

# THE EFFECT OF USING KAHOOT! FOR TEACHING ENGLISH

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**Abstract:** Kahoot! Is the most popular game-based learning platform among language teachers. The present paper is one of the studies which is dedicated learning the effects of the Kahoot! for learning English. The article presents the results of the using Kahoot for learning, and more specifically, on how Kahoot! affects learners, performance, engagement and motivation.

**Key words:** Kahoot!, student response system, game-based learning, teaching English

## INTRODUCTION

It is difficult to keep the students' concentration and engagement during the lessons. According to Liu, lack of motivation can result in a reduction of learning outcomes and a negative atmosphere in the classroom. (2012) This challenge is usually even a bigger problem in higher education with little interaction in mixed-ability groups. Butler (1992) argues that educational research has shown that students who are actively involved in the learning activity will learn more than passive students.

According Steiner & Snell (1999), there are multiple approaches for making lectures more interactive, including breaking the class into smaller groups, questioning the audience, using student response systems (SRS), introduce cases the students can work on, use written material, organizing debates, reaction panels and guest talks, using simulations and role-plays, using video, audiovisual aids, and learning technologies.

Game-based learning is another advancement in learning technology. James Paul Gee argues that well-designed video games are efficient learning machines, as they motivate and engage the players in such a way that they are learning without

being aware of it (Gee, 2003). Games can be beneficial for academic achievement, motivation, and classroom dynamics (Sharples, 2000).

Several SRSs have introduced game-features to increase the engagement of the students, but Kahoot! was the first SRS designed to provide a game experience using game design principles from theory on intrinsic motivation (T. W Malone, 1981) and game flow (Sweetser & Wyeth, 2005).

## **MAIN PART**

Kahoot! is a combination of using audience responses, role-plays and, using video and audiovisual aids. The motivation for this literature study was to investigate the effect of combining the concept of a student response system and a video game. Although other SRSs include game-features, as far as we know, only Kahoot! has been designed from ground up as a video game (Wang, 2015).

The concept of Kahoot! is to combine an SRS, the existing technical infrastructure in universities, the fact that students are bringing their own digital devices, social networking, and gaming into one learning platform. The goal of Kahoot! is to increase engagement, motivation, enjoyment, and concentration to improve learning performance and classroom dynamics.

Boredom in a computer learning environment can cause inferior learning and problem behavior (Baker, D'Mello, Rodrigo, & Graesser, 2010). Kahoot! is a game-based learning platform used to review students' knowledge, for formative assessment or as a break from traditional classroom activities. As of 2019, over 2.5 billion people from more than 200 countries have played Kahoot! (Vick, 2019).

Since the platform was released in 2013, there have been published many studies on the effect of using Kahoot! in the classroom, but so far, there has not been any analysis of the results published by these studies at large. This article presents the results of using Kahoot! for learning, its effects the students' motivation, engagement, concentration and enjoyment.

Kahoot! is a game-based student response system (GSRS) where the classroom is temporarily transformed into a game show, where the teacher is the game show host, and the students are the contenders (Wang, 2015). The platform is a result of

the Lecture Quiz research project initiated at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology in 2006, where multiple prototypes were developed and evaluated through experiments over several years (Wang, Ofsdal, & Morch-Storstein, 2007).

Experiments with the early prototypes showed that Lecture Quiz increased student motivation, engagement, and perceived learning through entertaining social learning activities. In fall 2012, a start-up company was founded to develop a new game-based learning platform from the ground up named Kahoot! based on Lecture Quiz. The Kahoot! game-based learning platform was released in September 2013. Essential requirements for the platform was that it should be straightforward for teachers to create own content, play quizzes and assess the students, and for the students to join without need to register, play without embarrassment (anonymously), have fun, be competitive, and learn (Wang, 2015).

The author (henceforth “the instructor”) taught the Business English Reading course which makes the object of the present account for the first term in 2020. It was the course of Business School and it was for all undergraduate students which are divided into three groups, irrespective of their English proficiency. The classes were comprised of seventeen undergraduate freshers. The overall English proficiency ranged from elementary to pre-intermediate and the level of student motivation was moderate. The main coursebook used was Market Leader Pre-intermediate 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition (Pearson Education Limited). The instructor used a student-centered approach which emphasized the integration of listening, reading, writing and speaking skills. Although the name of the module is BER (Business English Reading), the instructor believes in teaching English in an integrated way. It was the intensive course; the instructor should conduct lessons every day and each lesson last only 50 minutes. Since, it is a pandemic period, the instructor has to conduct Zoom lessons for online learners at the same time. During Zoom sessions, online learners are usually active during the Kahoot! games not during the other parts of the lessons. It was the intensive course; the instructor should conduct lessons every day and each lesson last only 50 minutes. Hence, the instructor did not want to include the Kahoot! at the beginning in the process of

conducting lessons.

However, after students' reaction, the instructor changed her mind and added the Kahoot! each week in order to stimulate the students to concentrate, engage and motivate as well as utilize their language skills. The Kahoot! games were made by the instructor according to the topics of the course book at the beginning of the term, later the instructor found out the function of Discover in the Kahoot platform! and adapted ready games for her purposes. Moreover, collected and adapted the Kahoot! games could give the access of the pro version functions of the platform to the instructor and learners.

There are some feedback and comments of students: "Kahoot! is very interesting game, always funny competitions with groupmates, interesting way to learn grammar or material related to the topic, let's play more and more", "The Kahoot! is more interesting than Padlet or WordWall. It is so funny to play the Kahoot!", "The Kahoot is always interesting, but it makes me rush and guess. Sometimes, I am stressed because I want to win", "I think, our class wakes up when we play the Kahoot! Because, it is so interesting!" and "Kahoot! really help us to repeat and revise topics carefully".

From the comments it can be concluded that Kahoot! has a positive effect on learning compared to other tools and approaches in terms of the classroom dynamics, engagement and motivation. However, students' anxiety should be taken into consideration. Teachers are advised not to use the Kahoot! every lesson, because learners will get anxiety from a game that focuses only on points, scoreboards, and winning. On the other hand, according to some research the Kahoot! helps release stress and tension, it takes the stress out of learning, adds humor to class, and it contributes to feel safer when responding to questions and encourages participation without being judged. Teachers' and students' perception are also quite diverse in terms of the Kahoot! platform effects to learners' anxiety.

## **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, the Kahoot! can have a positive effect on learning compared to traditional learning and other learning tools and for various contexts and domains.

However, there are challenges and gap for improvement. There have been written several papers regarding the learning the effects of the Kahoot! platform, but there is a gap on empirical studies on classroom dynamics, teacher and student perception.

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