

APPLICATION OF THE ONLINE PLATFORM FOR INTERACTIVE CONTENT „KAHOOT!“ FOR MASTERING AND STRENGTHENING NEW VOCABULARY IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Irina Mishkova-Yotova

Department of information and in-service teaching training, Trakia University-Stara Zagora, Bulgaria,
i.mishkova@trakia-uni.bg

Abstract: Language is a fundamental prerequisite for human development, shaping cognitive processes and enabling structured thought. Beyond its communicative function, language serves as the foundation of literacy, which in turn supports the acquisition of listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills—particularly in foreign language learning. In today's digital age, the process of developing these skills can and should evolve through the integration of innovative digital tools that enhance both teaching and learning experiences.

One such tool is the interactive platform „Kahoot!“, which has emerged as a powerful educational resource. Its game-based format fosters cognitive engagement and boosts student motivation by transforming learning into a dynamic and enjoyable experience. Designed with user-friendly, mobile-compatible features, „Kahoot!“ aligns seamlessly with modern digital trends, allowing for its implementation in both traditional and remote learning contexts. By turning vocabulary practice into an interactive challenge, the platform reduces anxiety and creates a more relaxed atmosphere conducive to deeper learning.

„Kahoot!“ supports learners in acquiring and consolidating vocabulary through repetition, immediate feedback, and a competitive yet collaborative environment. These features encourage active participation, creative thinking, and imagination, all of which are essential for meaningful language acquisition. Moreover, the platform helps cultivate more autonomous learning habits, as students become increasingly confident in exploring and practicing language independently.

This interactive approach reflects a broader shift in 21st-century pedagogy, where digital technologies are not merely supplementary tools but integral to the learning process. „Kahoot!“ exemplifies how gamified learning environments can bridge the gap between academic rigor and student engagement, ultimately contributing to more effective and lasting educational outcomes. Integrating such platforms into language instruction offers a meaningful way to connect with digital-native learners while preserving clear educational goals and high teaching standards.

By encouraging curiosity and experimentation, tools like „Kahoot!“ promote a growth mindset in learners. They also offer educators a flexible framework to adapt content to various proficiency levels and learning styles. As technology continues to evolve, such platforms will play an increasingly vital role in shaping the future of language education.

Keywords: web-based application, lexical chunks, foreign language learning, Kahoot, gamification

1. INTRODUCTION

Language serves as a fundamental pillar of human development, influencing cognitive processes and enabling structured thought. While its primary function lies in communication, language also forms the foundation for literacy and the development of essential skills in listening, speaking, reading, and writing - particularly crucial in foreign language learning. In today's digital age, traditional teaching methods must adapt by incorporating innovative technological tools that can significantly enhance both instruction and the learning experience.

Interactive platforms like „Kahoot!“ have emerged as powerful educational tools that exemplify this digital transformation. By utilizing game-based learning principles, „Kahoot!“ increases student engagement and motivation, turning vocabulary acquisition into an interactive and enjoyable process. Its adaptable design works effectively in various learning environments while reducing learner anxiety through a stimulating yet low-pressure approach. The platform promotes active participation, critical thinking, and learner autonomy through features like instant feedback and collaborative competition. As digital tools become increasingly integral to modern education, solutions like „Kahoot!“ demonstrate how gamification can maintain academic rigor while boosting engagement, ultimately leading to more effective and lasting learning outcomes in language education.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The use of vocabulary terms is of essential importance in learning any language. Many words, if studied in isolation, do not provide sufficient foundation for developing listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. These skills represent the ultimate goal in foreign language learning and are inconceivable without a certain lexical inventory that actively participates in the communication process.

„By lexical knowledge we understand words, expressions, word combinations, and phraseological units. These are designated by the concept of lexical items“ (Stefanova, 2007, p. 146). The word is the smallest lexical unit and possesses the property of universality. „It fulfills nominative, significative, communicative and pragmatic functions“ (Stefanova, 2007, p. 146). According to Pavlina Stefanova, lexical items possess several components: semantic, phonetic, graphic (grapho-combinatorial) and stylistic (language register). In the classroom, students „encounter words as sound and written complexes“ (Stefanova, 2007, p. 147). Acquiring knowledge about the relationships between sound and written sign, i.e. determining the phonetic and graphic components, leads to recognizing and connecting the meaning of words in listening and reading processes, and applying this knowledge in productive speech activities - speaking and writing.

In recent decades, it has been established and widely accepted that vocabulary can be divided and presented through three distinct levels. Understanding these levels supports teachers' work in the classroom when selecting words to teach - from the first day of instruction to the last.

The first lexical level comprises primarily words from everyday language. Since they are used very frequently, these words are conventionally called „high-frequency“ words. This level includes words such as „dog“, „phone“, „good“ and „happy“. Particular attention must be paid when teaching homophones and polysemous words at this level.

The second lexical level consists of words necessary for understanding and presenting complex ideas in an academic context. This includes words such as „formulation“, „specificity“ and „hypothesis“. These lexical items span multiple topics and subject areas, and their effective use reflects mastery of academic style.

The third lexical level contains rarely used words specific to particular topics or subjects. This is the so-called specialized terminology of a given field. For example, words such as „orthography“, „morphology“ and „etymology“ are characteristic of the field of linguistics. Some of these words may also exist as words from the previous levels, such as „similarity“ or „expression“. Therefore, words must always be taught in the context of their meaning and purpose within a given learning unit.

Depending on the nature of the language activity, foreign language teaching methodology distinguishes two types of vocabulary: active and passive.

Active vocabulary refers to words used to express information in spoken or written form. This type of vocabulary is also commonly termed productive vocabulary, as it is characteristic of productive language skills - speaking and writing.

Passive vocabulary encompasses words used for comprehending information in spoken or written form. This lexical category is alternatively called receptive vocabulary because it accompanies receptive language skills, namely reading and listening. When only passive vocabulary is reinforced, what occurs is so-called passive mastery - that is, understanding a word's meaning typically within context.

For foreign language teachers regarding vocabulary teaching methodology, a key question arises: Do students acquire new words more effectively by studying words individually or in multi-word combinations forming lexical chunks?

The term „chunk“ represents a universal concept covering any formulaic sequence, lexical/phraseological expression, or multi-word element. Over 25 years ago, Michael Lewis published *The Lexical Approach* (Lewis, 1993), prompting a radical rethinking of how we perceive language and how we teach it.

Contrary to the predominant linguistic view of that era, which regarded language as consisting of grammatical structures filled with individual words, Lewis argued that „language consists of lexical chunks which, when combined, produce coherent discourse“ (Lewis, 1997).

By „chunks“, Lewis specifically refers to: collocations (wrong way, give way, the way forward), fixed expressions (by the way, in the way), formulaic utterances (I'm on my way; no way!), sentence starters (I like the way...), verb patterns (to make/fight/elbow one's way...), idioms and catchphrases (the third way; way to go!). These linguistic elements share the following fundamental characteristics: they consist of multiple words, they are conventionalized, they exhibit varying degrees of fixedness, they demonstrate different levels of idiomaticity, they are likely acquired and processed as single units (or „holophrases“).

A key characteristic of lexical chunks is that they are processed holistically rather than as sequences of individual words. This phenomenon stems from frequency effects: the more frequently a sequence (of morphemes or words) occurs, the more likely it is to be stored and retrieved as a single unit (Siyanova - Chanturia & Martinez, 2014).

There are at least three fundamental reasons why lexical chunks should be prioritized in language learning: they facilitate fluent processing, they provide idiomaticity, they establish the foundation for subsequent language development

Lexical chunks are fixed word combinations that include phrases, idioms, and collocations (e.g., „make the bed“ vs. „do the washing“), which pose challenges for foreign learners despite seeming simple to native speakers. True language proficiency requires understanding how these chunks function naturally in context, rather than just

memorizing isolated word lists. Effective teaching prioritizes high-frequency, memorable lexical phrases whose patterns learners can easily internalize. Instruction should target whole expressions and common short sentences, as these reflect authentic language use more than individual words. The same pedagogical principles that optimize single-word vocabulary acquisition apply equally to teaching lexical bundles.

The primary pedagogical objective when working with new vocabulary is „the acquisition of durable lexical units that can be quickly and accurately applied in both spoken and written communication“ (Stefanova, 2007, p. 148). This means teachers should aim for students not merely to memorize words, but to use them appropriately and effortlessly in real communicative situations.

Word learning can be achieved through various methods: visualization (using visual aids), repetition (systematic reinforcement), association with familiar concepts, motivation (intrinsic and extrinsic), affective engagement (emotional connection with the material), and active contextual use. Each of these methods contributes to deeper vocabulary acquisition.

There are two main approaches to teaching new vocabulary: incidental/unintentional learning - occurs through context exposure, Develops via L1 transfer (analogy with native language) and intentional/deliberate learning - focused, goal-oriented instruction: lexical exercises: identification (word recognition), matching tasks, categorization by topic/meaning, contextual word selection (choosing appropriate words for given contexts) and lexical games (vocabulary-focused games)

To achieve the main objective in vocabulary teaching methodology for foreign language instruction, the game-based method has proven highly effective, particularly in digital environments through apps and platforms that function seamlessly in both traditional classrooms and distance learning. „With the digitization of the modern era, some language games have transformed into digital ones, but they have retained their essence - a source of information and competition of intellect and attentiveness, with an element of novelty, the unknown, and filled with many emotions“ (Dimitrova, Donev, 2024). A prime example is the educational platform „Kahoot!“, which has been successfully implemented in Bulgaria as a game-based learning tool designed to provide students with „a more engaging way to use words they have already learned“ (Dellos, 2015, p. 49). The platform creates interactive exercises, quizzes, and surveys featuring multiple-choice questions (optionally enhanced with images and videos), all structured around three core principles: social interaction, playfulness, and instructional value. Operating in real time, „Kahoot!“ encourages active participation via personal devices, offering instant feedback and a motivational points system that reinforces engagement. This approach aligns with the natural inclinations of young learners, who thrive in playful environments, making the platform an ideal tool for blending education with entertainment.

The effectiveness of such digital tools reflects broader shifts in modern pedagogy, where digitization has introduced new diversity into the didactic process. Computers and related technologies serve as powerful alternatives in education, breaking down barriers between students and teachers (Dimitrova, 2024). According to M. Maneva, „despite the growing importance of digital technologies in education, the teacher remains a key figure who inspires students to develop critical thinking and self-learning skills“ (2024, p. 142). Well-designed video games, often described as „learning machines“ (Gee, 2003), can immerse players so deeply that they learn unconsciously (Wang, Lieberoth, 2016). Research in K - 12 education confirms that games enhance academic achievement, motivation, and classroom dynamics (Rosas, Nussbaum et al., 2003), while digital devices like laptops and tablets foster positive emotional attitudes in students (Donev, Petrova, 2024). „Kahoot!“ exemplifies this synergy, demonstrating how gamified learning can transform vocabulary acquisition into a dynamic, student-centered experience. The experiment is organized as a pedagogical study involving two groups of students.

Objective of the experiment: To develop and test a model for using the online platform for interactive content „Kahoot!“ to reinforce new vocabulary in English language learning, and to determine how it affects the level of acquired knowledge and skills, as well as students' interest.

Hypothesis: It is assumed that if the „Kahoot!“ online platform for interactive content is systematically used during the experiment for practicing and reinforcing new vocabulary, this will lead to higher performance in the learning process and increased student interest.

Object of the study: The educational and cognitive activities of 8th-grade students in foreign language classes – English – related to the implementation of the developed methodological model for teaching and learning new vocabulary through the „Kahoot!“ online platform for interactive content, the results established during the research, as well as the interest shown in using it.

Subject of the study: The impact of the developed methodological model for reinforcing new vocabulary in English language learning through the use of the „Kahoot!“ online platform for interactive content on students' performance and interest.

Sample: The experiment was conducted with two groups of 8th-grade students from the Vocational High School of Electrical Engineering and Electronics – Galabovo, Republic of Bulgaria: a control group and an experimental

group. In the control group, consisting of 24 students, the classical method for acquiring and reinforcing new vocabulary was applied. In the experimental group, also consisting of 24 students, a methodology using the web-based platform „Kahoot!“ with access via mobile devices was implemented.

3. RESULTS

After completing the test on the „Kahoot!“ learning platform, I found that the number of low grades among students in the experimental group was three times lower than the number of low grades among students in the control group who took the test on paper (8.33% compared to 25%).

The average results in the experimental group are 67% higher than the average results in the control group (50% and 33.33% of the total number of grades, respectively).

Half of the students using the „Kahoot!“ game have acquired and reinforced the minimum amount of new vocabulary.

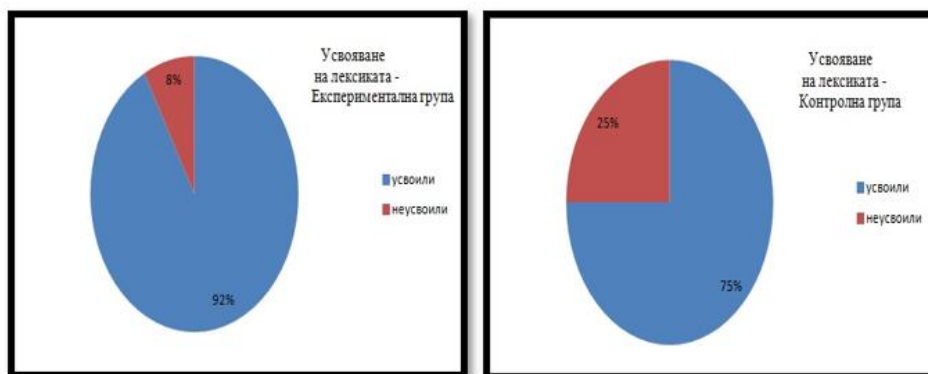
The good results achieved in the control group are by ¼ of all students in the class, which represents 25% of the total results. In the experimental group, there are no students who received a grade of „Good“ (4) on the test.

The number of students who received a „Very Good“ grade (5) through the „Kahoot!“ application is twice as high compared to those who received the same grade on the paper-based test (4 vs. 2 students, or 16.67% vs. 8.33%).

The number of students who achieved excellent results using the „Kahoot!“ quiz game is three times higher than the number of excellent results in the control group (25% vs. 8.33%).

At the class (group) level, I found that the percentage of students who successfully acquired and reinforced the new vocabulary in the experimental group is 92%, compared to 75% in the control group (figure 1).

Fig. 1. Summary of Class Results Based on the Criterion of New Vocabulary Acquisition



Source: researched by the author

The reason for the higher results in the experimental group may lie not only in the convenience of working with the specialized platform „Kahoot!“ and the incorporation of the game-based and competitive nature of the test (as opposed to doing it by hand), but also in the individual qualities and skills of the students.

From the provided feedback, it was found that two students from the experimental group who received average and good results did so not because of a lack of knowledge, but because they were unable to complete the entire test. This may have been due to interrupted internet access to the application or the inability to respond within the given time limit (20 seconds per question).

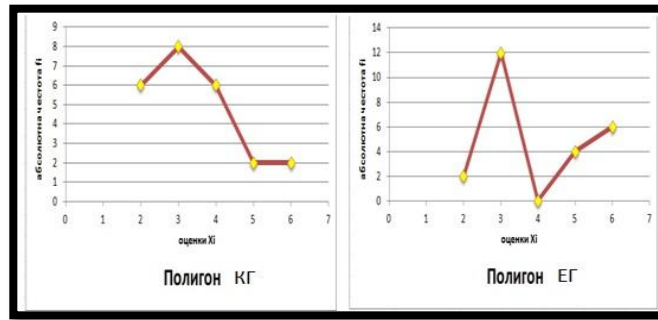
A comparison of the statistical measures shows that the average score in the experimental group is higher than that of the control group by 0.58, which is a significant difference.

The mode of the distribution and the median are low (equal to three) and are the same in both stages, despite the higher results in the second stage: Mode of the distribution: $m = x_i(\max f) = 3$, Median: $Z = 3$.

This is due to the predominance of students with lower performance in vocational high schools in recent years, at the expense of language and specialized high schools.

Figure 2 shows a polygon of the results for the control and experimental groups in the experiment.

Fig. 2. Polygon of Results in the Diagnostic and Formative Stages of the Experiment



Source: researched by the author

The results from the tests conducted in both stages of the study are summarized in table 1.

Table 1. Summary of Experiment Results

Study of the achievements of students taught and assessed with „Kahoot!“ and in the traditional way – on paper		
Group	Control group	Experimental group
Instrument	Paper-based	„Kahoot!“
Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Test (the same for both classes), consisting of five exercises with four examples each from the section „No place like home“ from the foreign language - English program for 8th grade - General education preparation, • The questions and corresponding possible answers are adapted for the application of the game-based method – interesting and fun, • Game elements and aesthetics are integrated. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The time to answer each question is strictly fixed, • It is not possible to go back and make corrections, • Points are accumulated – for correct answers and for time, • Timer, • Intense music, • Competition, • Ranking at the end of the test, • Uplifted mood in the foreign language - English classroom, • After each question, the answer is discussed and analyzed, • A technical device with a constant internet connection is required.
Result	The results obtained from the diagnostic stage are lower than the results from the formative stage.	
Conclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When using „Kahoot!“, there are time limits for selecting an answer for each question, and it is impossible to go back, • Students from 8th grade, class „B“ are using „Kahoot!“ for the first time, which slows down their responses, • The recording of answers in „Kahoot!“ depends on the speed and reliability of the internet connection, • „Kahoot!“ tests are suitable for acquiring, reinforcing, and formally assessing new vocabulary at the beginning or end of a lesson. 	

Source: researched by the author

4. DISCUSSION

The findings from the pedagogical experiment yield three key conclusions:

- The integration of the interactive platform „Kahoot!“ in English language lessons significantly improved students' vocabulary acquisition and retention.
- Survey data confirm heightened student interest and perceived ease of learning, aligning with gamification's known motivational benefits (Wang & Lieberoth, 2016).
- The methodology's applicability underscores its potential for broader adoption in EFL contexts.

These empirical results resonate with established theoretical frameworks. Language fundamentally serves „as a condition for human development and cognitive formation“ (Koleva, 1997, p. 6), while Vygotsky's assertion that words constitute „a unity of generalization, communication, and thinking“ (1982, p. 62) highlights why lexical competence remains pivotal in L2 acquisition. The study corroborates that contemporary pedagogy benefits from

synergies between linguistic development and ICT tools (Gyurova et al., 2007), especially when teachers leverage resources that „stimulate and direct creativity toward language mastery“ (Gyurova et al., 2007, p. 147). „Kahoot!“ exemplifies this synergy by systematizing vocabulary learning through interactivity and immediate feedback - features shown to enhance cognitive and behavioral engagement (Ovcharova, 2023). However, its efficacy depends on contextual factors: while the platform reduces anxiety and saves instruction time (Dellos, 2015), infrastructure limitations like unstable internet access may hinder implementation in resource-constrained settings. Future studies could explore hybrid models combining gamified tools with traditional methods to mitigate such barriers.

5. CONCLUSION

The integration of ICT and game-based methods in education expands cognitive horizons, boosts student engagement, and nurtures creativity while aligning lessons with students' digital experiences. As Ovcharova (2023) emphasizes, teachers play a pivotal role in classroom management, particularly through creating stimulating environments that foster all engagement aspects - cognitive, emotional, and behavioral - which are crucial for both motivation and effective learning. The „Kahoot!“ platform exemplifies this approach by uniquely combining learning and entertainment, enabling knowledge acquisition in a low-pressure environment that eliminates negative emotions. Its gamified interface fosters intrinsic motivation through friendly competition and collaborative learning, with multimedia design directly contributing to improved performance. Effective education emerges from strategically combining digital tools like „Kahoot!“ with quality teaching materials, creating an enjoyable yet results-driven process. Beyond knowledge transfer, these interactive tools cultivate sportsmanlike behavior, teamwork, and imaginative thinking - essential 21st century competencies.

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