GAMIFICATION IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING DO YOU *KAHOOT*?

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Abstract:
The use of ICT tools in traditional classrooms has become essential in recent years, due to the rapid introduction of new technological tools (tablets, smartphones), as well as new programs and applications that offer a huge number of possibilities applicable in teaching. The combination of traditional ways of teaching with the incorporation of (on-line) games, or "gamified activities" can prove to be a good strategy in foreign language teaching. As a relatively new pedagogical strategy, gamification implies the use of game elements and game design techniques in a non-game context, such as classroom. The tool that will be presented in this paper is Kahoot, an online free application accessible for the teachers of all subjects and suitable for foreign language classes. According to the students' responses, positive results of this gamifying application would be: increase of motivation, easiness of grammar or lexical revision, better acquisition of new structures, and maybe the most important: increase of positive relations with the teaching subject.

Keywords:
ICT, language learning, gamification, Kahoot.

1. INTRODUCTION

The selection of teaching strategies in foreign language teaching might be accurate, in order to achieve successful learning, but it is also necessary to create a relaxed atmosphere in the classroom which will make all kinds of learners feel comfortable [1]. On the other hand, as in all aspects of human life, ICTs have become an increasingly indispensable medium in educational institutions where they can play multiple roles. Certainly, language teachers need to know how to relate the knowledge of motivation concepts and principles to their classrooms and to their instructional roles in the teaching and learning process [2]. That is why the concept of game-based learning and gamification[1] are having significant relevance in language teaching contexts, where the games do not only have a playful character but are also important learning support material.

1 There is a difference between concepts of Game-Based Learning and Serious Games and Gamification, because in gamification game elements add an extra layer over existing educational activities, while GBL and SG use games as the training or learning medium.

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DOI: 10.15308/Sinteza-2017-511-516

When used in non-game contexts, game elements can trigger motivation, effective player engagement, as well as persistence to win or learn.

For that reason, the main objective of this paper is to recognize the value and to encourage the use of gamified ICT medium as a teaching tool in foreign language teaching and learning. More precisely, to demonstrate that the digital learning platform named Kahoot can be used as an important didactic tool by which teachers can achieve different educational purposes: introduce, review and evaluate didactic contents, and- at the same time- increase the motivation, attention and learning autonomy of their students. In that context, teachers' skills in using digital technology and pedagogical knowledge are fundamental for successful teaching and learning. On the other hand, students' results and opinion is also relevant regarding "gamification", as well as satisfaction and achievement during their learning experience.

Gamification in educational environment

In recent years, debates on games, video games and education, which were traditionally based on discussions of their social consequences, have been much more creatively focused, particularly as a result of the emergence of two approaches: serious games and gamification [3]. However, games have always been recognized as an important aspect in the development of people: they stimulate creativity, encourage communication and socialization, develop body and senses, and serve as a manner of expression and emotional control. Play is a free and meaningful activity which is common to all cultures, and which existed before all cultures [4].

Although the principles of gamification certainly existed in a pre-digital world, the term gamification gained widespread usage around 2010, when the immersive quality of digital games incited remarkable innovation in the study of learning mechanisms. Gamification as a "powerful tech neologisms" is the first viable term to "encapsulate the concept of using game concepts outside of games" [5]. Nevertheless, gamification does not refer solely to playing. Recent studies in fields other than education (marketing, human resources, etc.) have highlighted gamification as a significant means to improve the production and creative talent of persons [6].

From this perspective, by gamification- we refer to the use of game mechanism in non-play environments and non-play applications, in order to enhance motivation, concentration, effort, and other positive values common to all games. This new strategy stimulates and motivates groups of people, like in classroom. Therefore, gamification in educational environment is gaining support among teachers, who recognize that effectively designed games can provide a significant increase in productivity and creativity of students, who are motivated by the reward-and-feedback systems that characterize the experience of play [7]. In that context, playing and learning share many common elements: both are goal-directed activities, that include rules or standards of behaviors, and present goals that constitute an object of aspiration for students/players [8].

Advantages of gamification in teaching and learning

All games generally share similar characteristics: they are voluntary activities with established time limits and a series of rules which induce tension, serve as an incentive, and engage participants. In that context, games also play an important role in the learning process that takes place during childhood and adulthood. Repeating data until memorizing them is certainly not the most effective way to learn. For that reason, motivation represents one of the most important factors in gamified teaching, as one of the essential aspects in the game engagement. That is why factors such as emotion, surprise and experimentation are some of the ingredients needed to improve knowledge [9].

According to neuroscientists, emotion is the secret ingredient of successful teaching and learning, fundamental element for both teachers and students because we can only learn what we love [10]. That means that the process of learning is dependent on the subject's sympathy for the topic. The interplay of emotion and cognition is indissoluble and play is a form of "disguised teaching", an important tool to stimulate curiosity, focus attention, and enhance memory, thereby promoting learning in the classroom.

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Some of advantages of gamification incorporated in language classroom are following:

- Modifies the mood within the classroom;
- Increases learners' feeling of happiness;
- Provides breaks from learner's fatigue;
- Increases motivation and improve attention;
- Increases student's engagements in the classroom activities;

- Stimulates a goal oriented activity;
- Makes learning fun.

That is the reason why game is often used in second language teaching, as a source of motivation and an incentive to practice the language.

Role of the teacher in the gamified language learning

Many teachers have long recognized the value of games in second and foreign language learning, and that they can be a very serious activity: offering an excellent solution to situations that teachers and learners face in classrooms all over the world: demotivation and detachment. The gamification of learning as an educational method motivates students to participate and be involved in the learning process. In that context, teachers introduce gamified activities in order to achieve different positive purposes: to create a relaxed and participative atmosphere in the classroom; to make students feel confident during learning; to evaluate contents of the teaching subject in more relaxed way; to encourage creativity and sociability, among other advantages [11].

For that reason, the importance of the role of teachers is fundamental in this process, in order to achieve their main objective: successful learning.

Language teachers' competences might be multiple: beside linguistic and digital skills, their pedagogical knowledge is essential ("TPACK competences") [12].

In that context, before using or creating a language practice or activity for the class, it is necessary to:

a) know what types of exercises to choose to practice a language or to evaluate the knowledge of a language;

b) know whether an exercise that we select for such a practice is viable, reliable, non-discriminatory;

c) have knowledge and skills in order to criticize existing teaching materials;

d) know how to create our own materials: teacher user-teacher creator [13].

Therefore, for well-prepared activities, teacher's guidance and clear objectives are fundamental in order to for the students to learn and have fun at the same time [14]. In that context, when teachers decide to use a gamified tool in the classroom, they should first consider the needs of students (their age, level, personality), then- that the ludic component is focused on objectives and content, and finally, that the activity has clear rules so that students do not have difficulties when they carry it out.

Gamification tool: Kahoot

In presenting different web tools for the purpose of gamification in our classroom, such as an ICT support for the learning process through the use of mobile devices such as laptops and tablets, MP3 players, smartphones and mobile phones (also called mobile learning), we would say that there is a really huge number of tools commonly used for classroom activities in modern language teaching[2]. Nevertheless, in this paper we will present *Kahoot*, a free game-based learning platform that makes it fun to learn (https://getkahoot.com/).

Kahoot can be used as a student response system which contains options like quizzes, discussions and surveys that challenge students to learn and make them participate in the learning process.

Figure 1. Linking Meauserments to Strategy[3]

Though it can be compared to tools like *Plickers* or *Socrative*, *Kahoot* is different, because it incorporates gamification elements, which make the learning process fun and engaging. It is not just a one-way teaching tool, in which the teacher creates questions and students are limited to answer in real time, competing with each other (hence the game-based learning). It promotes active learning of students, which influences students' engagement, participation in the class, and collaboration with other students, sharing knowledge [15].

Teachers can create their own Kahoots adapted to the needs, level of knowledge and interests of their students. Questions, along with answer choices, created by a

2 Plickers; Storybird; Quizalize app; Learn a language; Rockalingua; Classtools.net; Cerebriti; Lyrics training; Tinytap.it; Quia.com; Taskmagic; Textivate.com; Quizlet live; Duolingo; Classdojo; Educaplay; TinyTapit; Wizer.me; Quizizz; Tiger

teacher, are projected on a classroom screen or projection, while students submit responses using a mobile device (smartphone, tablet, notebook, etc).

Every Kahoot has a game PIN number, which the students have to type in their devices and then write their names (or nicknames), and then the "game" can start: students must answer 20 different questions or exercises, previously discussed in class (grammar, vocabulary, communicative functions, etc.) with the limited time of 20 or 30 seconds for each response. In this paper, the *Kahoot* quiz that has been created for a group of students[3] will be presented and it could be performed for the following purposes:

a) "Flipped classroom": Students are asked to consult information first (read a text on the Internet or in the textbook, watch a video, listen to a recorded material, etc.) so that later, in class, through the *Kahoot* quiz, teachers can check what students have learned and which concepts or structures have been less successfully understood or learnt.

b) "Icebreaker activity"[4]: before teaching a new subject or linguistic structure, teachers can make a questionnaire as a "warm-up" activity or introduction to the subject, to encourage the students' participation and engagement. This is particularly advisable option to apply in order to get students interested in activity and relax them at the same time, in front of the new topic or teaching subject which could be more complex or not that attractive educational content.

c) "Review activity": a questionnaire is made on the most relevant points previously worked on in the classroom, so that the students can be self-evaluated and the teacher receives feedback with all the necessary information on students' achievement, in order to refine his/her class planning and improve the teaching-learning process.

The example of a Kahoot online game, which will be presented here as a class activity, is the third type described above, named "Review activity". The students will "play" grammar and vocabulary exercises concerning the structures and topics which were introduced and practiced during the previous class. All the students in class, were asked to bring (or to share with a peer) their own device in order to perform this "digital-interactive-gamified-competitive" language exercise.

The chosen topic was "Spanish cousin" which was the title of a unit of the textbook, presenting the vocabulary related to food, Spanish regional cousin, habits, common expressions, etc.

The activity also contains grammar exercises aimed at practicing the Spanish conditional verb form (El condicional) which was introduced and explained in the previous class.

3 This example of practice with Kahoot.it online game has been performed with students attending the classes of general Spanish language course (level B1 according to CEFRL) at Singidunum University, Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Management.

4 Pedagogical model in which the traditional class, lecture and homework elements of a course are reversed (Alvarez, 2011). It implies active learning and students' engagement out of the class. Aaron Sams and Jonathan Bergmann are considered the pioneers of this way of teaching.

When the game is over, both the students and the teacher receive the results instantly and the feedback becomes immediate, through following questions: How fun was it? Did you learn something? Would you recommend it? How do you feel?

The scoreboard will display the top five results, and the students will be able to provide feedback about the quiz with a star rating, yes/no questions and smileys. Once they do that, teachers will be able to collect the entire information as an Excel file or directly on the Google Drive account.

Then, teachers can see the results of each student, individually, since this application generates an Excel sheet of each game. The document will show student's name, correct and incorrect answers from the total amount of questions, the final score and individual answer for each question. The overall performance: percentage of total correct questions, total erroneous answers and total score are also shown, in another column.

With this group of students the following results were obtained: 74.75% correct answers, and 25, 25% of the total responses were incorrect. Most of the students rated their learning experience very highly. It is visible through this questionnaire result – with 100% positive responses to the questions regarding learning, feelings and recommendation.

A	B	C	D	E	
Overall Performance					
Total correct answers (%)		74.75%			
Total incorrect answers (%)		25.25%			
Average score (points)		10688.29 points			
Feedback					
How fun was it? (out of 5)		4.60 out of 5			
Did you learn something?		100.00% Yes		0.00% No	
Do you recommend it?		100.00% Yes		0.00% No	
How do you feel?			100.00% Positive		0.00% Neutr

The results of students achievements (which were also very high), and results of their opinions about the learning experience are very important factors for teachers in order to be able to evaluate not only this specific activity, but also their decisions related to preparation of language class sessions. With these results that the game provides, the teachers can also comprehend whether students have more difficulties, or what aspects they have assimilated or learned well.

Conclusion

As a gamification teaching tool Kahoot is recommendable for all universities or educational institutions where there is a rapid connection to the Internet. Nevertheless, it is not necessary that all the students have a mobile device because they can perform with peers or in small groups, solving questionnaires, quizzes or educational games together, in pair or team work.

The main advantages of this tool that have been recognized are the following: a) No need for previous software, it is free and easy to use. b) Questions can be done without any complex work, on any topic or structure. c) Images or videos in questions, in order to incorporate a visual element like incentive for learners are also included. d) The answers are obtained from each student, or as group responses, depending on the form of questionnaire which was determined by a teacher. e) All responses are recorded and stored in an excel format, allowing the teacher evaluation and feedback.

On the other hand, technological innovation, and availability of technical and digital equipment does not imply a pedagogical innovation itself, because of the indispensable role of the teacher, who will be able to create an appropriate organization and strategy for a specific pedagogical task, where there are well-defined objectives, contents, methodology, activities and evaluation criteria. For that reason, *Kahoot* can have limitations from a foreign language pedagogical perspective. If not used properly, this type of activity can cause a bit of "fatigue" and demotivation (when used very frequently), or with insufficient clarity of questions and answers.

Therefore, it is advisable to apply this type of quizzes moderately, with clear and precise objectives, and always with feedback, in order to enrich the evaluation and improve the teaching-learning process.

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