

GAMIFICATION IN LANGUAGE LEARNING: THE EFFECTS OF KAHOOT ON STUDENT MOTIVATION AND LANGUAGE RETENTION IN A LEARNING CENTER

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Abstract: Gamification has become one of the most effective techniques in modern education, especially in language learning. This study explores the effects of using Kahoot, a game-based learning platform, on students' motivation and language retention. The research was conducted at a learning center with 10 participants over the period of one month. During the lessons, Kahoot quizzes were integrated into English practice sessions to make learning more interactive and enjoyable. Observations and short interviews revealed that students showed higher levels of engagement, participation, and excitement during lessons. Furthermore, their vocabulary and grammar retention improved significantly compared to traditional methods. The competitive and fun nature of Kahoot helped students become more confident and interested in learning English. Overall, this study suggests that gamification, when applied thoughtfully, can serve as a powerful tool to enhance motivation and retention in language education.

Keywords: Gamification, Kahoot, Language Learning, Motivation, Retention

Introduction

In recent years, the concept of gamification has gained growing attention in the field of education, especially in language learning. Gamification refers to the use of game elements—such as points, competition, rewards, and leaderboards—in non-game contexts to enhance motivation and engagement. For language learners, these elements can transform routine classroom activities into enjoyable and interactive experiences. As technology continues to develop, educators have increasingly adopted game-based platforms such as Kahoot, Quizizz, and Duolingo to make learning more dynamic and student-centered.

Motivation plays a key role in successful language acquisition. Without intrinsic or extrinsic motivation, students often lose interest, especially when faced with repetitive grammar or vocabulary exercises. However, gamified activities like Kahoot quizzes can help students feel more involved, curious, and enthusiastic. Through competition and instant feedback, learners can monitor their progress, which leads to a stronger sense of achievement and continued participation.

This study aims to explore how the use of Kahoot as a gamification tool can influence student motivation and language retention. The research was conducted in a learning center with a group of ten students over the course of one month. Kahoot was used during English lessons to review new vocabulary, grammar, and reading comprehension topics. The researcher observed how the integration of gamified elements affected students' attitudes, engagement, and ability to remember the learned material.

Literature Review

Gamification has been widely studied in educational contexts over the past decade. According to Deterding et al. (2011), gamification is the integration of game design elements into learning environments to increase user engagement and enjoyment. This approach has been especially effective in language education, where motivation and consistent practice are essential.

Previous studies have shown that using game-based learning tools helps learners remain focused and improves their participation in class activities (Dichev & Dicheva, 2017).

One of the most popular platforms for gamified learning is Kahoot. Wang (2015) found that students using Kahoot showed higher motivation and better classroom interaction than those in traditional lessons. The platform's instant feedback and colorful interface provide a sense of excitement and achievement, which are key factors in long-term learning. Similarly, Zarzycka-Piskorz (2016) reported that Kahoot increases students' willingness to participate in vocabulary and grammar tasks, making them less anxious about making mistakes.

Gamification also positively affects memory and retention. Hanus and Fox (2015) noted that the use of competitive elements like points and leaderboards enhances cognitive engagement, which in turn strengthens memory recall. In another study, Bicen and Kocakoyun (2018) observed that students using Kahoot retained new vocabulary more effectively due to frequent repetition and emotional involvement during games.

Although many studies have confirmed the benefits of gamification, most have focused on university students or online learners. Fewer studies have examined the effects of gamification in smaller learning centers with limited groups. Therefore, this research aims to fill that gap by investigating how Kahoot influences both motivation and retention among young English learners in a learning center environment.

Methodology

This research employed a qualitative approach to investigate how gamification through Kahoot influences students' motivation and language retention. The study was conducted in a private learning center where English is taught to young learners. The participants included ten students aged between 12 and 16 who attended English classes regularly. The research took place over the course of one month, during which Kahoot was integrated into each lesson at least twice a week.

The main purpose of using Kahoot was to transform traditional exercises—such as vocabulary revision, grammar practice, and short reading comprehension tasks—into fun and engaging games. Before starting the experiment, students were briefly introduced to the platform and shown how to use it on their smartphones. Each Kahoot session contained 10 to 15 questions related to the lesson's topic, and students earned points for correct answers and quick responses. To evaluate the impact of gamification, data were collected through observation, informal interviews, and short quizzes. The teacher observed the students' participation, enthusiasm, and behavior throughout the sessions. Additionally, students' performance in mini-tests was compared before and after the one-month experiment to measure their progress and retention.

All participants gave their consent to take part in the study. The learning environment was kept natural to avoid any pressure or anxiety. The collected information focused on qualitative insights such as visible motivation, cooperation, and confidence during lessons. This methodological approach allowed the researcher to understand not only academic outcomes but also emotional engagement, which is a key factor in language learning success.

Results and Discussion

The results of the one-month experiment revealed a noticeable improvement in both student motivation and language retention. At the beginning of the study, most learners viewed English lessons as routine and sometimes tiring. However, after the introduction of Kahoot, their attitudes changed significantly. Students began to look forward to each lesson, asking the

teacher whether a new Kahoot quiz would be played that day. This excitement created a positive learning atmosphere, reducing anxiety and encouraging active participation. Observation showed that even the quieter students became more involved during the gamified lessons. The competitive nature of Kahoot motivated them to concentrate more and recall the correct answers quickly. The instant feedback feature helped students immediately recognize their mistakes, which made them eager to improve in the next round. As a result, the classroom dynamic became more interactive, and peer encouragement increased.

Regarding retention, students demonstrated higher levels of vocabulary and grammar recall in post-lesson quizzes compared to their earlier results. Many learners mentioned during informal interviews that they remembered words more easily because they associated them with the fun and excitement of the game. This aligns with the findings of Bicen and Kocakoyun (2018), who also reported improved memory retention due to emotional engagement in gamified lessons.

Another important outcome was the rise in confidence. Students were no longer afraid of making mistakes because the game setting made errors feel less serious and more like part of the fun. This emotional comfort encouraged risk-taking in speaking and faster learning. Overall, the findings suggest that Kahoot successfully enhanced students' motivation, attention, and retention by combining learning with play, supporting the idea that gamification can transform the classroom into a more dynamic and enjoyable space.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study explored the impact of gamification, particularly through Kahoot, on student motivation and language retention in a learning center environment. Over the period of one month, the integration of Kahoot transformed ordinary English lessons into interactive and enjoyable sessions. The findings revealed that gamified learning increased students' motivation, participation, and confidence, while also improving their ability to remember new language material.

The results clearly showed that gamification can make a significant difference in how students perceive language learning. Instead of seeing lessons as repetitive or difficult, students became active participants, eager to compete and learn. The positive atmosphere created by Kahoot not only supported memory retention but also strengthened teamwork and communication among learners. This highlights the importance of emotional engagement in education, as enjoyment and curiosity play vital roles in long-term success.

Based on these outcomes, it is recommended that teachers and language centers incorporate gamified tools such as Kahoot, Quizizz, or Wordwall into their lessons. However, gamification should be applied with clear objectives and moderation to ensure that the focus remains on learning rather than just competition. Future studies could explore the effects of gamification on other language skills such as speaking and writing, or examine long-term impacts on academic performance.

Overall, this research confirms that gamification is not only a source of fun but also a meaningful pedagogical approach that can enhance both motivation and learning outcomes in language education.

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