



## The Potential of Gamification in Enhancing English Language Learning: A Case Study of Kahoot in the Libyan University Context

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### Abstract:

The integration of technology in education has introduced innovative pedagogical tools, with gamification emerging as a powerful strategy to enhance student motivation and engagement. This paper explores the potential of Kahoot!, a popular game-based learning platform, in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction for Libyan university students. Drawing upon existing research on Kahoot!'s effectiveness in the Malaysian ESL context, this paper synthesizes key findings and adapts them to the unique challenges and opportunities within Libyan higher education. The paper examines the linguistic and pedagogical challenges faced by Libyan EFL learners, including vocabulary acquisition, grammatical accuracy, and motivation. It proposes a conceptual framework for integrating Kahoot! into Libyan university English programs, arguing that its interactive and competitive nature can foster a more engaging and effective learning environment. This paper also discusses the potential of Kahoot! to address the specific needs of Libyan students, drawing parallels with successful implementations in similar EFL contexts. The paper concludes with recommendations for future empirical research to validate the proposed framework and to explore the broader implications of gamification for language education in Libya and the wider MENA region.

Keywords: Gamification, Kahoot!, English Language Learning, Libyan Higher Education, Student Motivation, Educational Technology, EFL.

### Introduction

The 21st-century educational landscape is characterized by the pervasive influence of technology, which has fundamentally reshaped pedagogical approaches and learning environments. Among the various technological innovations, gamification has gained significant traction as a method for increasing student engagement and motivation (Flores, 2015; Christopoulos et al., 2023).

Gamification, the application of game-design elements in non-game contexts, has shown considerable promise in language education, where maintaining student interest and enthusiasm can be a significant challenge (ZarzyckaPiskorz, 2016). This is particularly relevant in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, where students often struggle with the complexities of a new linguistic system.

In Libya, as in many other countries in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, English proficiency is a critical skill for academic and professional success. However, Libyan university students often face a myriad of challenges in their efforts to master the English language. These challenges range from linguistic difficulties, such as vocabulary retention and grammatical accuracy, to motivational issues stemming from traditional, teacher centered pedagogical methods (Aldbea, 2024; El Raggas, 2014). The need for innovative and engaging teaching strategies in the Libyan EFL classroom is therefore more pressing than ever.

This paper explores the potential of Kahoot!, a popular game-based student response system, as a tool to address these challenges and enhance the English language learning experience for Libyan university students. Drawing on the findings of two key studies conducted in the Malaysian ESL context (Singh et al., 2019; Tan et al., 2019), this paper will synthesize the evidence for Kahoot!'s effectiveness and adapt it to the specificities of the Libyan educational landscape. By examining the parallels between the Malaysian and Libyan contexts, both of which are EFL environments with similar challenges, this paper will build a case for the adoption of Kahoot! in Libyan universities. The paper will also review the broader literature on gamification in the MENA region to provide a comprehensive understanding of the potential benefits and challenges of implementing such a tool.

Ultimately, this paper aims to provide a conceptual framework for the integration of Kahoot! in Libyan university English programs and to lay the groundwork for future empirical research in this area. By doing so, it seeks to contribute to the ongoing discourse on technology-enhanced language learning and to offer practical insights for educators and policymakers in Libya and beyond.

## Literature Review

### Gamification in Language Learning

The concept of gamification in education is rooted in the idea of leveraging the motivational power of games to enhance learning outcomes. As defined by ZarzyckaPiskorz (2016), gamification involves the use of game elements and design techniques in non-game contexts. In language learning, this approach has been shown to be particularly effective in increasing student motivation, engagement, and knowledge retention (Flores, 2015). The interactive and competitive nature of gamified activities can transform mundane tasks, such as vocabulary drills and grammar exercises, into enjoyable and rewarding experiences.

Research has shown that gamification can have a positive impact on various aspects of language learning. For instance, a study by Chen (2022) found that gamification influenced students' study engagement through the indirect effects of enjoyment and self-efficacy. Similarly, a meta-analysis by Zeng et al. (2024) revealed that gamification has an overall positive influence on students' academic performance. These findings underscore the potential of gamification to create a more dynamic and effective language learning environment.

### Kahoot! as a Gamified Learning Tool

Kahoot! is a game-based student response system that has gained widespread popularity in educational settings worldwide. The platform allows educators to create and share interactive quizzes, surveys, and discussions, which can be accessed by students on their personal devices. Kahoot!'s key features, such as points, leaderboards, and music, are designed to create a fun and competitive atmosphere that encourages active participation.

Two key studies from the Malaysian ESL context provide strong evidence for the effectiveness of Kahoot! in language learning. The first, a chapter by Singh, Ganapathy, and Tan (2019) in the book "Creativity in Education," highlights Kahoot!'s potential to enhance creativity in the language classroom. The authors argue that the platform's interactive and playful nature can encourage students to think outside the box and to experiment with language in a low-stakes environment.

The second study, a journal article by Tan et al. (2019), presents the findings of a semester long experiment with 57 Malaysian ESL students. The results showed that weekly Kahoot! sessions had a significant positive impact on students' motivation and learning. The students reported that Kahoot! was not only enjoyable but also helped them to reinforce their understanding of grammar, vocabulary, and reading comprehension. These findings are particularly relevant to the Libyan context, as they demonstrate the potential of Kahoot! to address some of the key challenges faced by EFL learners.

### The Libyan Context: Challenges and Opportunities

The Libyan higher education system faces a unique set of challenges that have a direct impact on the teaching and learning of English. As noted by Aldbea (2024), Libyan students often struggle with vocabulary acquisition, phrasal verbs, and the cultural and linguistic disparities between Arabic and English. These difficulties are often compounded by a reliance on traditional, teacher-centered teaching methods that can stifle student motivation and engagement.

Furthermore, the integration of technology in Libyan higher education has been hampered by a number of factors, including limited ICT infrastructure and a lack of training for educators (Hbaci, 2021). However, there is a growing recognition of the need for technology enhanced learning and a greater willingness to explore innovative pedagogical approaches. The recent push to integrate modern technology into educational practices, as highlighted by University World News (2025), signals a promising shift in the Libyan educational landscape.

This is where a tool like Kahoot! can play a transformative role. By providing a fun, interactive, and student-centered learning experience, Kahoot! has the potential to address many of the challenges faced by Libyan EFL learners. The platform's focus on active participation and immediate feedback can help to improve student motivation, while its game-like features can make the process of learning English more enjoyable and less intimidating. Moreover, the successful implementation of Kahoot! in the Malaysian context, which shares many similarities with the Libyan EFL environment, provides a strong rationale for its adoption in Libyan universities.

### Conceptual Framework

To effectively integrate Kahoot! into the Libyan EFL context, it is essential to establish a robust conceptual framework that aligns with established theories of language learning and technology adoption. This framework is built upon several key pillars: **Gamification**

**Theory**, the **Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)**, and **Culturally Responsive Pedagogy**. By synthesizing these theoretical perspectives, we can create a holistic approach to leveraging Kahoot! for enhanced language learning outcomes among Libyan university students.

### Gamification and Motivation

The core of this framework lies in the principles of gamification, which aim to increase **intrinsic motivation** by incorporating game-like elements such as points, badges, and leaderboards into the learning process. According to Self-Determination Theory (SDT), intrinsic motivation is fostered when three basic psychological needs are met: **autonomy**, **competence**, and **relatedness** (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Kahoot! directly addresses these needs:

- **Autonomy:** While the instructor designs the quiz, students have control over their responses, creating a sense of agency in their learning.
- **Competence:** The immediate feedback and point system provide a clear measure of performance, allowing students to track their progress and experience a sense of mastery.
- **Relatedness:** The competitive yet social nature of Kahoot! fosters a sense of community and shared experience among learners, enhancing their feeling of connection.

By tapping into these motivational drivers, Kahoot! can transform the often-daunting task of language learning into an engaging and enjoyable activity, thereby increasing students' willingness to participate and persist in their studies.

### Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

For any educational technology to be effective, it must first be accepted by its users. The **Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)**, proposed by Davis (1989), provides a valuable framework for understanding the factors that influence the adoption of new technologies.

According to TAM, two key beliefs determine a user's intention to use a technology: **perceived usefulness** and **perceived ease of use**.

- **Perceived Usefulness:** In the Libyan context, the perceived usefulness of Kahoot! will depend on its ability to address the specific challenges faced by students, such as vocabulary acquisition and grammar practice. The findings from the Malaysian studies (Tan et al., 2019) provide strong evidence of Kahoot!'s utility in these areas.
- **Perceived Ease of Use:** Kahoot!'s simple and intuitive interface makes it accessible to both students and instructors, even those with limited technical expertise. This is particularly important in the Libyan context, where digital literacy levels may vary.

By ensuring that both students and instructors perceive Kahoot! as both useful and easy to use, Libyan universities can facilitate its successful integration and maximize its pedagogical impact.

### Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

Finally, the successful implementation of Kahoot! in Libya requires a **culturally responsive approach** that acknowledges and respects the local cultural context. This involves more than simply translating content; it requires a deep understanding of the cultural norms, values, and communication styles of Libyan students. For example, instructors can design Kahoot! quizzes that incorporate culturally relevant topics, humor, and examples, making the learning experience more relatable and engaging for students.

By adopting a culturally responsive pedagogy, educators can ensure that Kahoot! is not perceived as a foreign imposition, but rather as a tool that is sensitive to and respectful of the local culture. This will not only enhance student engagement but also foster a more inclusive and effective learning environment.

## Proposed Methodology for a Future Study

To validate the conceptual framework outlined above and to gather empirical evidence on the effectiveness of Kahoot! in the Libyan context, a future study employing a mixed methods approach is proposed. This study would aim to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the impact of using Kahoot! on Libyan university students' motivation to learn English?
2. To what extent does the use of Kahoot! affect Libyan university students' performance in English vocabulary and grammar?
3. What are the perceptions of Libyan university students and instructors regarding the use of Kahoot! as a language learning tool?

## Participants and Setting

The study would be conducted at a major Libyan university, such as the University of Benghazi, with undergraduate students enrolled in a required English proficiency course. A quasi-experimental design would be employed, with two groups of students: an experimental group that receives regular instruction supplemented with Kahoot! activities, and a control group that follows the traditional curriculum without the use of Kahoot!.

## Data Collection and Analysis

To ensure a comprehensive understanding of the impact of Kahoot!, both quantitative and qualitative data would be collected:

- **Quantitative Data:**
- **Pre- and Post-Tests:** To measure changes in students' English vocabulary and grammar knowledge.
- **Motivation Questionnaire:** A validated questionnaire, such as the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ), would be administered at the beginning and end of the semester to assess changes in students' motivation.
- **Qualitative Data:**
- **Semi-structured Interviews:** With a subset of students and instructors from the experimental group to gather in-depth insights into their experiences with Kahoot!.
- **Classroom Observations:** To observe the dynamics of the Kahoot! sessions and to document student engagement and interaction.

Quantitative data would be analyzed using statistical methods, such as t-tests and ANOVA, to compare the performance and motivation of the experimental and control groups. Qualitative data would be analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring themes and patterns in the participants' responses.

By combining quantitative and qualitative data, this proposed study would provide a rich and nuanced understanding of the potential of Kahoot! to enhance English language learning in the

Libyan context. The findings would have significant implications for educators, policymakers, and researchers, and would contribute to the growing body of knowledge on the use of gamification in language education.

## Discussion

The synthesis of literature from the Malaysian context and the analysis of the specific educational environment in Libya provide a compelling case for the integration of Kahoot! into Libyan university EFL classrooms. The challenges faced by Libyan students, particularly in the areas of motivation and engagement, mirror those observed in the Malaysian studies where Kahoot! was shown to be an effective intervention (Tan et al., 2019). The findings of Aldbea (2024), which highlight Libyan students' struggles with vocabulary and grammar, align directly with the areas where Kahoot! demonstrated significant pedagogical benefits for Malaysian learners.

The proposed conceptual framework, which integrates Gamification Theory, the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), and Culturally Responsive Pedagogy, offers a structured approach to implementation. The success of Kahoot! is not merely a function of its game-like features but its ability to tap into fundamental psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness, as described in Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000). The competitive, yet low-stakes, environment of a Kahoot! quiz can provide a powerful motivational boost for Libyan students who may feel anxious or discouraged by traditional assessment methods.

Moreover, the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) provides a crucial lens through which to view the potential adoption of Kahoot! in Libya. The platform's perceived ease of use is a significant advantage in a context where digital literacy among both educators and students may be inconsistent. Its perceived usefulness, as demonstrated by the positive outcomes in similar EFL settings, can be a strong driver for adoption. However, for successful integration, it will be crucial for educational leaders at institutions like Benghazi University to provide the necessary training and support to ensure that instructors feel confident and competent in using the tool, a factor highlighted as a barrier in previous technology integration efforts in Libya (Hbaci, 2021).

Finally, the element of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy cannot be overstated. The research on gamification in the broader MENA region suggests a general openness to game-based learning (Almelhes, 2024). However, to maximize engagement, the content of Kahoot! quizzes must be adapted to be culturally and linguistically relevant to Libyan students. This could involve using local examples, incorporating elements of Libyan culture, and being mindful of social norms in the design of competitive activities. By localizing the content, educators can transform Kahoot! from a generic educational tool into a powerful pedagogical resource that resonates with students on a personal level.

## Conclusion

This paper has argued for the potential of Kahoot! as a transformative tool for English language learning in the Libyan university context. By synthesizing findings from successful implementations in similar EFL environments and analyzing the specific challenges and opportunities within Libya, a strong rationale for the adoption of this gamified learning platform has been established. The core challenges of student motivation and engagement, prevalent in many language learning contexts,



are particularly acute in Libya, and the interactive, competitive, and enjoyable nature of Kahoot! offers a promising solution.

The proposed conceptual framework, grounded in established theories of motivation, technology adoption, and culturally responsive teaching, provides a roadmap for the effective integration of Kahoot! into Libyan university English programs. The success of such an initiative, however, is contingent on more than just the technology itself. It requires a commitment from educators and institutions to embrace innovative pedagogical approaches, to provide the necessary training and support, and to adapt educational tools to the unique cultural and linguistic needs of their students.

The next critical step is to move from conceptualization to empirical validation. The proposed mixed-methods study would provide invaluable data on the actual impact of Kahoot! on Libyan students' learning outcomes and motivation. The findings of such a study would not only contribute to the academic literature on gamification in the MENA region but would also offer practical, evidence-based guidance for educators and policymakers in Libya. By embracing innovative tools like Kahoot!, Libyan higher education can take a significant step forward in preparing its students for success in an increasingly globalized and interconnected world.

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