed from the context in which they first appear in and are presented in situations free from any communicative values (e.g., word lists, flash cards, dictionary look-up).Activities that are somewhat contextualized are sometimes referred to as deliberate or planned vocabulary acquisition or teaching (e.g., word grouping, word association, word elaboration, physical response). Finally, fully contextualized activities are thought to play an important role in vocabulary teaching because they give students opportunities to practice authentic communication, such as reading stories, plays, magazines, newspapers, or letters; listening to the radio; watching TV; participating in conversations; or writing messages with the goal of communicating in real-life situations, to name a few.

2.2. Word Lists

A word list is a sheet of paper on which students write the L2 terms and their L1 explanations or translations on one side. "The assumptions that underpin this approach appear to be that learners do not require much, if any, context to learn vocabulary, and that rote memory is entirely fine," Oxford and Crookal (1990) stated (p.10).Methods that offer learners with opportunity to process words by creating connections between what they already know and what they have learned, according to certain experts such as Baumann and Kameeuni (1991) and Blachowicz and Fisher (2000), are successful tactics. Making a semantically relevant relationship between learners' schema and what they have recently learned is required for personalizing a new term.

It is typical practice to acquire second language vocabulary utilizing lists of word pairs (rote repetition). Although much research has been conducted on vocabulary acquisition, Griffin and Harley (1996) believe that little research has been conducted on list learning of new terms, despite the fact that it is one of the most commonly employed approaches among learners.

Some characteristics of word list learning are mentioned by Yongqi (2003). First, he attempts to address the question of how many repetitions students need to memorize word pairings. He claims that a remarkable amount of word pairings may be learnt in a short period of time. For example, Lado, Baldwin, and Lobo (1967, as quoted in Yongqi, 2003) discovered that intermediate college Spanish students remembered 65% of 100 terms after only one encounter.Similarly, Crothers and Suppes(1967) found that after seven repeats, participants remembered all 108 Russian-English word pairings, and after six repetitions, most participants remembered 80% of the 216 word pairs. Second, Yongqi (2003) examines the best quantity of words to study at once. Crothers and Suppes (1967) investigated varied list sizes ranging from 18 to 300 words and discovered that the number of words in each word list is determined by the difficulty level of the words. When the words were simple, big list sizes were suitable; when the words were challenging, small list sizes were effective. As a result, if the words are simple, lists of 100 or more can be employed in the educational program (Yongqi, 2003).

According to Thornbury (2002), the importance of list learning in language schools may have been overestimated. He offers various ideas on how to use word lists in the classroom. Some of these tactics are as follows:

i. The teacher reads words at random from the list, and students match the sounds to the written forms by checking the ones they hear.
ii. If students have a bilingual word list, they cover the translation section; the teacher provides translations, and students check off the English counterparts.

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Volume: 5 Issue: 5 September to October 2022 https://www.ijsmsjournal.org

iii. Students can create a tale from a list of words by selecting, say, twelve words from a list of twenty words and then constructing a narrative scenario. Or they take turns crafting a phrase that incorporates the next word on the list in order to continue the tale.

Because the communicative method is widely employed in many parts of the globe, any strategy requiring vocabulary learning outside of context has been rather unpopular. Although it is often assumed that list learning should be abandoned as a behaviorist learning approach (Hulstijn, 2001), empirical evidence suggests that list learning should be employed as a strategy for teaching and learning L2 words. For example, in certain research comparing vocabulary acquisition by context and list learning, the results showed that list learning is more efficient and effective than context learning (e.g., Nation, 2001).Furthermore, contrary to popular opinion, list learning does result in long-term retention. Empirical research has shown that vocabulary taught through lists is retained in the learner's long-term memory (Hulstijn, 2001; Nation, 2001).

2.3. The use of mobile- assisted language learning (MALL)

According to a 2015 International Telecommunication Union report, there were more than 7 billion mobile customers worldwide in 2015, accounting for almost 96% of the global population.Shandu (2018) asserted that mobile phones have permeated our daily lives to the point where many admit to being unable to function without them. Because mobile technologies have various benefits such as flexibility, cheap cost, small size, and user-friendliness, academics are studying ways to employ mobile technology to improve language acquisition. However, there are significant disadvantages, such as limited screen size, restricted graphic display (Albers & Kim, 2001), and reliance on networks that may not always provide extremely high transmission capabilities and will be prone to a variety of disruptions. Despite these flaws, Thornton and Houser (2005) demonstrated that mobile devices may be excellent instruments for providing learning materials to learners. Furthermore, the new generation of MALL applications allows students to fully utilize technology to strengthen their linguistic abilities, and more and more interactive forms are now available to learners. Concerning the advantages of utilizing mobiles in language learning, Nguyen (2016) states that owning mobiles and wireless devices allows learners to participate more actively in learning materials and allows learners to select activities that meet their individual requirements. The advantage of employing mobile technology in language learning is that it swiftly attracts new users, possibly opening up new learning situations (Pachler, Bachmair 12& Cook, 2010). Therefore, it is urgent that the use of MALL be studied carefully to enhance the process of teaching and learning language.

2.4. The application of Quizlet in teaching and learning vocabulary

Quizlet is defined as a "mobile and web-based study tool that enables students to acquire knowledge through game-like learning activities". Quizlet offers over a hundred million user-created study sets and over forty million people use it every month, making it one of the most widely used flashcard systems accessible (Quizlet, 2016).

It employs user-created learning modules made up of concepts and their meanings or descriptions. These modules (referred to as study sets by Quizlet) are provided to students through various learning modes such as flashcards, games, collaborative activities, and quizzes to allow rote learning environments that may help students master many subjects, particularly languages and vocabulary. The internet application interfaces include eight learning modes, of which five are featured in the mobile application interface.

They may easily submit the set of vocabulary on Quizlet using this language learning software, and the students can study the uploaded set of vocabulary using their devices such as smart phones or tablets. Quizlet's study modes include Learn, Flash Card, Write, Test, and Match.

i. "*Learn*" – Through multiple choice and writing questions, students may learn words and their meanings. The difficulty of the questions ranges from easy to severe.
ii. "*Flashcard*" –Digital flashcards exhibit words and may be flipped by mouse clicks or screen tabs to provide definitions or visuals that illustrate the term.
iii. "*Write*" –Students are expected to create meanings for the phrases or images shown. If the student makes an error, further efforts are necessary.

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Volume: 5 Issue: 5 September to October 2022 https://www.ijsmsjournal.org

iv. "*Test*" –A written test with four sorts of questions: multiple choice, matching, and True or False. The questions are based on whether the terms are explained by image, explanation, or L1 translations in the study set. Students can review their results as well as the proper answers for any incorrect responses.

v. "*Match*" –A game in which students must match phrases to their meanings (or accompanying images) as rapidly as possible.When a learner completes a task, the app displays his score and rank among other learners.

All of the study modes include feedback and mistake correction, making autonomous learning extremely successful. Furthermore, users have additional options for how to utilize each mode, such as replying with words or definitions, listening to audio or not, and studying all or specific terms.

3. Methodology

3.1. Participants

3.1.1. Teacher

The researcher was in charge of instructing lessons to both experimental group and controlled group.

3.1.2. Students

For the purpose of the present study, a total of 60 elementary adolescent learners including 34 (56.67 %) males and 26 (43.33 %) females of a high schoolin Mekong Delta participated in the study.

The participants were conveniently assigned into two groups, so I randomly took one for the control group and the other, the experimental one. They were required to complete a pre-test, a post-test in the study process.

Table I:
THE BACKGROUND INFORMATION OF THE TWO GROUPS

Conditions	Number of participants	Gender		Years of study
		Males	Females	
Controlled group	30	18	12	7 years
Experimental group	30	16	14	7 years

3.2. Research instruments

A vocabulary test and an achievement test were employed in this investigation. The vocabulary test utilized as the study's pre-test comprised 40 words chosen from the Tieng Anh 10 Bright(textbook and workbook) published by Hue University Publishing House, a book taught in grade ten at a high school in Mekong Delta, one level above the participants' present level. The goal of such a test was to cross out terms that both groups' participants knew. Another tool utilized in the study was an achievement test. It includes all of the participants' unfamiliar words from both groups, a total of 40 terms. At the end of the research, the test was employed as a post-test.

3.3. Procedure

There were two classes chosen, each with 30 participants. The classrooms were identical in several ways: the students were both the same age and attended the same high school with the same English teacher. They were exposed to the same vocabulary items but in various ways during the treatment period. Both the Quizlet and the Word lists groups received identical tests and instructions at the same time. Because of time constraints, the researcher decided 40 vocabulary items. The words were all taken from the participant's textbook (Tieng Anh 10 Bright).For two sessions, Group 1 got vocabulary training through Quizlet, whereas Group 2 received vocabulary instruction via Word lists. In both sessions, the lesson was delivered in 10 minutes. Finally, two days following the operation, both groups were given a post-test to assess which group recalled more terms. Following data collection, students' scores were calculated by adding together the right answers. Participants earned zero if they did not know the answer, and zero pointtwenty five point if they supplied the correct answer. As a result, each participant's total score ranged from 0 to 10.

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Volume: 5 Issue: 5 September to October 2022 https://www.ijsmsjournal.org

4. Findings

This section presents the findings of the study regard to students'vocabulary performance before and after the intervention.

Two vocabulary tests selected from achievement tests for students at tenth grade were used to measure participants' achievement in vocabulary language. Two tests were nearly identical in terms of structure and difficulty. Scoring for each is ranked from zero as the minimum to ten as the maximum. Scores were transferred to SPSS 20.0 for data analysis.

4.1. Participants' Grammar retention within the two groups before and after the intervention.

In order to identify students' changes in vocabulary retention, the General Linear Model test was carried out. Initially, the result of control group's pre-test and post-test were collected and analyzed. With p= 0.00, it is confident enough to conclude that the pre-test's mean score and the post-test's mean score are different. Then, the Descriptive Statistic Test was performed to identify mean score of each test.

Table II:
Mean difference of students' vocabularyperformance within control group

Group	Tests	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Deviation
Control	Pre-test	30	3.25	6.50	5.02	.92
	Post-test	30	4.00	8.50	6.65	.90

As can be seen from Table II, participants' vocabulary performance in the control group changed following the research. The control group's mean score of vocabulary performance after the study (M post=6.65) was greater than that of the same group before the research (M pre=5.02). In addition, the mean difference (MD = -1.52) is statistically significant (t= -9.78, df = 34, p=0.00).It can be concluded that after six weeks of intervention, students' vocabulary retention of control group was slightly improved.

Subsequently, the General Linear Model test was employed to identify the difference of mean score of experimental group's pre-test and post-test (p=0.00) led to a conclusion that it was fully confident that the vocabulary retention of the experimental group was different at pre-test and post-test. Later, the mean scores of the pre-test and post-test were clarified by Descriptive Statistic Test.

Table III:
Mean difference of students' vocabulary retention within experimental group

Group	Tests	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Deviation
Experimental	Pre-test	30	2.50	6.75	5.06	1.12
	Post-test	30	5.25	9.25	7.26	.87

The mean score of participants' vocabulary performance of the experimental group after the study(M post=7.26) was higher than that of the same group before the study (M pre=5.06). Moreover, the mean difference (MD = -2.12) is statistically significant (t= -9.58, df = 34, p=0.00). The result indicates that there is a significant change in participants' vocabulary performance in the experimental group after the study. The post-test is significantly higher than the initial level (before the study). It can be concluded that after the study students' vocabulary retention in the experimental condition significantly improved.

4.2. Participants' Grammar retention between the two groups before and after the intervention

Following the collection of data from vocabulary tests, descriptive statistical tests were performed on students' vocabulary performance to investigate the minimum, maximum, means, and standard deviation of scores achieved by each group before and after the experiment. Table IV provided an overview of the descriptive statistics tests' results.

DOI: 10.51386/25815946/ijsms-v5i5p122

Volume: 5 Issue: 5 September to October 2022 https://www.ijsmsjournal.org

Table IV:
Descriptive statistics about students' vocabulary retention achievement

Grammar tests	Conditions	N	Min.	Max.	Mean (M)	Std. Deviation
Pre-test	Control	30	3.25	6.50	5.02	.93
	Experiment	30	2.50	6.75	5.06	1.15
Post-test	Control	30	4.25	8.75	6.65	0.90
	Experiment	30	5.50	9.25	7.26	.87

It can be clearly seen from Table IV that there were significant differences about the total mean scores for vocabulary achievement between and within the two groups before and after the experiment. Both of the two groups obtained higher total mean scores after the experiment. In addition, the mean score of the experimental group (M = 7.26) was slightly higher than the control group (M = 6.65) after the experiment.

However, the evidence insufficiently supported that these differences were statistically significant. T-tests must continuously be conducted to examine the significance of the mean scoredifferences.

Comparision of participants' vocabulary retention between the two groups before the intervention

An Independent Samples T-test was conducted to evaluate whether there is a significant difference in vocabulary performance between the control group and the experimental group. The mean score of the experimental group's vocabulary performance on the pre-test (M= 5.06; SD= 1.15) was similar to the mean score of participants' vocabulary performance of the control group (M= 5.02; SD= .93). The Independent Samples T-test shows that the mean difference (MD= -0.39) in participants' vocabulary performance between the two conditions before the study is not statistically significant (t= -1.49, df= 69, p= 89), which proves that the students from the two groups were at an equal level at the beginning.

Comparision of participants' Grammar retention between the two groups after the intervention

An Independent Samples T-test was also conducted to evaluate whether there is a significant difference in vocabulary performance between the participants in the control group and the experimental group after the study. The results demonstrate that following the study, the experimental group's mean score of participants' vocabulary performance (M=7.26) is greater than that of the control group (M=6.65). According to the Independent Samples T-test, the mean difference (MD= -1.80) in participants' vocabulary performance after the study is statistically significant (t= -2.98, df= 69, p= 00). This means that after the study participants' vocabulary performance between the two conditions is significantly different.

APaired Samples T-test was then run to check whether there was a significant difference between the result of the pre-test and post-test. The result revealed that there was a statistically significant difference between the pre-test and post-test (df=34, Pfinal= 0.00 < 0.05). From that, the researcher can conclude that Quizlet instructions had an influence on students' vocabularyretention. The students under the treatment improved their vocabulary retention.

Furthermore, data analysis from Table IV demonstrated that the students' vocabulary retention differed between the two groups following the intervention. After six weeks of intervention, both groups' post-test averages were significantly improved (Mpost = 6.65 for the control group, experimental Mpost = 7.26 for the experimental group). Figure 1 depicts the progress of both the control and experimental groups.

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Volume: 5 Issue: 5 September to October 2022 https://www.ijsmsjournal.org

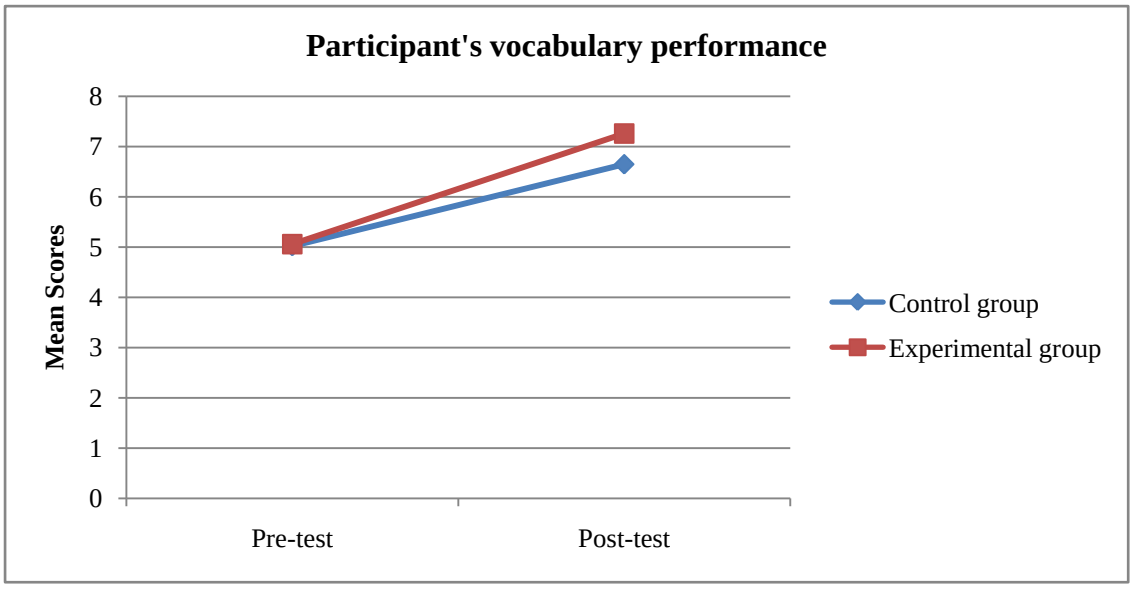

Figure 1: Summary of participant's vocabulary retention performance before and after the study

Figure 1 clearly shows that the mean score of the control and experimental groups before treatment is practically the same, at 5.02 and 5.06, respectively. After treatment, the mean score of the control and experimental groups is substantially different, with 6.65 and 7.26, respectively. That is, following the intervention, the experimental group's mean score is 2.20 greater than the control group. Results illustrated that the line of the mean score of the post-test of experimental group was growing up from 5.06 to 7.26, which can be highlighted that there was an increase in students' vocabulary retention performance after the intervention.

5. Discussion

The researcher had observed the effects of Quizlet in this study. This research was conducted by two groups. One of which was designated as an experimental group, and another as a control group. The experimental group received Quizlet instructions, while the control group did not. Vocabulary performance participants who used Quizlet had positive effects on vocabulary retention after six weeks of testing. Moreover, the research questions were clearly answered by the findings.

Results of the study were consistent with the findings of many studies, according to Ashcroft and Imrie (2016), the increased capability provided by the digitalization of flashcards can change students' vocabulary learning practice. Kose, Cimen, and Mede (2016) conducted four weeks monitoring and interviewing 42 students who used Quizlet as a vocabulary learning tool to investigate learners' perceptions of Quizlet's usefulness. The findings revealed that the majority of students thought Quizlet was useful for learning definitions, synonyms, and pronunciation.

Also, the findings of the present study were in line with Through an experimental research methodology, Andarab (2017) assessed the effect of utilizing Quizlet flashcards on EFL learners' vocabulary learning. The study's findings revealed a considerable difference in the scores of the two groups, with the experimental group's participants using online Quizlet flashcards to learn. His study's findings corroborated the claim that students might increase their learning by using Quizlet.

The current study found that teaching vocabulary items using Quizlet instructions resulted in higher understanding among EFL learners. Quizlet instructions enhanced learners' incentive to improve their vocabulary memory. In addition to being creative for the study's participants, Quizlet may give possibilities for them to be more effective in their vocabulary acquisition.

6. Conclusion

The study's findings demonstrated the influence of applying Quizlet instructions on EFL learners' vocabulary acquisition of language; thus, teachers should recognize the worth and usefulness of Quizlet in

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Volume: 5 Issue: 5 September to October 2022 https://www.ijsmsjournal.org

teaching vocabulary and other parts of English language. Vocabulary is a crucial aspect of any language education and learning. And the kids must constantly acquire new terms as they study structure and practice sound system, yet the majority of the pupils are uninterested and unmotivated. As a result, the author employs Quizlet as one of the instructional tactics that assists students in a variety of ways.

The success of Quizlet as an e-learning tool in boosting vocabulary acquisition may be linked to the growing importance of information technology in many parts of life. New generations of students are accustomed to doing the majority of their everyday duties using smart gadgets connected to the internet. Furthermore, Quizlet is an ideal learning environment that may deliver active learning both inside and outside of the classroom. Within the classroom, the live learning mode provides effective collaborative experimentation to students who are forced to share information and trade answers to vocabulary problems in a competitive spirit with other groups of students, transforming learning into an active cooperative process. Furthermore, Quizlet's study sets are designed to satisfy the needs of self-directed learners. Learners can perform different learning tasks, assess their vocabulary acquisition, and gamify the vocabulary learning process. These features of Quizlet and the findings of this research and other studies imply that Quizlet can be considered a good candidate for both teachers and students for vocabulary instruction and learning.

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Volume: 5 Issue: 5 September to October 2022 https://www.ijsmsjournal.org

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