

# Students' Perception Towards The Use of Kahoot in Vocabulary Learning

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## Abstract

This study investigates students' perceptions toward the use of Kahoot! in vocabulary learning at the junior high school level. The research employed a qualitative case study approach involving six ninth-grade students at SMPN 5 Tambun Selatan. Data were collected through observation and semi-structured interviews. The findings reveal that students perceive Kahoot! as a fun, engaging, and motivating tool that enhances vocabulary learning. They found it easier to understand and memorize new words through visual aids, contextual questions, and interactive features. Additionally, the gamified elements of Kahoot!, such as quizzes, scores, and time limits, fostered a more dynamic and competitive learning environment. However, students also reported technical challenges, including unstable internet connections and discomfort with the limited response time. Despite these issues, the overall perception of Kahoot! was positive, indicating its potential to improve vocabulary acquisition and student engagement. The study recommends further research on the long-term effects of gamified learning and comparisons with other platforms.

**Keywords:** Kahoot!; Vocabulary Learning; Students' Perception; Gamification

## INTRODUCTION

As technology rapidly evolves, education must adapt to meet the needs and habits of a generation raised in digital environments. The integration of digital tools in the classroom has transformed how students engage with learning, encouraging educators to adopt methods that align with learners' technological experiences. Martínez & Gómez (2023) highlight that the use of digital tools is essential in supporting students' learning processes, particularly in environments increasingly shaped by interactivity and connectivity. Consequently, incorporating technology into pedagogical practices has become a necessity in modern education. This shift is particularly evident in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning. Li et al. (2019) note that the expansion of digital technologies has reshaped language teaching practices, especially through the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) tools in all levels of education. Beyond efficiency, ICT fosters intercultural understanding, enhances communication skills, and enables global connectivity among learners. According to Jamalova (2024), the integration of digital tools significantly increases student motivation and cultivates a more positive attitude toward English learning. Vocabulary plays a central role in language proficiency. Santi et al. (2021) define vocabulary as the set of words known and used by an individual. Without sufficient vocabulary, learners struggle to comprehend or express meaning, limiting their ability to communicate effectively. As Krashen (1982) suggests grammar alone is insufficient; vocabulary is fundamental to meaningful communication. However, vocabulary acquisition is often viewed by students as a monotonous and difficult process. Traditional methods relying on rote memorization and repetition frequently fail to maintain student interest and engagement.

This challenge is reflected in Indonesia's low English proficiency, where the country ranked 81st out of 111 countries in the EF English Proficiency Index (Education First EF, 2022). A lack of vocabulary mastery may contribute to this ranking. Emiliyasi & Kosmajadi (2019) report that low basic English proficiency is a major barrier for students in following English lessons effectively. To address these issues, educators have turned to technology-enhanced learning methods that make vocabulary learning more interactive and engaging. Digital tools such as flashcards, gamified quizzes, and multimedia-based applications cater to diverse learning preferences and have been shown to improve vocabulary acquisition (Lafleur, 2024; Panmei & Waluyo, 2023; Teymouri, 2024). Among these, gamification stands out as a promising approach. Yu (2023) demonstrates that gamified learning environments increase learners' motivation and transform passive learners into active participants who collaboratively construct knowledge. One popular gamified learning platform is Kahoot!, a user-friendly, game-based tool that allows teachers and students to create and participate in interactive quizzes featuring competitive scoring, multimedia elements, and real-time feedback (Darwis & Amal, 2023). Its simplicity and accessibility have contributed to its widespread adoption, with over 50 million users reported globally in 2021 (Mohammed Nuri et al., 2022). Studies have shown that Kahoot! fosters a positive learning atmosphere and enhances student motivation (Darwis & Amal, 2023; Perdanasari, 2021). However, the effective use of Kahoot! in classroom settings depends on factors such as technological infrastructure, digital literacy, and quiz design quality. Downie et al. (2021) argue, understanding students' perceptions of digital tools is vital for maximizing their potential benefits. Learner-centered approaches emphasize the importance of incorporating students' experiences and feedback to enhance the learning process.

Several previous studies have examined students' perceptions of using Kahoot! in English language learning. Kusumaningrum et al. (2022) and Darwis & Amal (2023) focused on vocabulary learning, while Adnyani et al. (2020) and Rahmadani et al. (2024) explored broader English learning contexts. These studies generally highlight increased motivation and engagement. However, most of them emphasize general outcomes rather than students' specific experiences and challenges in learning vocabulary through Kahoot!. Moreover, few were conducted at the junior high school level in Indonesia, and many relied on quantitative methods.

## METHOD

This research employed a qualitative approach with a case study design to explore students' perceptions toward the use of Kahoot in vocabulary learning (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The study was conducted at SMPN 5 Tambun Selatan with ninth-grade students. A case study was selected as it allows an in-depth exploration of participants' experiences in a real-life educational context.

The participants consisted of six students selected using purposive sampling, as this technique enables the researcher to choose individuals who are most likely to provide rich and relevant data (Patton, 2015). The selection criteria included English proficiency level (low, medium, high). This ensured a diverse range of insights regarding the use of Kahoot.

Data collection involved two instruments: observation and interviews, (Creswell, 2012). Observation was conducted to gather information about the process of teaching vocabulary in the class. The primary instrument used in this observation was an observation sheet. Semi-structured interviews were conducted after a trial session using Kahoot to allow students to express their perceptions freely while maintaining a consistent set of guiding questions (Stuckey, 2013).

The data analysis technique used in this research was based on Miles and Huberman's model (Matthew B. Miles et al., 2014), consisting of four stages: data collection, data condensation, data display, and data verification.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Results

This research aims to find out the students' perception using Kahoot game in vocabulary learning process at SMPN 5 Tambun Selatan.

#### **Kahoot! helps increase students' interest and motivation in learning vocabulary.**

The majority of students stated that learning vocabulary using Kahoot! was fun and not boring. They were more motivated because the learning atmosphere was interactive and in accordance with the habits of the current generation who are close to technology. In addition, students also felt that Kahoot! was easier to use.

*"Very fun and not boring."* (M2)

*"It's fun and good for learning. It's very effective because we can learn a lot from it."* (H1)

*"Vocabulary learning is good because it suits the current generation who use mobile phones."* (H2)

*"In my opinion, learning using the Kahoot application is easier than in class."* (L1)

*"In my opinion, it's easy compared to other applications."* (L1)

#### **Kahoot! makes it easier to understand and enriches students' vocabulary.**

Students stated that Kahoot! helped them understand the meaning of words more easily, especially through the illustrations and context of the questions. They also acquired many new vocabulary during the learning process.

*"Kahoot can also add new insights, not only from words, but also from illustrations."* (H1)

*"Not bad. Because it's uncountable, because there are so many vocabulary words to learn."* (H1)

*"Makes learning easier."* (H2)

*"New vocabulary 5 to 6."* (H2)

*"There are a lot."* (M1)

#### **Gamification of Kahoot!**

Features such as quizzes, images, illustrations, scores, and time are a special attraction for students in the learning process. This creates an active and competitive learning atmosphere.

*"Interesting... can be from the arts too, cartoon pictures."* (H1)

*"You can learn a lot from there, and there are also many interesting choices, including from the arts, cartoon pictures."* (H1)

*"I think the game is good, like the quizzes are good for kids."* (M1)

*"The quizzes on Kahoot are easy to understand."* (M1)

*"The game is good and interesting."* (L2)

#### **Challenges When Using Kahoot!**

Some students experienced problems such as unstable internet connections, laggy applications, and data quotas that ran out quickly. In addition, the time to answer questions was considered too short for some students, reducing comfort when working on the quiz.

*“The network is less stable.” (H1)*

*“Sometimes the system lags.” (M1)*

*“The downside is that the data package might be wasteful or it might run out quickly.” (H1)*

*“The downside is that time runs out quickly” (H2)*

These technical issues disrupted the flow of learning and caused frustration, especially in a timed competitive environment where every second counts. In addition to technical issues, students expressed concern about the countdown timer in each quiz. For some learners, especially those with lower proficiency, the limited response time increased anxiety and reduced their ability to think clearly.

## Discussion

The findings of this study revealed that the use of Kahoot! in vocabulary learning has a positive impact on students’ motivation, engagement, and vocabulary acquisition. Students described the learning process as enjoyable and motivating, which supports the notion that game-based learning can foster a more dynamic and interactive learning environment. This aligns with Kusumaningrum et al. (2022), who found that students perceived Kahoot! as engaging and effective in helping them remember vocabulary more easily. Similar to their findings, students in this study emphasized the enjoyable nature of Kahoot! as an alternative to traditional classroom vocabulary learning.

Additionally, the integration of visual cues, contextualized questions, and instant feedback in Kahoot! was found to aid students in understanding and memorizing new vocabulary. These findings are supported by Darwis & Amal (2023), who reported that Kahoot!’s interactive format helped increase student interest and retention of vocabulary. The visual and multimodal elements of the quizzes appear to activate multiple cognitive channels, thereby reinforcing vocabulary learning.

Another important aspect highlighted by students was the gamification feature of Kahoot!, such as scoring, countdown timers, and the competitive nature of quizzes. These elements were perceived as motivating and encouraged active participation, creating a more enthusiastic classroom atmosphere. This echoes the results from Rahmadani et al. (2024), where students felt that the game-like and competitive elements of Kahoot! enhanced both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation to learn English.

Despite these positive outcomes, the study also uncovered certain limitations. Several students encountered technical issues, such as unstable internet connections, app lag, and limited data access. These technical barriers disrupted the flow of learning and occasionally caused frustration. Furthermore, some students expressed discomfort with the time pressure during quizzes, particularly those with lower proficiency levels. These findings resonate with Adnyani et al. (2020), who also noted that slow internet connectivity and technical difficulties were common challenges during Kahoot! implementation in classroom settings.

## CONCLUSION

This study aimed to address the challenge of vocabulary learning being perceived as monotonous and difficult by students. The findings confirm that integrating Kahoot! into vocabulary learning effectively overcomes these issues. Students expressed that learning vocabulary through Kahoot! was more enjoyable, motivating, and easier to understand. The gamified features of Kahoot! created a competitive and interactive atmosphere that supported vocabulary retention and increased student engagement.

Moreover, the use of visuals and contextualized questions contributed to students' better comprehension and acquisition of new words. These outcomes support previous studies that advocate for game-based learning to enhance language education. However, the study also confirmed that technical challenges, such as unstable internet and time pressure, can hinder the effectiveness of such tools if not properly addressed.

In conclusion, this study confirms that Kahoot! can serve as a valuable digital tool to make vocabulary learning more engaging and effective, particularly for junior high school students. Future implementation should consider infrastructure readiness to maximize its potential in the classroom.

Future research is recommended to explore the long-term impact of Kahoot! on vocabulary retention and academic performance. Comparative studies involving other gamified learning platforms may also provide broader insights into which tools are most effective in different educational contexts. Additionally, expanding the participant pool to include diverse grade levels or schools in rural areas could offer a more comprehensive understanding of the tool's applicability and limitations across varied settings.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

All praise and gratitude are due to Allah, the Most Merciful and the Most Compassionate, who has granted me the strength and ability to complete this study. I would like to sincerely express my deepest appreciation to my supervisors, Ms. Praditya Putri Utami, S.S., M.Pd., and Mr. H. Acep Bahrum Kamil, S.Pd., M.Pd., for their invaluable guidance and encouragement throughout this process. My heartfelt thanks also go to my beloved parents and dear friends for their endless support, prayers, and motivation.

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