



Gamification in English Language Classrooms: The Case of Kahoot!

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Bilim, Eğitim, Sanat ve Teknoloji Dergisi (BEST Dergi); bilimsel ve hakemli bir dergi olarak yılda iki kez yayınlanmaktadır. Bu dergide; bilim, eğitim, sanat veya teknoloji ile ilgili özgün kuramsal çalışmalar, literatür incelemeleri, araştırma raporları, sosyal konular, kitap incelemeleri ve araştırma makaleleri yayınlanmaktadır. Dergiye yayınlanmak üzere gönderilen makalelerin daha önce yayınlanmamış veya yayınlanmak üzere herhangi bir yere gönderilmemiş olması gerekmektedir. Bu makale araştırma, öğretim ve özel çalışma amaçları için kullanılabilir. Makalelerinin içeriğinden sadece yazarlar sorumludur. Kullanılan fikir ve sanat eserleri için telif hakları düzenlemelerine riayet edilmesi gerekmektedir. Yazarlar, araştırma ve yayın etiğine uydıklarını beyan ederler. Dergi, makalelerin telif hakkına sahiptir. Yayıncı, araştırma materyalinin kullanımı ile ilgili olarak doğrudan veya dolaylı olarak ortaya çıkan herhangi bir kayıp, eylem, talep, işlem, maliyet veya zarardan sorumlu değildir.

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Gamification in English Language Classrooms: The Case of Kahoot!

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Abstract

Technology has been part of education in the 21st century. Especially gamification and online games have been integrated into traditional classroom instruction and they have found their place in language education. It is argued that gamification creates opportunities in which teachers and students focus on entertaining game elements that can be used in non-game settings such as the classroom. Kahoot! is one of the most commonly used online gamification applications that many teachers and students utilize in language teaching and learning process. The current review article focuses on teaching English as a foreign language with the help of Kahoot!. Therefore, the researchers give a detailed explanation of the benefits that Kahoot! brings to the language classroom for both teachers and learners, and how teachers can use Kahoot! for evaluative purposes. The researchers also introduce an overview of classroom activities in which teachers can utilize Kahoot! to develop students' language skills in the current article.

İngilizce Dil Sınıflarında Oyunlaştırma: Kahoot! Örneği

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Öz

Teknoloji, 21. yüzyılda eğitimin bir parçası olmuştur. Özellikle oyunlaştırma ve çevrimiçi oyunlar geleneksel sınıf öğretimine entegre edilmiş ve dil eğitiminde yerlerini bulmuşlardır. Oyunlaştırmanın, öğretmenlerin ve öğrencilerin sınıf gibi oyun dışı ortamlarda kullanılacak eğlenceli oyun öğelerine odaklandıkları fırsatlar yarattığı gözlemlenmiştir. Kahoot! birçok öğretmen ve öğrencinin dil öğretme ve öğrenme sürecinde yaygın olarak kullandığı çevrimiçi oyunlaştırma uygulamalarından biridir. Bu derleme makalesi, Kahoot! yardımıyla İngilizcenin yabancı dil olarak öğretilmesine odaklanmış ve araştırmacılar Kahoot! etkinliklerinin hem öğretmenler hem de öğrenciler için dil sınıfına getirdiği faydaları ve öğretmenlerin Kahoot! etkinliklerinin farklı amaçlarla nasıl kullanabileceklerini ayrıntılı bir şekilde açıklamışlardır. Ayrıca, araştırmacılar öğretmenlerin öğrencilerin dil becerilerini geliştirmek için Kahoot! kullanarak yapabilecekleri sınıf içi etkinliklerine dair örnekler sunmuşlardır.

Introduction

The terms digital natives and digital immigrants have been commonly used in the education field as most students today are digital natives or Gen Z-learners (Prensky, 2001). They were born into the technology era and have spent their entire lives being exposed to several tools of the age such as mobile phones, personal computers and various digital games and online platforms. Therefore, this phenomenon has become a discussion point in every stage of education and among educators and authorities as it has urged the institutions to stay up-to-date by adapting to the changes in technology, among teacher trainers to acquire new perspectives in teacher training, and among teachers to change or adjust their teaching methods and strategies in line with the learners' needs.

Along with the developments in technology, the amount of information and communication technologies (ICT) used in language classrooms to address the learners who are digital natives has increased dramatically. This increase has helped the learners teachers find new ways to practice language both within the classroom and outside the classroom. Integrating technology in language classrooms has been inevitable to help learners maintain their academic motivation. In other words, teachers have been urged to choose alternative ways to promote language learning with interactive strategies and methods (Nafis, 2020). However, it is not just using computers or projectors that can satisfy or motivate Gen Z-learners. Therefore, teachers and institutions have realized the need to utilize technological tools within the classroom. This realization has directed teachers and experts to use mobile phones and tablet computers to facilitate language learning. Consequently, it has created the term gamification, which can be described as the practice of using game-like mechanics in non-game contexts (Baptista & Oliveira, 2019), edutainment, and Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL), which is described as language learning that deals with mobile devices and technology (Sutrisna, Ratminingsih & Artini, 2018). Game-based learning has been discussed as a term in language teaching and learning. However, combined with technology, it turns into a powerful approach for the digital natives (Bicen & Kocakoyun, 2018). One of the most popular online tools that have been used in language classrooms for a while to catch up with the developments in educational technologies is Kahoot!. Therefore, this review article aims to offer an insight into how and why to use Kahoot! in English language classrooms. In other words, the present study is designed to investigate previous studies to clarify the benefits of using Kahoot! to teach English. It also aims to provide some activities and ways to utilize Kahoot! to teach English in the classroom.

Literature Review

Since the integration of Web 2.0 in language education, interactive and collaborative use of technology has gained popularity in teaching and learning. Various kinds of online content have become accessible for learners, and Ybarra and Green (2003) state that technology creates a precious language experience to the students when learning a language. Thus, students have been able to acquire language skills easily with technological tools. Besides online content available, some platforms like blogs, web-based communities, social networking sites, authentic or artificial audio-visual materials have become open to the use of learners to develop language skills.

Additionally, game-based technologies and gamification have gained more attention and importance with the development of educational technologies, ICT and MALL.

Game-based Learning and Edutainment

The new “technology-savvy” (Kukulka-Hulme, 2012, p. 247) learners demand more engaging and modern instructional approaches and media to replace conventional coursebook-oriented instruction and an unappealing learning atmosphere (Batsila & Tsihouridis, 2018; Tan & Liu, 2016; Tan, 2015). To resolve these concerns, teachers must aim to make lessons more interactive and find a new creative approach that integrates different digital technologies into classroom instruction so that these digital resources can create a bridge between traditional learning setting and the idea of student-centeredness (Nawahdah, 2018; Viberg & Grönlund, 2013). This can be accomplished by integrating games into the learning environment while also allowing learners to improve their “motivation, classroom interaction, and cognitive level” (Batsila & Tsihouridis, 2018, p. 565; Dehghanzadeh et al., 2019; Hanus & Fox, 2015).

It is also worth noting that teachers can perform their game-based teaching by utilizing some technological tools and devices to boost higher motivation in a relaxed learning atmosphere. It leads to the term edutainment, and Buckingham and Scanlon (2000, as cited in Okan, 2003) define it as a blended form that strongly focuses on visual content, stories, or gamification components through a more relaxed, less didactic way of instruction. Edutainment aims to engage learners' feelings through a computer display full of brightly coloured animations to draw and retain their attention. Buckingham and Scanlon (2000, as cited in Okan, 2003) state that the main aim in edutainment is to get the learners' attention via computer or technological tools used in the classroom. It depends on the idea that learning is fun.

The relationship between games and language education has been well-accepted and praised, and therefore, games have always been part of the learning process. Al-Azawi et al. (2016) summarize the features of games as being fun, fictitious creating different realities for the players, time independent and unforeseeable which creates curiosity. The researchers define educational games as the games designed and utilized for educational purposes. In educational games, the idea is to merge the elements of fun and educational concepts to boost learner's academic motivation and active participation in learning. Therefore, game-based instruction is more student centered compared to traditional instruction settings. It is believed that game-based instruction creates a better learning environment and higher academic motivation which helps learners increase their problem-solving skills (Al-Azawi et al., 2016). Following a student-centered motivating game-based instruction has brought the term gamification. Michos (2017) puts forward the definition for gamification as the use of game elements in non-game settings and non-game applications to create and increase motivation, concentration, and other positive components of games. Gamification differs from the idea of an educational game. While the idea of gamification is based solely on using game elements, the latter includes the games to achieve non-entertainment purposes (Dicheva et al., 2015).

The main elements of gamification include badges, leader boards, points and levels and progress tracking. Grant (2013) defines badges as “validated indicator of an accomplishment, skill, quality, or interest that can be earned in various learning environments” (p. 1). Various research on how badges affect student motivation and participation have presented positive outcomes. For example, Filsecker and Hickey (2014) conclude that there is no damage of external reward on the academic motivation of learners and their engagement in the learning process, yet it promotes learning. The researchers claim that the badges become effective tools when various factors such as learner profiles, learning objectives and the purpose of the tool are considered (Filsecker & Hickey, 2014). Leader boards are commonly used across many games and game platforms to increase engagement (Jia et al., 2017). They are among the important elements of games and allow the players to see their achievements (O’Donovan, 2012). Points are also widely utilized in gamified environments. Points are considered as an essential part of any gamified setting (Zichermann & Cunningham, 2011) and Carr-Chillman (2015) highlight that the having points as a game element in learning environment fosters active participation of learners. Finally, progress tracking is part of each gamified instruction (Šćepanović, 2015). It can be used as a feedback tool in educational setting since learners and the teachers can track the progress of each learner and the whole group. Progress tracking is generally represented in graphics, character upgrades or progress bars (Raymer, 2011).

Recently, several studies have paid attention to the effects of gamification in different language settings, in different educational levels, and with varying proficiency levels of language (Halloluwa et al., 2018; Stoyanova et al., 2018; Buckley & Doyle, 2016) as gamification provides many benefits for learners. Michos (2017) states that gamification helps the teacher modify the mood in the language classroom. It also increases the happiness level of the learners. What’s more, gamification helps the teacher increase the motivation of learners and improve their attention. With the help of gamification, learners become more engaged in classroom activities. It also creates a goal-oriented context within the classroom so that learners actively participate in the lesson. Finally, it makes learning fun for both the teacher and the learners. Zarzycka-Piskorz (2016) highlights the potential of gamified education to influence intrinsic motivation and states that playing a game together in the classroom goes beyond the traditional way of learning, which directly increases the motivation to learn a language.

Ali et al. (2020) conducted a study to investigate if language games can motivate adult learners to learn grammar or not. They adopted language games as a motivational strategy for teaching English grammar to a sample of 31 male and 19 female first-year undergraduates at a university in Pakistan. The participants were not studying English as a primary subject, their ages ranged between 19 to 22 years, and English was not their mother tongue. After teaching them grammar for one semester, the instructors—the researchers themselves—asked for their feedback on the use of games through a 25-item questionnaire from the students. The questionnaire included sub-sets such as interest, satisfaction, effort, tension, choice, usefulness, competition, and pre-and post-treatment experience of learning grammar. The findings of the study show that language games are motivating for young learners as well as adult language learners. It is suggested that games should be made an

integral part of students of primary and high schools. They also conclude that teachers should be trained on how to implement games into the classroom.

In the study conducted by Bolliger et al. (2015) in Japan, the researchers tried to examine how college students perceived digital games in English classrooms. According to the findings, many of the participants claimed that using computer games was a good idea. Ebrahimzadeh and Alavi (2017) analysed how digital video games affect high-school students' motivation level. It was found that utilizing online video games would increase learner motivation towards language learning. Another study carried out with second-year high school students in Norway proved that it was advantageous to utilize gamification elements in the language classroom (Cruaud, 2016). Finally, in the study conducted by Rachels and Rockinson-szapkiw (2017), a mobile phone application was extremely useful in teaching Spanish to elementary students.

Shortly, there are many opportunities that gamification provides for both learners and teachers. In terms of students, it can be postulated that gamification and gamified activities foster learning, increase learner achievement, promote learners' active participation, create a relaxed atmosphere where learners feel confident and eager to learn, triggers social and communicative skills (Yürük, 2019). From the teachers' perspective, gamified activities help teachers achieve their goals by creating an appropriate learning environment that serves the base for learning. Therefore, while preparing games or gamified activities, teachers should pay attention to some factors such as student needs, interests, age, language proficiency level, personality as well as keeping the activity fun. As Yürük (2019) states, when all these are considered, pedagogical importance of games and gamification cannot be underestimated.

Kahoot! as a Tool for e-learning

Gamification has been used by the language teachers recently and there are some platforms that can be employed in the classroom such as Socrative, Plickers, Quizizz, Quizgame, etc. Although there are numerous online sites and tools that can be used in language learning, Kahoot! is one of the most commonly used online platform. Kahoot! is a game-based student response system (GSRS) that turns the classroom environment into a game show in which the teacher becomes the host, and the learners are the contestants (Wang, 2015). According to Wang and Tahir (2020), Kahoot! is the students' most favourite gamification application compared to other gamification applications such as Socrative or Plickers. Kahoot! has been compared to these gamification applications in many studies. It has been found out that Kahoot! is different in the sense that it integrates various gamification components to make learning motivational and entertaining, provides learners opportunities to interact with the tool as well as other students, and boosts active student participation and collaboration (O'Brien et al., 2009).

Kahoot! is a free mobile application that is accessible for teachers from different disciplines and can be used at various levels. The platform is user-friendly and doesn't require sophisticated computing or programming skills. The teachers can easily create their questions according to the level of their learners. With gamification elements

such as points, a leader, winner, and feedback, Kahoot! can create an atmosphere where autonomy and cooperation can be observed. Additionally, it is digital game-based learning (DGBL) platform with more than 70 million users worldwide (Wang & Tahir, 2020). Kahoot! is mediated to be smart, easy to utilize without any former experience. Neither learners nor teachers have to download any software, yet it can simply be operated through a search engine on a computer as well as a mobile phone or a tablet connected to the Internet. Moreover, digital native learners will quickly understand Kahoot! and relate it with other apps they have already been familiar with.

As stated before, Kahoot! has become very popular among language teachers and learners, and there are some advantages of Kahoot! like any other game-based teaching environment. Kahoot! increases dynamics within the classroom, interaction, inspiration, and learning beyond what can be done by conventional methods including PowerPoint presentations, chalk, and lectures. Using Kahoot! in the classroom will help students pay attention and concentrate on the activity. Dellos (2015) stated that in Kahoot! a game-based learning platform is merged with a student response system, and it also functions as a formative assessment tools for both teachers and students. In the learning process involved with Kahoot!, the game may help students recall the previously discussed material, comprehend different perspectives, and enhance their knowledge.

Moreover, as stated by Rosas et al. (2003), individual student can engage with others while studying the content through an online platform by changing classroom dynamics with the help of Kahoot! It may also increase competition within the classroom. Then, when playing a Kahoot! game, the students will get immediate feedback directly related to their answer to know if they have got an answer right or wrong. They will analyse the responses and try to comprehend why they were right or not. This will consequently lead to a deeper understanding that helps the participation and retention of students' knowledge. It can be stated that integration of Kahoot! games in the learning process can help students increase their focus and encourage different interaction in the classroom.

Yürük (2019) states that gamified activities implemented in traditional classroom settings can be useful in language classrooms. She conducted a study that aimed to show that Kahoot! could be employed as a review activity and to gather students' ideas regarding the application in the educational setting. The study was expected to shed light on making a warm, relaxing, and entertaining classroom atmosphere for students. The research design was action research. Within the study, Kahoot! was used three times after every three units. As a part of the quantitative data collection phase of the study, a questionnaire with 20 items was given to 15 participants to identify the perceptions of the application. The results of the study show that students could participate actively during the lessons. They could excel the target language efficiently and had a good time while learning English.

The study conducted by Kaur and Nadarajan (2020) explored experiences of 5 language teachers and 50 secondary students of an international school using Kahoot! in their English lessons. The researchers administered a 10-item questionnaire and a semi-structured interview for data collection. Majority of the

teachers found Kahoot! efficient for teaching and assessment and stated that utilizing Kahoot! helped the teachers encourage active participation of students. The questionnaire findings highlighted that many students in the study had positive experiences with Kahoot!. They said they could actively participate in their lessons when Kahoot! was utilized. Generally, it was realized Kahoot! helped learners participate actively in their learning, and teachers employed Kahoot! to create a richer language learning experience for their learners.

Prawira and Mukhaiyar (2020) carried out a study to analyse the effects of using Kahoot! to teach grammar to students in the second year of a high school in Indonesia. In their study, they used a quantitative method which included quasi-experimental design with pre- and post-test. There were 20 participants in the experimental group and 22 participants in the control group. The scores of the post-test results of grammar teaching with and without using Kahoot! were the data for the study. The test results were compared to determine the efficiency of Kahoot! to teach grammar. According to comparative t-test results, it was observed that utilizing Kahoot! was useful in grammar teaching.

There has been plenty of research conducted on gamification among children at school ages, students at university, or pre-service teachers. Almost all these studies have highlighted that gamification impacts learning of their participants. Therefore, if teachers are not aware of the advantages of gamification, they may prevent themselves and their learners from reaching their aims. Keeping this thought in mind, Yunus and Azman (2019) researched to show that using Kahoot! would help the year-3 pupils retain the irregular English verbs. The researchers used a quasi-experimental research design with 3rd year pupils (N=35) and used the pre-test and post-test. The results were assessed descriptively by a sample t-test, and they presented that performances of students in the post-test showed improvement with Kahoot! in the classroom. Briefly, this study provides an understanding of how gamification can impact pupils' learning. Obviously, Kahoot! helps learners retain the previously learned topics.

Kahoot! as an Assessment Tool

Assessment is always part of the teaching and learning process, and it has two significant purposes: Summative and formative assessment (Ismail et al., 2019; Yan & Cheng, 2015). Formative assessment can be defined as “activities undertaken by teachers - and by their students in assessing themselves - that provide information to be used as feedback to modify teaching and learning activities” (Black & Wiliam, 2010, p. 82). Wiggins (1998) argue that “The aim of [formative] assessment is primarily to educate and improve student performance, not merely to audit it” (p. 7). Formative assessment embraces the tools giving feedback to teachers or students to help learners learn more effectively. On the other hand, summative assessments can be defined as “cumulative assessments ... that intend to capture what a student has learned, or the quality of the learning, and judge performance against some standards” (National Research Council, 2001, p. 25). Contrary to formative assessments, which are usually utilized to give feedback to teachers and students, summative assessments are generally employed to get a final assessment of how much students have learned and know (Gardner, 2010).

Formative assessment may be practiced in various forms, including paper-based assessment and assessment through ICTs, which is known as e-assessment (Bahar & Asil, 2018; Stödberg, 2012).

Games and gamification can be used in the classroom for assessment purposes as well. Mahbub (2020) investigated the perception of students' towards e-assessment through Kahoot!. The study conducted by Mahbub (2020) is an endeavour to illustrate the attitudes of undergraduate students towards Kahoot! when integrated into the undergraduate students' learning. He aimed to investigate the Indonesian undergraduate students' ideas of the in-class use of Kahoot! as a formative assessment tool. To this end, the researcher used a sequential explanatory design with 21 undergraduate students from a university in Indonesia. Also, an online five-point Likert scale questionnaire was used to examine their perceptions. Additionally, a focus-group interview was carried out to find out detect their in-depth feelings. The results indicated that the participants were happy with the integration of Kahoot! into classroom. The participants have a high level of perception towards Kahoot! insertion in the classroom. The results showed that the participants believed Kahoot! is attractive, entertaining, and can promote concentration. Additionally, it also reinforces the students' participation.

Furthermore, a literature review analysed online formative assessment and concentrated on variety of delivery techniques and their psychological advantages (McLaughlin & Yan, 2017). With the help of videos, pictures, music, scoring, and ranking, Kahoot! was identified as a game-like response system that is more vigorous when compared to other online tools. The main advantages of online formative assessment embody increase in scores and the improvement of fundamental complex mental processes including self-regulation.

How to Use Kahoot! in (Language) Classes?

According to Bergin and Reilly (2005), games have been used to promote learning since it is known that they catch the interest and "all of us learn better when we are motivated" (p.294). Therefore, to create an environment to help students actively get involved in the learning process and keep their motivation to learning maintained, Kahoot! can be implemented in different ways in the classroom.

First, Kahoot! can be utilized as a diagnostic activity. Before starting the teaching process at the beginning of the academic period, teachers can use a short Kahoot! quiz to understand what and how much learners know or remember from their previous learning experiences. Namely, teachers can prepare a Kahoot! quiz covering the possible target vocabularies or linguistic forms of the language level that have been taught and will be introduced in the academic year, semester, or the term. Then, the learners can be directed to work in pairs or small groups to do the Kahoot! quiz. That's how Kahoot! may replace traditional paper-based quizzes to detect learners' levels as well as guiding them to get to know each other.

Kahoot! can also be used as a warm-up activity before starting a new topic in class. The teachers can prepare a short vocabulary activity related to the unit's topic or the course material on Kahoot! to activate what learners

know about that topic. Integrating Kahoot! as a warm-up activity is also likely to change the classroom dynamic, which is usually driven by the coursebook activities in which learners are required to discuss the topic to activate their prior knowledge. For example, before starting a unit to teach cooking verbs, quantifiers and food, the teacher can include some visuals and multiple-choice questions, gap-fills, or True-False questions to activate learners' previous knowledge about the topic.

Besides, Kahoot! can be part of flipped learning. Learners can be required to read a text online or in the coursebook, listen to a recording or watch a video before the lesson, and later, teachers can check their understanding by using Kahoot! during the class (Michos, 2017). By implementing Kahoot! as a part of flipped learning, teachers can use class time more efficiently and help learners become more autonomous by taking up some responsibilities to maintain the lesson's flow. Additionally, with the help of Kahoot!, the routine and the possible boredom that may be resulted from typical checking understanding activities can be eliminated.

Additionally, Kahoot! can be employed as a review activity. The teacher can prepare a quiz or a questionnaire on Kahoot! to evaluate and identify students' level of achievement, and the teacher can provide feedback to learners (Michos, 2017). Instead of handing out traditional paper-based gap-filling activities to analyse how much learners remember the previously taught topics, they can be provided with a short review activity in which they not only revise the topic but also enjoy while competing with their peers.

Finally, Kahoot! can be utilized as an assessment tool in language classrooms. Instead of assessing learners through traditional paper and pen quizzes or tests, teachers can use Kahoot! to see the progress in learners. Learners can also be informed about their strengths and weaknesses that they need to focus on. Using Kahoot! as an assessment tool can be a new and enjoyable way to evaluate the students' learning and it is a less stressful way to assess.

Discussion and Conclusion

In today's world, technology has been an integral part of teaching and learning. Several researchers have argued that incorporating the online tools into teaching-learning wisely is likely to make the lessons more efficient, creative, and motivating for both learners and teachers (Westera & Sloep, 2001; Young, 2003; Blachowicz et al., 2009; Yuksel & Tanriverdi, 2009; Salehi & Salehi, 2012; Yunus et al., 2012).

It can be concluded from the previous studies (Batsila & Tsihouridis, 2018; Graham, 2015; Ismail et al., 2019; Plump & LaRosa, 2017) that using Kahoot! boosts students' English learning. To enhance the students' academic motivation and get an optimal result of the teaching, Kahoot! can help teachers create an appropriate classroom atmosphere. It offers an opportunity for the teachers to build an appealing and personalized learning environment, optimize learning, and enrich students' experiences in receiving and processing information and interaction. It also creates a competitive environment in the language classroom in which learners can work individually or in teams to achieve success.

Kahoot! can be used for different types of activities and purposes thanks to its being interactive, easy to use, and multifunctional. The online application Kahoot! is also proved to be one of the efficient tools for language learning as it encourages active, cooperative, constructive, authentic, and purposeful learning.


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