

# Kahoot!: Engaging and Active Learning Environment in ESL Writing Classrooms

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The aim of this paper is to examine the use of Kahoot! for teaching writing in English as a Second Language (ESL) classroom to create engagement and active learning. The purpose of this study is to measure the effectiveness of Kahoot! for teaching writing in the ESL classroom. This was accomplished through a quantitative design which is a survey regarding the use of Kahoot among third year Teaching ESL undergraduate students in a public university in Malaysia. A total of forty undergraduate TESL students were selected as participants for this study and the questionnaire was designed by using online form via Google form. The survey in this research is focusing on the effectiveness of Kahoot in creating engagement and active learning for teaching writing. The results show that students think the Kahoot! implementation and helps them to enjoy the class compared to the traditional method. The findings also show how the use of Kahoot can create engagement and active learning among students for teaching writing in the ESL classroom.

**Keywords:** *Kahoot!, learning, online-learning, technologies, e-Learning, game-based learning, students' engagement*

## Introduction

There are lots of learning approaches and active learning that has become an alternative option to traditional teaching methods and have received considerable attention (Williams & Chin, 2019). As stated in the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025 (Ministry of Education, 2012), there are many new approaches that have been introduced in improving the efficacy of teaching and learning strategies for teachers at school (Yeop et al., 2019; Raman et al., 2019). Fisher (2010) and Huang et al. (2019), both stated that one of the famous and acceptable approaches is online and game-based learning. Instructional and online games are gaining acceptance in the classroom especially in order to gain students' engagement and feedbacks (Braga, 2019).

Various studies have found that learning while using technologies such as computer and smartphones are effective in improving student's engagement and active participation in classrooms (Johns, 2015; Robertson, 2019). Kahoot! is a popular e-learning tool that can easily be used and helps in students' engagement and activeness in learning. Kahoot! is a free online learning platform that has gained wide acceptance in learning and it is based on current user-centred use (Kletnikov et al, 2019; Melchor, 2019). It is a free student-response tool for administering quizzes, facilitating discussions, or collecting survey data. It is a game-based classroom response system played by the whole class in real time. Acquah & Katz (2020) mentioned that game-based learning is one of the best approaches to be an effective tool because it tends to create more engagement compared to traditional approaches because it stimulates the verbal and visual components in learning.

The purpose of the research is to measure the effectiveness of using Kahoot! in ESL classrooms especially for teaching writing. This research also aims to observe whether students are familiar and are able to engage with Kahoot in ESL classrooms. Apart from that, this research is to identify whether Kahoot can help students in blended learning and whether Kahoot creates engagement and active learning for teaching writing in the ESL classroom. This research assessed the effectiveness of this approach by using the quantitative method which is questionnaires in schools.

## **Literature Review**

English is a subject that delivers its skills into four categories: listening, speaking, reading and writing (Rechal, 2019; Hashim et al, 2018). Writing skill which is an important aspect of language learning refers to the process of encoding the words. Pan & Wu, 2013 stated that the conventional instructions in teaching learning process are still dominant in most EFL context, however, these methods have made students feel bored and dislike in EFL classes (Kassem, 2019); thus it is very important for teachers to create a positive engagement in classroom.

### **Gamification tools: Kahoot! as a way to an engaged classroom**

The use of technology in the teaching-learning process have indicated improvement in student's motivation (Keezhatta & Omar, 2019). Krauskopf, Zahn and Hesse (2012) stated that the potential use of technologies can be maximised if teachers combine them with suitable learning objectives and given the strength and interactivity of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in all areas of society, the current classroom cannot be conceived without the use of technological tools.

Most students these days attend the university with a very powerful tool in their pockets, the smartphone, thus, technology obviously has contributed to the evolution of gamification,

including narrative transmedia (Furini et al, 2019). One clear example of the use of mobile devices in education is gamification, which is understood as the use of mechanisms, aesthetics, and thinking in order to attract people, encouraging action, promoting learning and solving problems.

According to Kapuler (2015) and Chiang (2020), Kahoot is one of the top 100 new apps to use in the classroom it in at number 36 on the list of apps related to educational trends. Kahoot is also advantageous to educational trends including gamification and students engagement (Ciaramella, 2017). According to a study carried by Wang (2015), the participants like to continue to play Kahoot after every lecture and they thought that they learned something from playing Kahoot. The students love to answer questions through Kahoot! because it brings something to learn quicker. Thus, Kahoot is an alternative media that can engage students' motivation in learning.

According to another study conducted by Licorish (2018), all the participants agree that the use of Kahoot! triggered positive attention and focus in the classroom. Some suggested that interacting with Kahoot! captured and sustained their attention, as well as enabled them to take a break in the lecture and provided a point of difference (Prado, 2019).

In summary, Kahoot! offers various benefits in the classroom due to its flexibility (Hemminki, 2019). The usage of Kahoot! is a great way to reinforce class content and to keep students in the classroom engaged as it is focused on social learning which makes the class environment fun (Thompson & Sorbet, 2020). The simplicity which does not require players to create an account first is definitely one of the benefits for both the teachers and students. Using Kahoot! definitely will make the students enjoy coming to class.

## **Methods**

This part mainly deals with the methodology used in this study which consists of four sections namely the research design, selection of participants, research instruments and data collection procedures.

### ***Research Design***

In order to look at how the use of Kahoot! in ESL classroom creates engagement and active learning among students, the researchers use quantitative design. A set of questionnaires regarding Kahoot! was made and filled by 40 respondents of third-year TESL undergraduates in a public university in Malaysia who enrolled in the Teaching Writing course.

### ***Research Instrument***

The instrument used in this research is a survey about the use of Kahoot! for teaching writing in ESL classroom to create engagement and active learning. The questionnaires consist of 25 questions and was been distributed to 40 TESL third year undergraduates. The participants were free to answer the survey according to their opinions regarding Kahoot!

### ***Data Collection Procedures***

For the data collection procedures, the researchers created a questionnaire which consists of three sections, Section A, B and C. There were 25 questions in total. The researchers then distributed the questionnaires to the participants using the application WhatsApp using the Google Form. By collecting surveys related to Kahoot from TESL undergraduates, researchers use the percentage to analyse the data. The findings were reported by using the data given by the participants.

### **Results and Discussion**

Based on the data collected from the questionnaire, there is a total of 40 respondents mainly from third year students which are currently taking Teaching Writing in ESL Writing. The questionnaire given to the respondents consisted of 3 sections each of which corresponds to the objective of the research.

#### **Section A**

The questions in this section are to observe if students are familiar and engage with Kahoot in ESL Classroom. There is a total of 5 questions in this section. The tabulation of data of first three questions showed on table 1.

**Table 1**

ITEMS	ANSWER (%)		
	YES	NO	NOT SURE
1. Have you used Kahoot! in lessons?	100	0	-
2. Do you feel the usage of Kahoot in your lessons enhance your learning experiences?	97.5	2.5	-
3. Do you feel that it is necessary to blend the learning experience for students in teaching writing?	87.5	2.5	10

Item 1 from the Table 1 shows that the students 100% know and have used Kahoot in their blended learning in the classroom. The majority of the respondents (97.5%) feel that the usage of Kahoot in their lessons enhance learning experiences. These findings are agreed by Licorish (2018) in findings which stated that the use of Kahoot! is able to trigger positive attention and enhance learners' focus in the classroom. Some suggested that interacting with Kahoot! captured and sustained their attention, as well as enabled them to take a break in the lecture and provided a point of difference.

A huge number of respondents (87.5%) also feel that it is necessary to blend in the learning experience for students in teaching writing, while 10% of them are not sure about this item. Based on 5 choices of what methods of learning that respondents prefer including paper based, online quiz/task, group work, observing and others that needs to be specified by the respondents, the majority of them (75%) choose online quiz/task. However, there are some of them who still prefer paper based (40%) learning and observing throughout the lesson.

## **Section B**

In this section, the questions are related to the second objective which is to measure the effectiveness of using Kahoot in teaching writing in ESL Classroom. Based on Table 2 from item 1, half of the respondents think that Kahoot! makes them learn in more fun ways while only 5% did not agree with this item. Next, the tabulation of the data from item 3 shows every respondent respond to each of the answers provided. Approximately 42.5% of the respondents agree that find they find Kahoot! as one of the best platforms to compare their understanding with friends. 22% of them neutrally feels that Kahoot! as one of the best platforms to compare their understanding with friends, while 15% of them are disagree with this item.

After that, item 4 shows that almost all of the respondents agree with this item where 19 of the students (47.5%) vote for agree and 18 students (45%) state that they are strongly agree with this item. The highest percentage of the data can be seen in item 7. 56.4% of the respondents which is 22 students agree with the statement that Kahoot! helps them to understand English comprehension better and the number of 7 students (17.9 %) strongly agree with this item.

Apart from that, the percentage of students agree and strongly agree with the tenth item, where Kahoot! makes them think that learning English is fun and effective at the same time, are 47.5 % and 37.5% respectively. This proves that Kahoot! is effective and it is able to create engagement and active learning in classroom.

**Table 2**

ITEMS	ANSWERS (%)				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I think that Kahoot! makes me learn in more fun ways	0	5	7.5	50	37.5
2. I feel that Kahoot! helps me to get the main keywords of the particular topic in the game.	0	0	12.5	52.5	35
3. I find that Kahoot! is one of the best platform to compare my understanding with my friends.	5	10	22.5	42.5	20
4. Kahoot! requires me to focus on the questions given through the screen in order for me to pick the correct answer	2.5	2.5	2.5	47.5	45
5. The answers provided in Kahoot! usually helps me in broadening my vocabulary for writing.	0	10	17.5	50	22.5
6. I find that Kahoot! enhance my vocabulary in English.	0	12.5	25	42.5	20
7. Kahoot! helps me understand English comprehension better	2.6	2.6	20.5	56.4	17.9
8. Kahoot! makes me think that English is challenging	7.5	10	22.5	27.5	32.5
9. Kahoot! helps me learn sentence structure and grammar in context better	0	10	25	45	20
10. Kahoot! makes me think that learning English is fun and effective at the same time	2.5	2.5	10	47.5	37.5

### **Section C**

This is the last section of the questionnaire. In this section, the questions given are based on the third objective of the research which is to identify whether Kahoot can help students in blended learning and whether Kahoot creates engagement and active learning for teaching writing in ESL Classroom.

**Table 3**

ITEMS	ANSWERS (%)				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I think Kahoot! is more interesting compared to written tasks/quizzes?	0	7.5	7.5	47.5	37.5
2. I think Kahoot makes you engage in the classroom?	2.5	0	5	52.5	40
3. I feel burdened whenever my lecturer conducts a Kahoot activity in the classroom?	17.5	22.5	20	25	15
4. I feel like it is more convenient for me to do online tasks compared to paper-based tasks	0	7.5	12.5	57.5	22.5
5. I am more focused on reading the questions when I am doing Kahoot compared to questions on the papers	7.7	10.3	17.9	35.9	28.2
6. I feel the need to participate in the classroom whenever my lecturer conducts a Kahoot!	0	5.1	5.1	53.8	35.9
7. I usually just randomly click the answers for Kahoot! without reading the questions first.	32.5	32.5	12.5	20	2.5
8. I feel happy when I able get the correct answer when answering Kahoot	0	0	2.6	38.5	59
9. When I clicked the wrong answer, I will try to answer the correct answer for the next questions.	0	0	5	50	45
10. I feel excited whenever I see my name on the top of the chart box whenever I do the Kahoot!	0	0	10	37.5	52.5

Based on table 3, item 1 shows the highest percentage of the respondents that agree and strongly agree with 47.5% and 37.5% respectively. They personally agree that Kahoot! is more interesting compared to written tasks/quizzes. Next, from item 3 the respondents vote for various answers. The number of 7 students (17.5%) and 9 students (22.5%) strongly disagree and disagree that feel burdened whenever the lecturer conducts a Kahoot activity in the classroom. 20% of them neutrally think that they feel burdened whenever the lecturer conducted a Kahoot activity in the classroom, while the respondents that agree and disagree are 25% and 15% respectively.

Apart from that, in item 5, 35.5 % of the respondents agree that they are more focused on reading the questions when doing Kahoot compared to the questions on the papers. However, under 7.7% of those surveyed said that they strongly disagree with this item. Finally, the majority of the respondents agree and strongly agree that when they clicked the wrong answer, they try to answer the correct answer for the next questions with approximately 50% of them voting for agree and 45% of them strongly agree. This shows that Kahoot make the learning process more competitive as they really need to click on the right answer to be at the highest rank of the game. These findings are parallel to a study done by Kapuler (2015) who figured that Kahoot is one of the top 100 new apps to use in the classroom. It is at number 36 on the list of apps related to educational trends. He also believed that Kahoot also provides advantages to educational trends including gamification and students' engagement during the ESL learning process.

## **Conclusion**

The introduction of technology in the classroom, specifically the use of a simple gamification tool (Kahoot!), has proven to be positive (Bawa, 2019) for the students' academic performance based on previous studies. Since we are living in the 21st century, the interest in understanding students' motivation and engagement by using technology has been growing as technology is believed to aid the process (Ahmad et al, 2019).

Throughout the study, Kahoot! definitely gave students more opportunities to engage with the teachers, peers and the lesson content (Zucker & Fisch, 2019). It also helped in creating a fun learning experience, which contributed to useful classroom engagement. Based on the study, students felt that Kahoot! captured their focus and interest during the lesson, but in a very "relaxing" way. This is obviously necessary for class with two periods, especially when student's attention spans these days are short. The outcomes show that Kahoot! motivated students to be more engaged in the classroom. Kahoot! is undeniably an extremely useful gamification educational technology tool that requires minimum technical expertise for creating quizzes, surveys and discussions.

Kahoot! does offer breaks from using the traditional style of learning which uses papers and pens all the time (Esnaashari et al, 2019; Alqurashi, 2019). Even though most students claimed that using Kahoot! is effective in making them more engaged to the class, but, in our opinion, to use it every single time during class hour is definitely not a good idea. This is because, Kahoot! uses this concept where students who answer the right answer with the fastest speed would be the winner, unconsciously making the players being more concerned on winning the game, and unfortunately do not absorb the answers to the questions being asked.



Other than that, the designers of the game, who most of the time are teachers, are not able to ask challenging or complex questions that will more accurately assess the students' knowledge on the lesson due to the time constraints for questions and answers in Kahoot! Thus, even though Kahoot! has a lot of to offer especially in terms of making the classroom engaged to the students; but there are also a few cons to be reconsidered.

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