

Edutainment: assessing students' perceptions of Kahoot! as a review tool in French L2 classes

Oneil N. Madden¹

Abstract. Gamification is a method used to engage and motivate students virtually during the coronavirus pandemic. This paper reports on the use of Kahoot! as a review tool in French as a foreign language (L2) classes at Northern Caribbean University (NCU), Jamaica, as a means of formative assessment. Using the exploratory approach, it seeks to highlight students' perceptions of this platform to enhance teaching and learning. Twenty-one students of both genders between the ages of 18 and 35 responded to a post questionnaire, after participating in two or more games of Kahoot!. Data was also collected through semi-structured interviews and observations recorded by the instructor. Preliminary findings show that Kahoot! helps most students (95%) to improve their French, in terms of learning and/or reinforcing new vocabulary or previously taught concepts, as well as pronunciation. All the participants highlighted that Kahoot! is fun and interactive, and playing the game serves as a motivation for them to revise their already acquired knowledge. However, the countdown feature can provoke stress and affect the thought process.

Keywords: Kahoot!, gamification, perception, French as a foreign language, Jamaica.

1. Introduction

In response to the coronavirus pandemic, “many countries around the world closed schools, colleges and universities to halt the spread of the virus” (OECD, 2020, p. 2). Consequently, many systems adopted virtual learning at an unprecedented level by exploiting technological devices and the Internet. However, despite

1. Northern Caribbean University, Mandeville, Jamaica; oneil.madden@ncu.edu.jm; <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9816-7444>

How to cite this article: Madden, O. N. (2022). Edutainment: assessing students' perceptions of Kahoot! as a review tool in French L2 classes. In B. Arnþjórnisdóttir, B. Bédi, L. Bradley, K. Friðriksdóttir, H. Garðarsdóttir, S. Thouéšny, & M. J. Whelpton (Eds), *Intelligent CALL, granular systems, and learner data: short papers from EUROCALL 2022* (pp. 240-245). Research-publishing.net. <https://doi.org/10.14705/rpnet.2022.61.1465>

the subsequent return of face-to-face classes in many universities worldwide, most Jamaican institutions have maintained online classes. As both students and instructors must adjust to new and sudden pedagogical dynamics, many educators, including L2 instructors, have to find creative and innovative ways to diversify their classes so that students can be engaged and motivated to learn (Madden, 2022).

From a psychological perspective, motivation is a necessary personality factor that L2 learners need to achieve meaningful production. Gardner (2010) posits that a motivated student engages in the relevant activities, expends efforts, persists in activities, attends to tasks, shows desire to achieve the objective, and enjoys the activities. Gamification is one approach that fosters that motivation. Kapp (2012) defines gamification as “using game-based mechanics, aesthetics and game thinking to engage people, motivate action, promote learning, and solve problems” (p. 10). Manzano-León et al. (2021) highlight that gamification fosters greater motivation, academic performance, and commitment in students while Buckley and Doyle (2016) indicate that gamification reinforces extrinsic motivation and improves intrinsic motivation.

2. Kahoot!

Kahoot! is a free game-based digital platform, which was developed in Norway (<https://kahoot.com/>). Research shows that Kahoot! is a platform that motivates and activates students' learning and engagement (Wang & Lieberoth, 2016) because it can test their knowledge, reiterate important concepts, and help them retain information. Plump and LaRosa (2017) add that Kahoot! enhances classroom dynamics, as the game gives students immediate feedback on their performance, and instructors can design and incorporate teaching activities to address any weaknesses in students' responses to the questions.

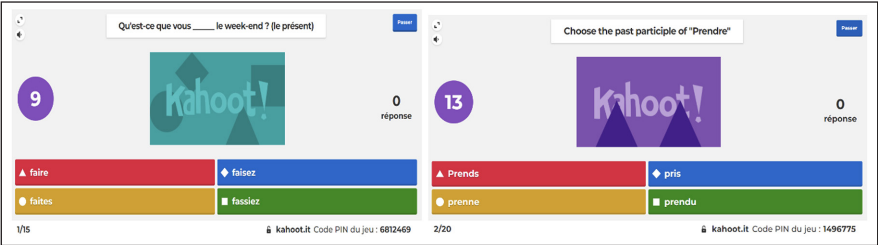
Thousands of Kahoot! games have been played across countries and institutions, and numerous research conducted; however, there is a dearth of documented experiences in the Jamaican context. Wanliss (2021), a teacher-trainer of French, recorded testimonies of Jamaican pre-service L2 teachers, who stated that Kahoot! was useful during their virtual teaching practicum. This scarcity of local data will benefit from this paper, which reports on the use of Kahoot! as a review tool in French L2 classes in a higher education context. Using the exploratory approach, the researcher seeks to ascertain students' perceptions on the use of Kahoot! as well as some benefits of gamification in the L2 classroom.

3. Method

This paper reports on the use of Kahoot! in French L2 classes at NCU, Jamaica² throughout the academic year 2021/2022, among undergraduate learners (N=21), both male (N=7) and female (N=14), between the ages of 18 and 35 years. The students were from different humanities and hospitality majors and followed beginners or intermediate French level courses as part of their programme requirements.

During the 15-week semester beginners' course (spring semester), the researcher played three Kahoot! games and four games in the intermediate course at different intervals to review/reinforce unit content. Each game comprised between ten and 20 questions on syntax, vocabulary, idiomatic expressions, and culture or interculturality (see example in Figure 1). The questions were tailored based on the challenges faced by the students during the lessons. After each question-response period, the instructor provided clarity on both the correct and incorrect responses.

Figure 1. Sample of Kahoot! questions



The data collection included semi-structured interviews and observations conducted by the instructor throughout the course (before, during, and after playing Kahoot!). The primary questions surrounded students' linguistic (all skills) and cultural gains after each session. Additionally, a questionnaire was given towards the end of the spring semester, which consisted of eight closed-ended and five open-ended questions. The former questions primarily accounted for demographic data, while the latter focused on ways in which Kahoot! helped to improve their L2 skills, their perception of Kahoot!, and their thoughts on gamification in L2 education.

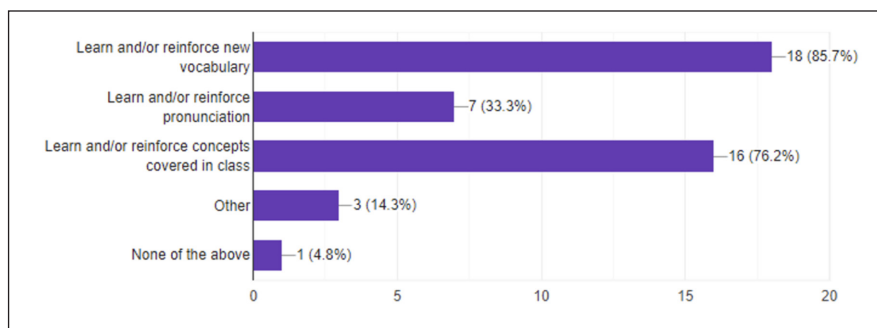
2. Thanks to all students from the Beginners 2 and Intermediate 1 and 2 French courses for participating in this study.

4. Preliminary findings and discussion

In the questionnaire, 72% of the respondents declared that before taking their French course, they had prior knowledge of and exposure to Kahoot!, while 28% had no familiarity with it. Kahoot! was used in other courses to aid revision, and in social and cultural contexts for entertainment as well as competitive purposes.

Concerning the use of Kahoot! to improve students' competence in French, 62% of the participants indicated that the tool helped to improve their level, 33% confirmed that it helped somewhat, while only 5% noted that it did not help at all. The majority of the respondents highlighted that the games played helped them to learn and/or reinforce new vocabulary and pronunciation, as well as previously taught concepts (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. How Kahoot! improves French L2 competence



An extrapolation of the data from the instructor's semi-structured interviews and observations, as well as students' self-reported gains from the questionnaire, also corroborate the above-mentioned findings (see Excerpt 1, [supplementary materials](#)).

Other advantages highlighted from the different data sources include metacognitive and interpersonal development, as students employ different strategies to respond to the questions, and they display great sportsmanship, encouraging and supporting each other throughout the games. However, some students underscore that the countdown feature can provoke anxiety, while for others, technical and connectivity issues can be a downfall (see Excerpt 2, [supplementary materials](#)).

Data from the questionnaire suggests that the incorporation of games in the L2 classroom creates a fun, interactive, and competitive environment, which makes

the context not so strict. Additionally, games tend to grab students' attention and motivate them to learn. Competition also encourages some students to revise their notes if they want to be ranked highly in the games. Moreover, the use of games helps students to recap learned content and identify their strengths and weaknesses (see Excerpt 3, [supplementary materials](#)). For these reasons, 86% of the respondents suggested that Kahoot! should be played after each learning unit, while 14% recommended once monthly. Seventy-one percent indicated that getting prior notice of the game would motivate them to revise, while 29% said it would somewhat motivate them.

An initial analysis of the findings supports [Wang and Lieberoth's \(2016\)](#) position that Kahoot! fosters learners' motivation, reinforces already taught concepts, and promotes information retention. Additionally, Kahoot! as gamification in general shifts classroom dynamics ([Plump & LaRosa, 2017](#)) and brings more diversity to an often-monotonous setting. However, in order for gamification to yield such results, the questions have to be carefully designed to prompt students to utilise their metacognitive strategies to produce meaningful output. Additionally, the instructor must spend time to clarify any misconceptions or questions that students may have.

5. Conclusions

This study suggests that there is a correlation between gamification and students' motivation and involvement in L2 classes. All the participants in this study reported that gamification is fun and engaging, and 95% of them confirmed that the use of Kahoot! enhanced their French language and cultural skills.

Kahoot! promotes student learning and reinforces the acquisition of new vocabulary, previously taught concepts and grammatical structures, and pronunciation. It also aids in the development of metacognitive and interpersonal skills. However, technical and connectivity issues can arise, and timing plays an important role. Gamification should be carefully designed and executed to yield meaningful output.

6. Supplementary materials

<https://research-publishing.box.com/s/grpagqq8socklgfvnzef39fp4561c8qs>

References

- Buckley, P., & Doyle, E. (2016). Gamification and student motivation. *Interactive Learning Environments*, 24(6), 1162-1175. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10494820.2014.964263>
- Gardner, R. C. (2010). *Motivation and second language acquisition: the socio-educational model*. Peter Lang.
- Kapp, K. (2012). *The gamification of learning and instruction: game-based methods and strategies for training and education*. Pfeiffer.
- Madden, O. (2022). Bridging the learning gap in higher education. *The Jamaica Observer*. <https://www.jamaicaobserver.com/columns/bridging-the-learning-gap-in-higher-education/>
- Manzano-León, A., Camacho-Lazarraga, P., Guerrero, M. A., Guerrero-Puerta, L., Aguilar-Parra, J. M., Trigueros, R., & Alias, A. (2021). Between level up and game over: a systematic literature review of gamification in education. *Sustainability*, 13(4), 2247. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su13042247>
- OECD. (2020). Strengthening online learning when schools are closed: the role of families and teachers in supporting students during the COVID-19 crisis. *Tackling Coronavirus (COVID-19): Contributing to a global effort* (p. 2). <https://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/strengthening-online-learning-when-schools-are-closed-the-role-of-families-and-teachers-in-supporting-students-during-the-covid-19-crisis-c4ecba6c/>
- Plump, C. M., & LaRosa, J. (2017). Using Kahoot! in the classroom to create engagement and active learning: a game-based technology solution for eLearning novices. *Management Teaching Review*, 2(2), 151-158. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2379298116689783>
- Wang, A. I., & Lieberoth, A. (2016). The effect of points and audio on concentration, engagement, enjoyment, learning, motivation, and classroom dynamics using Kahoot!. In *Proceedings from the 10th European Conference on Games Based Learning* (p. 738). Academic Conferences International Limited.
- Wanliss, K. (2021). *Practicum in a pandemic: voices of the pre-service teacher*. Unpublished manuscript.

Published by Research-publishing.net, a not-for-profit association
Contact: info@research-publishing.net

© 2022 by Editors (collective work)
© 2022 by Authors (individual work)

Intelligent CALL, granular systems and learner data: short papers from EUROCALL 2022

Edited by Birna Arnbjörnsdóttir, Branislav Bédi, Linda Bradley, Kolbrún Friðriksdóttir, Hólmfríður Garðarsdóttir, Sylvie Thoučny, and Matthew James Whelpton

Publication date: 2022/12/12

Rights: the whole volume is published under the Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives International (CC BY-NC-ND) licence; **individual articles may have a different licence.** Under the CC BY-NC-ND licence, the volume is freely available online (<https://doi.org/10.14705/rpnet.2022.61.9782383720157>) for anybody to read, download, copy, and redistribute provided that the author(s), editorial team, and publisher are properly cited. Commercial use and derivative works are, however, not permitted.

Disclaimer: Research-publishing.net does not take any responsibility for the content of the pages written by the authors of this book. The authors have recognised that the work described was not published before, or that it was not under consideration for publication elsewhere. While the information in this book is believed to be true and accurate on the date of its going to press, neither the editorial team nor the publisher can accept any legal responsibility for any errors or omissions. The publisher makes no warranty, expressed or implied, with respect to the material contained herein. While Research-publishing.net is committed to publishing works of integrity, the words are the authors' alone.

Trademark notice: product or corporate names may be trademarks or registered trademarks, and are used only for identification and explanation without intent to infringe.

Copyrighted material: every effort has been made by the editorial team to trace copyright holders and to obtain their permission for the use of copyrighted material in this book. In the event of errors or omissions, please notify the publisher of any corrections that will need to be incorporated in future editions of this book.

Typeset by Research-publishing.net

Cover photo by © 2022 Kristinn Ingvarsson (photo is taken inside Veröld – House of Vigdís)

Cover layout by © 2022 Raphaél Savina (raphael@savina.net)

ISBN13: 978-2-38372-015-7 (PDF, colour)

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data.

A cataloguing record for this book is available from the British Library.

Legal deposit, France: Bibliothèque Nationale de France - Dépôt légal: décembre 2022.