

## KAHOOT! IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

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### ABSTRACT

*Technological innovations have created various learning models and tools that can increase the effectiveness of the language teaching-learning process. Language practitioners now have various technological hardware and software to engage and optimise student engagement in the language learning process. There are a wide variety of learning software and platforms developed to assist language teachers in their teaching processes and help them create sustainable education environments. Research has shown that the infusion of 'gamification' software has the ability to influence and enhance language learning outcomes and create a positive learning environment. This paper reports on a small scale survey study done among 50 secondary students in an international school about their language learning experiences when they used Kahoot!. The study used a questionnaire with ten items using a five level categorical Likert scale. The results show that almost all the participants had positive experiences when they had lessons that integrated Kahoot!. Majority of the participants reported that they were able to engage actively in their language lessons when using the Kahoot! platform in their language lessons. Almost all participants reported positive experiences when they used Kahoot! in the language classrooms. Adaptive software and platforms like Kahoot! enable students to engage and actively participate in their language learning processes, and thus provide a more meaningful and rich language learning experience.*

Keywords English language learning, gamification, Kahoot! , ICT in language learning.

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### INTRODUCTION

In this digital era, technology has intervened in most aspects of our lives. In fact, technology has changed the way our world works and evolves. Technology has made vast changes in our personal lives, the business world and different industries in world (Dellos, 2015). It is fascinating to see how the intervention of technology in to every part of our lives and our environment has made a huge impact by promoting efficiency and enhancing productivity and quality to the works we do. There is no doubt that the intervention of technology into our education system is reshaping the future of education. The infusion of technology into our education has no doubt created various innovative learning models and tools that increase convenience and effectiveness of the entire learning process. Besides providing a great favor and benefit to students' the emerging of new technological hardware and software has equipped teachers with right tools they need in order to improve students' engagement into their teaching process.

According to a number of studies, technological tools such as computers, tablets, online teaching and learning applications have the ability to enhance improve students' engagement and active participation in the classrooms in an effective manner (Bransford, Brown & Cocking, 2007; Cox & Rogers, 2005; Kim & Reeves, 2007; Koile & Singer, 2006). As technology occupies every aspect of our lives, education contexts need to be sensitive to the changes and adapt according to the current needs of learners and their learning strategies and preferences. Therefore, teachers and educators should try to complement traditional textbooks with learning software in order to enhance students' engagement in learning.

There are wide varieties of learning software developed to assist language teachers in their classrooms. Adaptive learning software helps teachers to employ some variation on game elements to motivate, supply feedback and structure participation courses. Various researches and studies that involve educational settings have proven that the infusion of 'gamification' in the teaching and learning process has the ability to influence subjective experience as well as behavior and learning outcomes. The features of gamification based software such as being interactive and responsive make this type of adaptive software particularly suitable for English language classrooms. Studies should examine how students' experiences with such gamification based activities can lead to higher engagement in their language learning processes.

The rapid evolution of information era has given mutual power to technology to be spread all over the world at the fastest pace ever imagined. The requirement to invent high quality human capital is vital in order to generate high quality and level of skills, education, capacity and labor attributes. The Education Ministry of Malaysia, constantly strives to enhance curriculum and language learning and teaching approaches to develop human capital that would be compatible with the globalized world. According to the Malaysian Educational Blueprint 2013-2025, the Ministry strives to ensure that students are prepared with the required skills to face the global challenges through the application of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) as well the integration of information technology in the curriculum. Measures undertaken will increase students' interest through the exposure of new and innovative learning approaches and a better developed curriculum, incorporation of high order thinking skills which will aid in the increase of teaching tools utilization thus ensuring the relevance of the content associates with everyday life.

Most teachers have started integrating technology into their classroom activities. Teachers have started this practice in order to attract and motivate students' participation in classroom activities. One such technological software that has proven to be invaluable in the language classroom is Kahoot!. Kahoot! can be used as a teaching tool as well as an assessment tool. This

paper reports on the perspectives of fifty students of their experiences in using the Kahoot! platform in their classrooms in an international school located in northern Malaysia.

## **GAMIFICATION AND LANGUAGE LEARNING**

Gamification is the concept of using game-based activities and the process of utilizing video games in order to engage its audience or solve problems (Icard, 2014). Gamification is applied in education by infusing educational assessment into video games. The creation of interactive games for teaching in classroom promotes independent and collaborative learning. Gamification also enhances critical thinking and problem solving skills (Icard, 2014). Gamification aims to make the learning process much more interesting and promotes a fun learning environment that motivates the students. Progress indicators in a game also make learning and self-evaluation much more visible. As games are often part of daily life among students, they are much more comfortable in gaming environment. This helps students to embrace the new learning tool. Using gaming mechanics as learning material develops effective learning experiences. Theoretically, fun and enjoyable gaming environment increases responses and participation among students' in the learning process thus generating positive learning outcomes (Dellos, 2015).

### **KAHOOT!**

Kahoot! is a platform that contains quizzes, discussions and surveys using gamification mechanics. Kahoot! was invented on 2013 and immediately became a global educational brand. Kahoot! possesses its own unique features of typical gaming and teaching models that are interactive and competitive in nature. The principle of Kahoot! is creating a game-based platform for students to enjoy learning in a fun, interactive and competitive manner. Instead of the traditional method of reading textbooks and notes, Kahoot! users are encouraged to learn, play and socialize in classrooms thus making the learning process an active one (Graham, 2015). Kahoot! is a game based response system in a classroom which is played by the whole class at the very time or 'live' time. An example of Kahoot! application in a classroom is during a lesson questions will be projected on the screen where students would have to answer the questions shown on the screen via technological devices such as a tablet, smartphone or computer.

Kahoot! recently added a video feature to its website, meaning that user can add a YouTube video to the question. The user would only need the ID of the YouTube video as well as the time to start and end of the video clip. Users can add more questions to their quiz by clicking the "add question" button. Users must complete the question before they move on to creating the next question. Kahoot! also gives teachers the choice to duplicate questions if the teacher wants to create a similar question. From experimenting with the website, users can add many questions to their quizzes or surveys. After all the questions have been created, users then can preview their questions. On this preview screen, they are able to reorder the questions that they have created as well as edit their questions if needed. When the questions are in the desired order, users then are able to adjust the settings, such as privacy if they want to make the Kahoot! public or private, difficulty level such as easy, intermediate, advanced and the primary audience which can be school, university, business and many more. The last step is to select a cover image or cover video. This is done in the same way of adding an image or video to a question. Then, the created Kahoot! is ready to use with students.

Students play the created Kahoot! using their own devices. The teacher projects the game on a smartboard or projector that students can see from a distance. The teacher then begins the Kahoot! quiz. This creates a unique game code that students enter on a device of their choice. When students use this code, they will be synced into the quiz that has been created specifically for them by their teacher. Students then look at the game board, which is projected to get the questions and answer choices. On their devices, students see the two by two grid with different colors and associated shapes. Depending on answer choice and speed, Kahoot! will give students a score. After each question a leaderboard will be shown to students, as well as overall leader after that round. Students continue to do this throughout the Kahoot! quiz to find the overall winner of the game. Students are able to view in real time their scores and how they perform against their peers. This gives them a feeling of competing with their peers in real time. Responses to questions are also given, i.e. an indication if the attempt is correct or wrong. Thus students, get instant feedback.

### **KAHOOT! IN THE LANGUAGE CLASSROOM**

The application of Kahoot! in the classroom has brought many beneficial values to both the teachers and students. Many higher education institutions have begun to invest in the adaption of technology application such as Kahoot! in classroom activities as an effort to streamline teaching approaches with the current technology advancements (Zhao, Sheldon & Byers, 2002). Research has shown that students' engagement and collaboration when Kahoot! is used is relatively high (Icard, 2014). Students enjoy participating using Kahoot! in language based activities as the content is appealing and fun. Students also compete with their peers in real time and this gives them a sense of competition. The features of Kahoot! also enable teachers to analyze and assess if students truly understand the learning material covered through the use of Kahoot! quizzes and surveys.

Kahoot! also allows teachers to evaluate the understanding level of students effectively and efficiently. Kahoot! provides teachers the ability to track student performance in the games and to reassess and make relevant adjustment in their teaching approaches in some instances. Teachers are also able to utilize Kahoot! that was initially made by public users or even create their own Kahoot! platforms for their very own teaching activities. In language classrooms, these features of Kahoot! and the flexibility offered by Kahoot! allow teachers to create unique lessons that are fun and effective as well as monitor their students' progress through quizzes and surveys.

The concept of technology application in classroom assessment is where students are able to participate, answer questions and receive instructions without having the teacher facilitate and interrupt the session (Moersch, 1998). Thus learners' experiences are said to be more dynamic, open-ended and multidimensional. Thus, in many higher education settings, the application of technology in classroom assessment is slowly becoming a common practice in giving feedback and assessing students' learning (Nicol & Milligan, 2006; Saade, 2003). Kahoot! offers a method of giving feedback almost instantly without the teacher having to interrupt students' engagement in the activity. For language learning, this is essential as students' are able to continue the task and assessment uninterrupted but yet receive immediate feedback. Students can also create their own surveys and quizzes to show understanding of the subject matter. Teachers can use this too as an assessment for student learning by looking at the type of questions the students created, as well as what answer choices were created and visual representations that were associated with the different questions (Medvedovska, Skar lupina & Turchina, 2016).

The interactive features offered by Kahoot! enhance students' engagement while physically sitting in a typical traditional class. Students do not need to have access to a computer lab. Traditional activities quiz, discussion and surveys can be conducted on the Kahoot! platform but in a more fun and interactive way. Bitner & Bitner (2002) states that teachers are highly encouraged to not only use technology appropriately but also use it to manage lessons and in assessments. The integration of Kahoot! in classroom activities creates a fun and interactive atmosphere in the classroom (Lee & Hammer, 2011). Overall, Kahoot! is a great gaming response system that has a variety of uses for teachers in the classroom because it is user friendly and open ended. Teachers can find a use that is appropriate for their classroom and students. Kahoot! is a teaching tool that teachers should try to implement in their classroom because it can have positive impacts in the classroom for both teachers and students. For students, Kahoot! offers a learning tool that is interactive and offers almost immediate feedback. The game based feature of Kahoot! is attractive for students and especially useful for language learning activities as it allows students to freely practice their language skills with their peers in real time as well as get actual reactions.

**METHODOLOGY**

The aim of this paper is to examine students' perspectives and experiences of using the Kahoot! platform in their English language learning classes. The study was conducted in an international school situated in the northern region of Malaysia. The total number of academic staff working in the school is 51 and the current total of student's enrollment is 412. The international school offers the British International curriculum at early years, primary, secondary and pre-university levels. Students in this school comprise of Malaysians and non-Malaysian. The students need to sit for an English exam to be placed in their respective classes.

The sample of the study consisted of 50 students. The 50 students were all from the secondary level, with a mix of Year 9, Year 10 and Year 11 students. Based on the nationality information of the student participants, 33 students were Malaysians and 17 were non Malaysians. From the total number of students, 29 of them were learning English as second language while 22 were learning English as a first language.

A self-developed questionnaire consisting of ten questions was used to collect data. The use of the questionnaire was to gather students' perspectives about the use of Kahoot! application in their language learning and their experiences when using the Kahoot! application. The questionnaire was administered with the selected 50 students during their free time before lunch break. There are two sections in the questionnaire. Section A consists of four items about participant's demographic information. Section B consists of ten items and measured using a five-point Likert scale. The items are all related to the students' perception and feelings about the use of Kahoot in their English language classrooms. The items were related to their experiences, self-motivation and interest towards their language learning when using the Kahoot! platform. Furthermore, the items also examine students' preferences of the available features of the Kahoot! online application. All the items were in English as the students were taken to be proficient in the language.

**FINDINGS**

This section reports the findings from the questionnaires distributed to the 50 participants from an international school. All the items in the questionnaire were tabulated based on percentages. The data was analyzed using descriptive data analysis. Table 1 shows the findings of the study from the questionnaire.

**Table 1: Students' Perspectives on Kahoot! in English classes**

No	Item	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	Kahoot! is a fun way of learning language subjects.	62%	38%	-	-	-
2	I feel positive towards my learning when I participate in Kahoot! games.	36%	58%	6%	-	-
3	I found that Kahoot! application stimulates learning.	46%	54%	-	-	-
4	Kahoot! is an innovative tool designed to engage me with learning.	32%	66%	2%	-	-
5	I feel motivated when I compete with my friends to get higher scores in Kahoot! game.	60%	38%	2%	-	-

6	The question sets available in the Kahoot! application are related to my lessons.	30%	64%	6%	-	-
7	Kahoot! team mode enables me to discuss and collaborate with my team mates.	48%	42%	4%	6%	-
8	I learn language lessons better when I can create question and answer sets and also provide illustrations on the Kahoot! template.	42%	50%	8%	-	-
9	Language question sets available in Kahoot! help me to improve my language learning in interesting way.	34%	48%	18%	-	-
10	I prefer my teacher to conduct Kahoot! activity at least twice a week.	46%	54%	-	-	-

Based on Table 1, overall for all items, participants mostly chose between 'strongly agree' and 'agree' for the items. The students have positive reactions to most items. The analysis of item 1 shows that 62% 'strongly agree' with the statement followed by 38% who 'agree'. None of the students have 'neutral' perception and neither of them 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree'. Based from the results of item 2, a majority of 58% students 'agree' while 36% 'strongly agree' that they feel positive in the process of their learning when they are involved in the Kahoot! activities. Meanwhile, 6% of the students are 'neutral' towards this statement. For item 3, all the students either 'strongly agree' or 'agree' that Kahoot! encourages learning among them with 46% and 54% respectively. These three items are concerned with Kahoot! being a useful resource for learning. Almost all students were highly positive their reactions for items 1, 2 and 3. These students consider that Kahoot! as an useful resource for learning.

For item 4, 66% students 'agree' and 35% students 'strongly agree' with Kahoot! as an innovative tool which enables them to be attentive in their learning. Only one student which represents 2% is 'neutral' towards this statement and none 'disagree'. 60% of students 'strongly agree' for item 5 that they are motivated when they compete with their classmates to be in the top rank on the Kahoot! game score board. This is followed by 38% who 'agree' and 2% with 'neutral' response. These two items are related to the features of Kahoot! as being an innovative tool and provides a sense of competition as students complete activities in real time and their scores can be seen by their peers. Most students found that the features of Kahoot! as being useful to them and provides them with ample learning opportunities.

For item 6, 64% students 'agree' that the questions set available in Kahoot! are mostly related to the lessons they learned in their classes. This is followed by 30% who 'strongly agree' and 6% who are 'neutral' towards this statement. The analysis of item 7 shows that most students 'agree' that the Kahoot! team mode gives them the opportunity to cooperate with their team mates with 48% and 42% who 'strongly agree' and 'agree' respectively. Meanwhile, 6% students 'disagree' with the statement followed by 4% who are 'neutral'. For item 8, the responses show that 50% and 42% students 'agree' and 'strongly agree' with the statement that creating question and answer sets together with illustrations on the Kahoot! template enable them to learn better while 8% students chose to be 'neutral' towards the statement. 48% and 34% respectively 'agree' and 'strongly agree' with item 9 that states that Kahoot! is helpful in improving their language learning in interesting way. Meanwhile, 18% students are 'neutral'. This is actually the highest 'neutral' response for all 10 items. Students may feel that they may learn and improve language better with other types of activities as well, however the positive response rate seems to be high as well for this item despite the 'neutral' stance. For item 10, all the students are positive towards this statement as 54% 'agree' and 46% 'strongly agree' with the statement that Kahoot! should be conducted at least twice a week.

The findings show that almost all students have positive experiences and feelings about the application of Kahoot! in their language classes. None of the students strongly disagreed with any of the ten statements. Only statement 7 "*Kahoot! team mode enables me to discuss and collaborate with my team mates*" showed a 'disagree' reaction by 6% of the students. Some of the students may have introvert personalities who prefer to learn on their own (Bitner & Bitner, 2002). Activities based on Kahoot! mainly need students to collaborate in order to complete activities, and therefore may be unsuitable for students who prefer to work alone. For most of the items, most students either agreed or strongly disagreed with the statements. This is indicated that these students had positive perceptions about the use and the features of Kahoot! in their own language classes.

The findings in this study are similar to a study done by Bicen (2018) where it was found that students, who were preservice teachers also reported positive reactions on the use of Kahoot! in their classes. Bicen (2018) reported that the preservice teachers reported that Kahoot! had a positive impact for them especially the features of instant feedback as well as they felt excited when engaging in Kahoot! based activities. Yapici & Karakoyum (2017) also found that their respondents who were preservice teachers had such positive experiences with Kahoot! in their own learning that they indicated that they would adopt the use of Kahoot! in their own classes when they start teaching. These preservice teachers reported that Kahoot! made their learning engaging and enhanced their learning experiences (Yapici & Karakoyum, 2017).

One factor that needs to be highlighted in this study is the context and sample of the study. As the research is done solely in an international school with students who are mostly proficient in the English language, this could be strong factors that impact the findings. An international school has its own international context. It's unique features that consist of multinational students, global curriculum and ample infrastructure are some of the factors that allow teachers and students to fully use and benefit from Kahoot!. Teachers in this school are equipped with knowledge and training about Kahoot!. Those who have no knowledge about Kahoot! are given training to use and integrate Kahoot! in their classroom activities. This school actively promotes the use of technology in its teaching and learning approaches. Infrastructure to support the use of technology in teaching and learning is

also constantly upgraded to meet with current changes and advances. Thus, the school provides a platform and instills an awareness of the importance of technology and its benefits in education. According to King (2017), information and communication technology enhances the quality of education. Teachers need to be trained to be able to make full use of technology to enhance their teaching and enhance students' learning experiences. These could be lessons to be learnt for most national schools in Malaysia, where more active efforts need to be taken to encourage the use of information and communication technology in language classrooms. This is the reality of the world today; students are digital natives and only focusing on traditional methods and materials may not be enough to engage these students in classrooms.

### **IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY**

Kahoot game in English language classrooms can help to cultivate positive attitudes, increase motivation level of participants, stimulate better perceptions and expectation of learners towards English classrooms, healthy competition, fun and enjoyable learning environment and actively communicating learners by mastering the required targeted language (Medina & Hurtado, 2017). Implications for practice include the need for teachers to have access to technology within their classrooms and feel comfortable utilizing that technology within their instruction. Kilickaya and Krajka (2010) found that although technology appears to make instruction meaningful to students, teachers are unsure how to incorporate technology into their instruction. Teachers should receive professional development to incorporate game-based learning platforms into their daily instruction to help students remain engaged, motivated, and to promote retention (King, 2017).

### **LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The present study may have several limitations. The sample size for this study was relatively small. There were only fifty participants from Year 9, Year 10 and Year 11 that participated in this study. Therefore the findings should not be generalized. Furthermore, the data was analyzed descriptively. It is suggested that future research carry out the research with a larger sample size for more accurate and reliable findings. More rigorous methods of analysis should be employed in future research. Furthermore, the respondents were all from secondary level in an international school. In future, primary students can also be included as participants as well as students from national schools to get a more realistic representation of the students in Malaysia. In this study, the Kahoot! gamification approach used was only for English language subject. In future, it can be used for different subjects via different applications, and its effects could be examined. Apart from that, the respondents were only asked about team and classic modes when there are actually a lot newer features exist which could be studied.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

There are some improvements that can be done in future to carry out research about the integration of Kahoot! in English classrooms. Future research can centre on how Kahoot! can be used to develop the different skills as well as exploring how these skills can be assessed using Kahoot!. Such research can shed more light on the experiences of the students in addition to examining their perception and attitudes to Kahoot! as done in this current research. Kahoot! can also be used as formative assessment after students complete a certain sets of lessons. Future research can also focus on the development of Kahoot! games by students based on the topics they have learnt and use these student developed lessons as competitions in the classroom. This is a way for students to become facilitator and cultivate leadership characteristics among themselves thus guiding their friends too. Moreover, other online game platforms too can be assimilated in language learning classroom besides Kahoot! so that there will be varieties and students will be more excited and positive minded and highly motivated to learn English.

### **CONCLUSION**

From this small exploratory study, it can be seen that Kahoot! can engage and provide positive learning experiences to students in their language classroom. Students involved in this study expressed positive experiences and outcomes in their language classes when they engaged in activities via Kahoot! in an organized and sustained manner. Teachers in this particular school also seemed to be using Kahoot! to assist in their language classes and ample support is given in terms of IT support and facilities. The students involved in this study expressed that the features of Kahoot! such as real-time based activities, competing with peers, allows them to track their progress and interactive nature.

Kahoot! allows teachers to be creative and enhances students' learning experiences as Kahoot! is a game based platform that provides students a sense of competing in real time. Feedback is also given instantly, thus students can monitor their own learning pace and development. Kahoot! is a modification and enhancement of the use of information and communication technology on education and games. Kahoot! is relatively easy to design and offers students a fun and interactive learning experience. It is very useful and effective to enhance the students' learning. As the results of this study show, almost all the students found Kahoot! to be an effective tool in their language classrooms and they feel happy and competitive when they are engaged in Kahoot! based activities.

Kahoot! is an excellent choice for teaching all levels of students, in any subject and especially when teaching in language classes. Students are eager to use their mobile phones or tablets and implement technology into the classroom. These e-learning tools provide a positive environment in the classroom, increase energy and add fun to learning (Drigas & Charami, 2014). Motivation is one extra element that has to be considered, because students demonstrate a friendly competition and cooperative learning (Malamed, 2012). Kahoot! is also an effective assessment tool whereby all the results, scores and percentages of the questions can be recorded online and downloaded manually too. All level of students can benefit by getting involved in game based

learning platforms like Kahoot!. The games created in the Kahoot! platform too can be kept for other classes and teachers can reuse and adapt the games for other classes in the future. Kahoot! provides positive learning experiences to students as shown in this study. Kahoot! is also a tool for teachers to engage their students in language classrooms and also to develop human capital that is adept to the changing technologies.

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