THE USE OF KAHOOT! IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING

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Abstract:

Due to a widespread use of technology in the previous period, as well as the fact that the learners mostly belong to generations Alpha and Z, who are technology literate, there is an increasing need to implement ICT tools in the context of teaching foreign languages. Since the attention span of young learners is getting shorter, the teachers are trying to find ways to make lessons livelier and more engaging, which is not that difficult any more due to an abundance of online games at our disposal. One of the most efficient and most often used platforms in modern language teaching is Kahoot!, which is a free game-based learning platform, easy to use in all learning environments. This paper deals with the use of Kahoot! in foreign language teaching with the intention to prove that it affects the classroom dynamics, raises learners' motivation and contributes to more efficient acquiring of new language content. The comparative survey has been conducted in Radoje Domanović Primary School and Singidunum University, confirming that the impact of games on the learning process and motivation is the same with no regard to the age difference. The results indicate that the proper student engagement and interaction in the classroom increases the learners' willingness to attend classes and improve their knowledge. What is more, learners should be encouraged to make their own Kahoots! for homework, which could be a challenge and additional motivation in the process of learning foreign languages.

Keywords:

Kahoot!, language content, learners, motivation, age difference.

INTRODUCTION

There is a widespread use of technology in everyday life and it has become a reality for all generations, especially Z and Alpha. Generation Z is the generation which was born between 1995 and 2010, and the Alpha generation is the generation born from 2011 to 2025[1]. Generations Z and Alpha are "technology literate" generations. In other words, generations Z and Alpha are in the midst of technological developments that are identical to instant instruments (email, SMS, Facebook, line, path, Instagram, WhatsApp, and Twitter) and ignore the monotonous things[1]. Therefore, everything needs to be adjusted accordingly and our focus will be the educational context.

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In the past children didn't use to have mobile phones and it wasn't a real challenge for teachers to motivate them in the classroom, since the trouble with short attention span wasn't omnipresent as it is now. Nowadays, teenagers spend many hours a day playing games, being indoors, living their lives in virtual settings and feeling the urge to be amused all the time. Therefore, they are used to flashing images, music and sounds and it is becoming more and more difficult for them to focus on the teacher himself or the traditional tools used in the classrooms.

Over the past five years, the proportion of 8- to 18-year-olds who own their own cell phone has grown from about four in ten (39%) to about two-thirds (66%) [2]. Since even toddlers are given phones to amuse themselves and become acquainted with some games at this stage of their lives, it is only logical to focus on their benefits and try to implement them in the learning process. 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 [3]. In order to improve the process of learning in the contemporary educational environment, teachers are turning to online games as a way to improve rapport and boost students' motivation to participate. The combination of traditional ways of teaching with the incorporation of (on-line) games, or "gamified activities" proved 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[4].

However, it is not just the language we need to teach them, we have to do our best to form a good relationship with our learners from the early age and make a positive atmosphere so we can accomplish our teaching goals. The initial students' interest in learning a foreign language must be maintained and nourished, which can be achieved by the use of mobile applications in the teaching process, among other things. What is more, this way teaching materials wouldn't be considered the only acceptable resource in teaching anymore and therefore, traditional, formal and informal context of learning and activities would be meaningfully connected [5].

Although one may suppose that children are the ones who get motivated through games, the authors will try to prove that games can be equally efficient in the process of learning foreign languages at the tertiary level. There are numerous games at our disposal on the Internet, but one of the most efficient for both young learners and the adults is Kahoot!, since it can be adjusted to fit any level of learners, i.e., any level of language that is being taught. In order for any change to be successfully implemented in the classroom, teachers need to overcome their fear of the unknown and accept new methodologies with the same zest their learners have. Becker (2007) notes that instructors cannot be expected to embrace games as a tool for learning unless they have a sound understanding of the potential of games and the confidence in their abilities to employ them [6].

The comparative survey has been conducted in Radoje Domanović Primary School and Singidunum University in order to try to prove that the impact of games on the learning process and motivation is the same with no regard to the age difference. What is more, the authors will try to determine the advantages and disadvantages of using Kahoot! as a teaching tool.

2. KAHOOT!

Kahoot! is a game-based learning platform which affects the classroom dynamics, boosts students' motivation to participate and therefore learn, and improves the relationship between teachers and students[7]. It can be used to review students' knowledge and it is a way of formative assessment and a refreshing break from traditional classroom activities in which teachers write on the board and students daydream. Kahoot! is a tool which is easy for teachers to make and as easy for students to use. The platform gives both teachers and learners an opportunity to make an interactive classroom setting participating in competitive knowledge games using the devices (computer, mobile phones, tablets) and a good Internet connection. It provides teachers with the opportunity to create their own quizzes and surveys, or to use the existing quizzes made accessible for public use. Scores are displayed at the end of each game and teachers are able to save the information in a digital document. As for the learners (players), they are not required to register for a Kahoot! account and will instead be provided with the game PIN prior to joining a specific game at https://kahoot.it/#/ as directed by their teacher (game host) [8].

It can be used as an icebreaker activity, at the beginning of the lesson, during the lesson itself or at the end of it. If there is a lack of time or you would rather use somebody else's Kahoot, you can click on Discover and

choose the right one among the abundance of already made quizzes, that people around the world are willing to share. However, we always advise making your own Kahoot, since it doesn't take too much time to do it and you can adjust it according to your own wishes and needs. After they overcome the initial anxiety, learners become relaxed and willing to participate in the game, partly because the presented graphs do not show individual mistakes and partly because only the ones who give the correct answers are shown on the screen. It improves both teacher-learner interaction and interaction among learners and consequently affects the overall classroom atmosphere which is the first step in the learning process. It releases the learners from stress and encourages wider participation, willingness to ask if explanation is needed and creates lively classroom atmosphere as opposed to traditional classrooms in which discussions are generally dominated by a small number of extroverted learners.

There is also the competitive factor in games such as Kahoot! which motivates learners to participate, especially because only your positive scores are rewarded and published, while the negative answers remain unseen and unnoticed. Since there is a break after each question, teachers are given the opportunity to provide students with additional information, or repeat and explain the question already done. Students with different learning needs can also participate in Kahoot! since it uses different colors and shapes, the questions are simple due to the limitation of the number of characters and the teachers who actively participate can read both the questions and the answers to their students.

Learners are often eager to make their own Kahoot! and share it with their peers, which is also a part of learning process. Students can also create their own Kahoot! quizzes as an assignment or to study for a test. Kumar (1999) reinforces this methodology when he notes that computer games as educational tools have an intrinsic motivation factor that encourages curiosity and creates the impression that students are in control of their own learning [9].

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. STUDY AIMS AND HYPOTHESES

The aim of this paper is to determine whether the use of Kahoot! increase learners' motivation when it comes to acquiring new language content, regardless of their age. Prior to the research, the following hypotheses were set:

- ◆ The authors' assumption is that with no regard to the age of learners, the use of Kahoot! increases their motivation to acquire new language content.
- ◆ The use of Kahoot! creates more dynamic atmosphere in the classroom and contributes to the interactive environment.
- ◆ The use of Kahoot! contributes to more efficient acquiring of new language content.
- ◆ The authors' view is that there are more advantages than disadvantages of playing Kahoot! in the classroom.

3.2. RESPONDENTS

The comparative study was conducted in Radoje Domanović Primary School and Singidunum University and the survey included 55 pupils from elementary school and 110 students from the Faculty of Business and the Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Management. The research was conducted in March 2022. The survey was anonymous and all the respondents willingly gave their contribution. Students were asked to fill in the online questionnaire, whereas pupils were given the same in the paper form.

4. RESEARCH RESULTS

The authors' intention was to try to prove that the online games implementation in the learning process is equally beneficial for both young and adult learners. Based on the research results, the perception of the effect of games on the motivation of learners does not change regardless of the age, level of education, experience or the intention of respondents. Another point worth mentioning is that foreign language learners become aware of the benefits of games and willingly and intentionally implement them in the learning process at the tertiary level of education whereas primary school pupils focus more on the entertaining aspects of the game. Furthermore, the vast majority of respondents aged 11-15 and the respondents aged 19-23 find playing Kahoot! interesting and fun, which is definitely the first step to making the atmosphere and the rapport in the classroom better, thus providing the good basis for acquiring knowledge and increasing motivation of all the participants in the learning process.

4.1. THE POSITIVE ASPECTS OF PLAYING KAHOOT!

Almost all the respondents agree that the implementation of Kahoot! in the classroom is useful and fun, which supports the statement that it is both a leisure time activity and a learning tool. The main difference between the respondents from primary school and university is that pupils are willing to play games, namely Kahoot! all the time, with no difference whether it is played at the beginning, in the middle or at the end of the lesson, whereas most students consider that playing games should be done at the end of the lesson, when the learners' concentration is on the lowest level.

Figure 1 – Students' answers: Do you find playing Kahoot! interesting and fun?

Figure 2 – Pupils' answers: Do you find playing Kahoot! interesting and fun?

We find it interesting that pupils prefer learning new vocabulary primarily from the book, which could be the result of teaching methods in the traditional classroom. On the other hand, students consider that the combination of both options is the most efficient, which is in connection with their ability and experience in using the variety of different sources when gathering information in the learning process. When asked to make comparison between vocabulary and grammar Kahoot! 42% of pupils thought that learning vocabulary was easier than grammar, 47% could not see the difference and found it

equally difficult and only 11% considered memorising grammar easier. When asked the same question, 70.9% of students found playing vocabulary easier that playing grammar Kahoot!. Only 9.1% of them prefer grammar and 20% said that they did not see the difference between them. A small percentage of all the respondents agreed that learning grammar is better than learning vocabulary through games like Kahoot!, which proves that for some aspects of learning process, especially when it comes to grammar, traditional way of teaching is still irreplaceable.
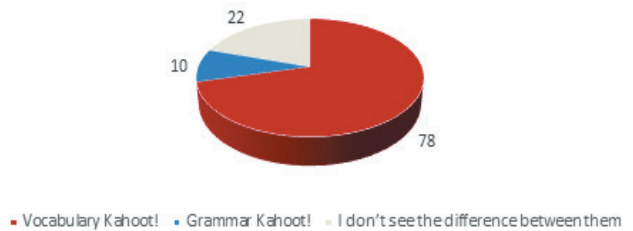
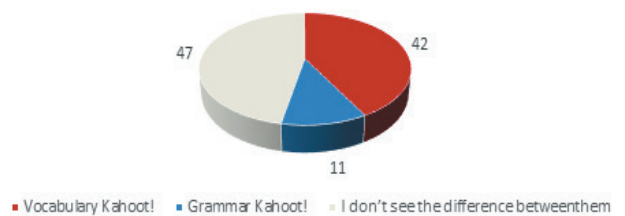Figure 3 – Students' answers: Do you find grammar or vocabulary Kahoot! easier to play?

Figure 4 – Pupils' answers: Do you find grammar or vocabulary Kahoot! easier to play?

We have also tackled the issue of competitiveness as a powerful source of motivation. It can trigger students' willingness to participate and thus improve their engagement in the classroom, which is supported with our research results. 64% of pupils and 73.6% of students always do their best in order to win, some of them even revise vocabulary prior to the lesson so as to have better score. Negative effect of competitiveness has been noticed only among 24% of pupils and 12.7% of students, either because they cannot think under pressure or they just focus on being fast.

When it comes to music as an additional feature of Kahoot!, the results show that the respondents are pretty indifferent and notice it only until the quiz starts and just a small percentage of them find music a distraction.

However, most of them agree that pictures are useful and helpful.

One of the research questions is connected with the learners' active engagement in the learning process, which means that they are given a chance to make their own Kahoot!. 53% of pupils and 45.5% of students find making their own Kahoot! a great way to learn new vocabulary and grammar, 22% of pupils and 38.2% of students agree with this statement but think that it takes a lot of time to do it and 25% of pupils and 16.4% state that they can only study from the book.
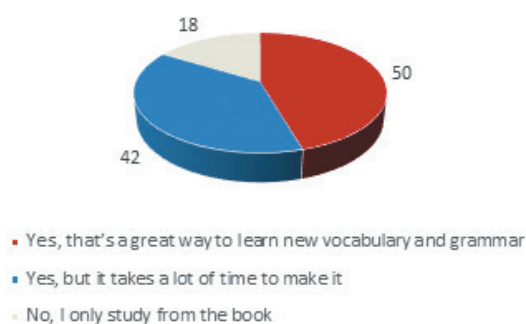
Figure 5 – Students' answers: Do you find making your own Kahoot! useful in the learning process?
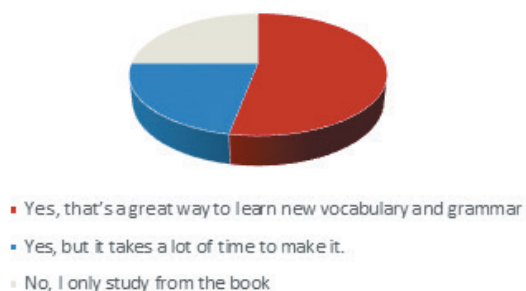

Figure 6 – Pupils' answers: Do you find making your own Kahoot! useful in the learning process?

4.2. THE NEGATIVE ASPECTS OF PLAYING KAHOOT!

When asked about negative aspects of playing Kahoot!, respondents stated various disadvantages:

- 40% of pupils and 43.6% of students sometimes have the Internet connection problem.
- 25% of pupils and 38.2% of students sometimes know the answer to the question, but due to bad Internet connection do not write the answer on time.
- 42% of pupils and 38.2% of students think that the time limit for the questions is short and that they are under pressure to give the correct answer before others.
- 18% of pupils and 17.3% of students sometimes have trouble reading the questions on the screen.
- 20 % of pupils and 16% of students become upset if they do not know the answer.
- 29% of pupils and 11.8% of students sometimes find the topics of Kahoot! boring.
- 18% of pupils and only 7.3% of students are sometimes more focused on picking their nickname than playing a game itself.
- 16% % of pupils and 6.4% of students say that the questions are difficult.
- 13% of pupils and 2.7% of students think that Kahoot! lasts for too long.

5. CONCLUSION

First of all, the authors are of the opinion that the study represented in this paper is relevant, having in mind the total number of respondents who willingly participated and contributed to our research. The sample size of primary school pupils is solid, since 55 respondents participated, while the number of university students who were part of a survey, which is 110, is more than enough for us to come to a relevant conclusion.

Our research unequivocally confirms that innovative ways of learning foreign languages, such as Kahoot! or any other easily used online game, are appealing to learners. They undeniably bring fun into the classroom thus enabling the creation of friendly atmosphere which boosts learners' motivation to participate, interact and effortlessly acquire new language material. Based on learners' answers, we have come to a conclusion that playing games should be carefully implemented in the learning process in combination with the traditional

ways of teaching, especially when grammar is concerned. Both pupils and students find playing grammar Kahoot! more difficult than playing vocabulary Kahoot!, especially since they can connect pictures with words, which they find extremely useful.

Another factor in favour of implementing online games in the learning process is that the learners' fascination with the game element does not change or diminish with time. The only difference is that pupils enjoy playing games all the time, without realising the importance of traditional ways of studying. However, students are well aware of the learning process and even though they enjoy having the fun element in the classroom, they prefer to do it at the end of the lesson since it is then that they lose focus and energy to process new pieces of information.

Even though there are some disadvantages to playing online games in the classroom, we have come to a conclusion that the only real problem is the Internet connection and some other technical problems. Only few respondents had negative remarks concerning the content, the difficulty or the length of Kahoot!.

Taking everything into consideration, the authors' view is that games like Kahoot! should be implemented in the learning process but only as an additional learning tool in combination with traditional ways of learning. The topics should be carefully chosen in accordance with the language material provided in study books, thus enhancing the learners' chances to acquire new knowledge or check the existing one. We believe that the proper student engagement and interaction in the classroom increases the learners' willingness to attend classes and improve their knowledge. What is more, learners should be encouraged to make their own Kahoots! for homework, which could be a challenge and additional motivation in the process of learning foreign languages.

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