

Students' Perceptions of Kahoot!, Gamification, and the Role of Instructor in Online French as a Foreign Language Classes in Jamaica

Oneil N Madden^{1*}, Rashad Higgs², Sheldon Gordon³, Rovel Chambers⁴

¹ Language Teaching and Research Centre (LTRC), University of Technology, Jamaica


² Department of Foreign Languages, Sherlin C Bootle Secondary School, Bahamas

³ Department of Computer Science, University of the Commonwealth Caribbean, Jamaica

⁴ Department of ICT, Discovery Bay High School, Jamaica

*Corresponding author's email: oneil.madden@utech.edu.jm

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9816-7444>

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ABSTRACT

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Gamification is a pedagogical tool that has brought much value to teaching and learning, including foreign languages (FLs), and serves to keep students engaged and motivated. Tools such as Kahoot! have gained much traction in FL contexts, with many studies focusing on their relation to learner enthusiasm and participation. However, the available data focuses primarily on the role of the teacher. The authors sought to gain students' perspectives of Kahoot! in online French classes and the role of the instructor in the process. Sixteen undergraduate students at the University of Technology, Jamaica responded to a questionnaire. The study used a mixed-methods research design. Qualitative content analysis was employed to analyze the qualitative data, while descriptive statistics were used to analyze the quantitative data. Major findings reveal that Kahoot! is beneficial to FL learning, as it helps to improve students' vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and cultural competence. Kahoot! also aids in the application, retention, and reinforcement of knowledge. However, technical and internet connectivity issues can impact the game's flow. The teacher is responsible for preparing and facilitating the game strategically, as well as reviewing the answers with the students in a manner that promotes metacognition. The study has implications for frameworks of foreign language excitement (FLEX).

Introduction

Technology is increasingly occupying our lives (Moreno, 2020), and it has brought about notable shifts in various sectors, including education (Tu, 2022). With the rapid advancement of technology, educators have access to numerous applications, gadgets, software, tools, and web resources that can be integrated into the teaching and learning process. Given this wide

variety, there is continuous experimentation, research, and development on the many exploits that technology brings to education. The incorporation of technology in education has made learning less boring and cumbersome, as it makes the process more interesting and engaging (Budhwar, 2017).

In the field of second/foreign language (L2/FL) learning, Pham (2022) highlights that technology is an inevitable and vital asset, as it offers not only “linguistic insight but also attractive social and cultural content” (Moreno, 2020, p. 256). Softa (2022) notes that modern technology assists FL instructors and methodologists with auditory and audio-visual teaching tools that target the four main language competences: reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Additionally, in the Jamaican FL context, technology continues to revolutionize the applied linguistics domain through constant advances and exploration in computer and mobile-assisted language learning (CALL/MALL), games, and interactive worksheets, which enhance students’ engagement and motivation (Madden et al., 2024; Madden et al., 2023). In fact, Panagiotidis et al. (2023) argue that “millennials interact continuously and seamlessly with technology and this is affecting both how they want to learn and to be taught in any level of education, and, the teaching and learning practices used” (p. 70).

Lăpădat and Lăpădat (2024) emphasize that motivation is critical to FL learning, as “it can significantly influence students’ engagement, perseverance, and overall achievement in the language” (p. 142). Research shows that gamification is an approach that fosters this motivation. Christopoulos and Mystakidis (2023) define gamification or gameful design as “the strategic application of game design principles, mechanics, and elements into non-game environments” (p. 1223). Gamification is often conducted through digital platforms with the aim of solving problems, enhancing engagement, and motivating participants toward specific objectives (Zhang & Yu, 2021). Thuraiarasu (2022) notes that gamification in FL can take various forms, including role-playing, board games, and simulations, to enhance grammar skills.

Kahoot! is also known as an increasingly popular gamified tool used in FL pedagogy. According to its website (Kahoot.com), Kahoot! is described as a “game-based learning platform” that promotes learning through “engagement and fun”. Across the globe, numerous studies have been conducted that explore the affordances of this platform to FL education. However, the literature remains limited in Jamaica. An exploratory study conducted by Madden (2022) at a tertiary institution in Jamaica found that Kahoot! helps most students improve their French in areas such as vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and culture. However, as there is a need for more in-depth studies, this research aimed to ascertain students’ perceptions of Kahoot! and gamification in online French as a foreign language (FFL) classes, as well as the role of the instructor in this regard. To achieve this, the following questions were formulated to guide the study:

1. What are students’ perceptions of Kahoot! and gamification in FL learning?
2. What is the role of the instructor during Kahoot! games?

Literature review

Overview Gamification in FL Pedagogy

Numerous educational and e-learning tools are available to enhance the teaching and learning process. Gamification is one tool that has experienced increased usage in FL pedagogy, particularly over the last three to four years, due to the coronavirus pandemic, which has altered

many aspects of our daily lives (Vo & Le, 2023). Educational tools, specifically e-learning or online educational tools, have two distinctive aspects: technology for education and education through technology. Gamification falls within the realm of education through technology (Fischer & Barabach, 2023). Gamification refers to the use of games within an educational context, aiming to meet the educational goals or objectives of a lesson or unit (Staller & Koerner, 2021).

Educators are defined and identified by their philosophy of education and the methods they employ in the classroom within the teaching and learning process. Gamification equally falls within this scope. Gamification should be determined based on the purpose of the game, the goal(s) to be met by the teacher and students, and the physical, metacognitive, social, and social-emotional skills being taught or refined. Kashive and Mohite (2023) posit that gamification should be well-thought-out in terms of the specific game (the type of game being used), its appearance, and how it applies to students' needs, as gamification is not only linked to student motivation but also to student behavior. Specific game features such as points, badges, prizes, and achievements can be utilized to enhance learning motivation and engagement (Pingmuang and Koraneekij, 2022). Gil-Acirón (2022) highlights the importance of motivation and engagement of various linguistics features, the process of communication, and the cooperative learning environment provided through gamification. Additionally, students can become informed consumers of digital information and netiquette in their first and second languages. Teachers can use these moments to incorporate incidental or planned mini-lessons on vocabulary related to technology and the game's features within the instructional process.

However, gamification also has challenges, such as internet connectivity issues and a lack of professional development and knowledge among students and faculty concerning technology integration within the classroom. Kashive and Mohite (2023) cautioned that the gamification of the educational arena must be well-planned and executed, as failure to do so may result in students being disengaged or unmotivated. If the game, its purpose, or medium has not been intentionally prepared and implemented, it can have adverse effects on students and the overall lesson. Additionally, some students may lack social skills, which can hinder the purpose of the lesson and its collaborative approach (where applicable) (Kashive & Mohite, 2023). Furthermore, the immediate feedback provided by gamification, in some cases, is insufficient to help students meet their language goals, or the feedback is limited to prizes, leaderboards, points, and other game-features that merely indicate one's strengths or weaknesses (Staller & Koerner, 2021).

Theories of Motivation and Gamification in L2 Teaching and Learning

Motivation is heavily reliant on individual students and the goals they set for themselves in contexts of second language learning/acquisition (Lin & Smith, 2024). Motivation, since its study from the 1950s, has been as pertinent as the study of a FL in and of itself. There have been three theories of motivation in focus: social psychological factors, cognitive, process-oriented, and –since 2005– a socio-dynamic theory, which encompasses the three theories through a three-dimensional L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS).

Lin and Smith (2024) discuss the following aspects of motivation in detail, which encapsulates the L2MSS: the instrumentality and integrativeness of motivation, L2 motivation as a process, Self-Determination Theory (SDT), the L2 motivational self-system, and identity and L2 motivation. The determining factor that influences every facet of motivation, and specifically those listed here, is the self. Put differently, the person acquiring the language, their belief system, and rationale for learning are just as salient as the language acquisition itself. Motivation is dependent on a growth or fixed mindset, which highlights fluidity in the case of

a growth mindset and calcification in the case of a fixed mindset (Wichaidit, 2025). However, while motivation, in some instances, may seem to be so easily defined and discussed, it is still a varying and complex aspect, which is unique to every learner—whether a FL learner or that of any other skill.

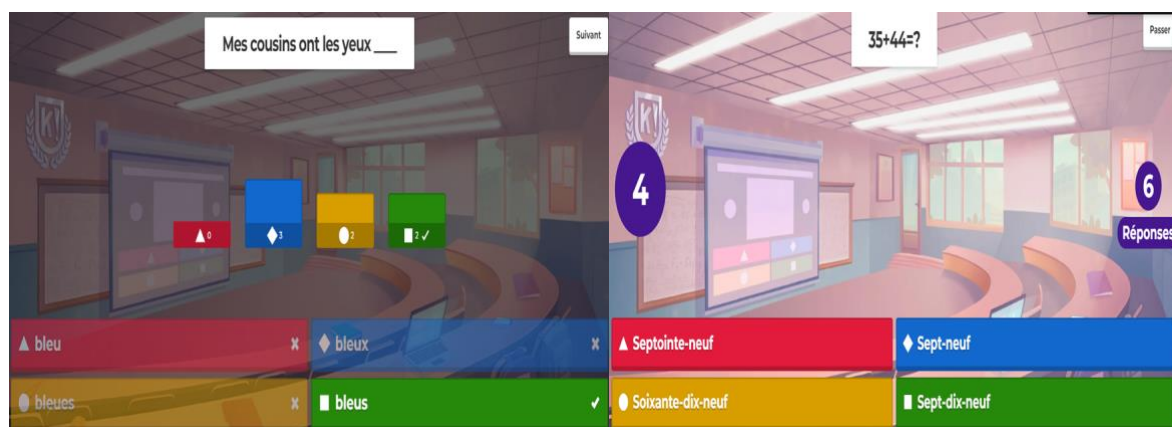
Fixed and growth mindset resembles intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation is the inner rationale for doing something that a person has—it is their innate ability to be self-motivated, despite other means of motivation. In contrast, extrinsic motivation signifies that external factors are the rationale for one's motivation—they are unmotivated without external influences (Zhang and Yu, 2022). The lack of motivation, regardless of the theory of motivation, is unique to each individual. Therefore, the reasons for one's demotivation can vary. Some reasons for a learner's demotivation can be due to a lack of self-belief, fear of failure or making mistakes, or a dislike for the teacher or subject area. Nevertheless, regardless of the reason a learner may be demotivated, using gamification is one way to support, engage, and motivate them throughout the lesson (Zhang & Yu, 2022). Within the classroom, gamification and game-based learning can be pivotal in motivating students; it is a simple but unique manner to encourage and help them to see that they can learn a FL without the fear of ridicule by peers or “not getting” when everyone else does. The many features that are embedded in a game such as prizes, leaderboards, points, customization of game characters, among others make learning fun and less rigid (Gil-Acirón, 2022)

Overview of Kahoot!

Available via <https://kahoot.com/>, Kahoot! is an interactive tool – developed in Norway – that enables instructors to engage and motivate students actively through game-based learning (Wang & Lieberoth, 2016). Aidoune et al. (2022) describe Kahoot! as a game-based classroom application that facilitates real-time categorization of classroom content for assessment, contributing to both formative tasks and learner reflection. It is available in free and paid versions (Hetesi, 2021). Kahoot! presents multiple-choice questions (see examples in Figure 1) that can be played individually or in groups, using personal electronic devices such as smartphones, tablets, or laptops. The questions are projected on a classroom screen, with a 95-character limit per question and a time limit ranging from 5 seconds to 2 minutes. Students earn points based on response accuracy and speed, with a scoreboard displayed after each question, thereby supporting point allotment, rewards and leaderboards in the learning process (Mayor-Peña et al., 2024). Instructors can track students' progress and scores in real time.

Figure 1.

Sample of Kahoot! multiple-choice questions



Kahoot! also allows instructors to create quizzes, surveys, or discussion questions for their

classrooms. Educators can choose to keep their games private for classroom use or share them publicly for broader use. The platform's flexibility makes it useful for presenting new topics, reviewing material, teaching vocabulary, polling students on opinions, and helping students learn content in a sequential order using the newly introduced Jumble mode (Punyanunt-Carter, 2017; Iqbal & Lodhi, 2024).

Benefits of Kahoot in FL Teaching and Learning

Kahoot! has been shown to positively impact students' interest in subject material and reinforce key concepts in the classroom. Research indicates that gamification tools, such as Kahoot!, improve student engagement and learning outcomes (Bicen & Kocakoyun, 2018; Chaiyo & Nokham, 2017). It also fosters strategic thinking, as students weigh the risks and rewards of answering quickly versus cautiously (McQuiston, 2023), offering a low-stakes learning experience before high-stake tests (Crouch & Mazur, 2001). Students often prefer these game-based sessions due to their fun and competitive nature, which promotes active participation and peer interaction (Kalleny, 2020). In addition, Kahoot! provides immediate feedback to both students and instructors, enhancing learning by allowing faculty to identify areas of weakness in their students, which subsequently helps to orient their pedagogical strategies, targeting understanding of difficult topics (Wang & Tahir, 2020; Kalleny, 2020; Plump & LaRosa, 2017; Alexander et al., 2009). Additionally, Kahoot! can be used in both face-to-face and virtual learning environments, facilitating engagement across different teaching modalities (Kalleny, 2020). Lloyd (2023) reports that some Jamaican teachers used gamification, including Kahoot! to engage students in remote learning during the coronavirus pandemic. Furthermore, Kahoot! offers flexibility in content creation, allowing instructors to tailor quizzes, surveys, and discussions to suit their classroom needs. This adaptability enables educators to create assessments that align with learning objectives, while fostering interactive and strategic learning (Crouch & Mazur, 2001; Suchman et al., 2006). Moreover, Kahoot! enhances collaboration and fosters a competitive atmosphere that motivates students to participate and engage with the material. Students report that the competition makes the learning process more exciting and encourages them to study harder (Bicen & Kocakoyun, 2018), thereby enhancing their metacognitive and interpersonal skills (Madden, 2022). The competitive elements of Kahoot! not only increase participation but also help students retain information more effectively (Kalleny, 2020).

Challenges Associated with Kahoot in FL Teaching and Learning

Amid the affordances of Kahoot!, studies have also highlighted associated challenges. For example, students have reported several issues with the fast-paced nature of Kahoot! games, including problems with internet connectivity and other technical issues that affected their ability to participate actively (Madden, 2022). Although providing additional internet-capable devices or using Wi-Fi extenders may be required to ensure full participation, McQuiston (2023) notes that these measures come with their own set of challenges. A solution could be the use of mobile data where internet fails; however, this may be financially challenging for students who do not have the requisite devices or financial support, particularly in developing economies and rural zones. This raises concerns of accessibility and equity.

Moreover, a lack of teacher training in using online learning tools, as well as a traditional curriculum design that does not support digital tools, further limits the adoption of Kahoot! in classrooms, especially in public schools (Iqbal & Lodhi, 2024). Additionally, educators have highlighted the inadequate character limit, which restricts their ability to pose open-ended questions – a feature that was being explored to be added to the game (Bicen & Kocakoyun, 2018). In addition, demographic factors such as gender and grade level can influence students'

engagement, with younger students showing higher motivation levels in some contexts (Kalleney, 2020; Rayan & Watted, 2024).

Recent Studies involving Kahoot in FL Teaching and Learning

This section explores recent studies on Kahoot!'s implementation in FL teaching and learning, with a focus on its applications for various linguistic and cultural contexts. It highlights the platform's application in European and minority language contexts. Additionally, it considers regional implications for the broader application of gamified learning in fostering linguistic diversity.

Troung and Dinh (2024) conducted a sequential explanatory mixed-methods study on 49 Vietnamese university students to gain their views on Kahoot! in English vocabulary teaching. Despite its dependence on technology and limited scope to foster higher-order thinking, the results show that Kahoot! facilitated students' learning. The results also highlight the importance of interactions and the balance between ease of use and opportunities for technology proficiency development in ICT-enriched classrooms. Notwithstanding, variations were noted in terms of students' competitive motivation, and inconsequential technical difficulties were observed.

Anane (2024) conducted a mixed-methods study to ascertain students' perceptions of Kahoot! in online FFL classes. The findings reveal that Kahoot! fostered consistently high student engagement and motivation across three semesters, with most students agreeing that the platform positively impacted their learning.

Caruana and Zammit (2024) examined the concerns and emotions of 43 adult international students while learning L2 Maltese with digital resources, including Kahoot!. The findings from this mixed-methods study reveal a range of both positive and negative emotions experienced during their learning of Maltese. The incorporation of innovative technological interventions corresponded with learners' beliefs and motivations, thereby making the learning process more effective, primarily by stimulating positive emotions.

Ahmed et al. (2022) examined the impacts of Kahoot! on 50 Iranian intermediate students learning L2 English using pre- and post-tests. Findings show that Kahoot! not only improved their vocabulary recall and retention but also showed greater active participation and enthusiasm for learning. Similarly, Korkmaz and Oz (2021) investigated Kahoot!'s impact on regarding comprehension in L2 English of 38 students at a Turkish university. Findings from data collected via reading quiz scores and a questionnaire indicate that learners experienced meaningful improvement in their reading scores after seven weeks of intervention. Additionally, students had a positive attitude towards Kahoot! and it enhanced their vocabulary. Overall, Kahoot! can help to improve students' reading comprehension skills.

Kaur and Nadarajan (2020) report on the use of Kahoot! in English classes in an international school involving five teachers and 50 high school students. The study employed a questionnaire comprising 10 items, utilizing a five-level categorical Likert scale, and semi-structured interviews to collect data. Findings show that almost all the teachers found Kahoot! to be an effective instructional and assessment tool, which helps to engage students actively in classes. Similarly, the majority of students reported positive experiences thanks to Kahoot!'s integration, as it influenced them to participate actively in their language learning process.

Kapsalis et al. (2020) investigated the effectiveness of Kahoot! as a formative assessment tool in reinforcing grammar in a beginning-level Greek course among multicultural learners. The study employed an experimental quantitative methodology to compare a group using Kahoot! with another group using traditional assessment methods. Although both groups improved

significantly on their post-tests, the grades were not notably different between the two groups.

This section examined the usage and perceptions of Kahoot! FL education. The studies included have consistently highlighted that Kahoot! enhances engagement, motivation, and active participation among learners, while providing immediate feedback and supporting formative assessment. Furthermore, this tool aids in vocabulary recall and reading comprehension for cultural understanding and linguistic diversity. Kahoot! demonstrated its adaptability to various languages, therefore promoting inclusivity of regional and minority languages. This review confirms that gamified learning, as exemplified by Kahoot!, can be leveraged to enhance learning processes and promote student-centered approaches through its technological advancements. However, the studies did not address the role of the teacher while playing Kahoot!, which the findings in this study hope to address.

Research Questions

To achieve the aims of this study, the authors were guided by the following questions:

1. What are students' perceptions of Kahoot! and gamification in FL learning?
2. What is the role of the instructor during Kahoot! games?

Methods

The aim is to capture the subjective meanings individuals attribute to their experiences, allowing for a deep understanding of their viewpoints.

Pedagogical Setting & Participants

The study was conducted during the second semester of the 2023/2024 academic year to investigate students' perceptions of Kahoot! and gamification and the role of the teacher in FL classes. The participants in the study consisted of 16 undergraduate students (10 male, 6 female), aged 17 to 40, who took a beginning-level French course (FRE3001 – Basic French) as an elective at the University of Technology, Jamaica. They were from different majors: business administration (N = 5), law (N = 2), computer science (N = 4), communication and technology (N = 2), pharmacy (N = 1), economics (N = 1), and mechanical engineering (N = 1). Majority of the participants (N = 10) had prior exposure to French in high school and university, while (N = 6) did not have any. The majority of them (N = 11) were familiar with Kahoot! Before taking the course, (N = 5) were unfamiliar with the game.

The research employed a purposive sampling technique to select the participants for the study. Campbell et al. (2020) state that purposive sampling is used to select participants susceptible to yield appropriate and valuable information. Stratton (2024) notes that researchers select participants based on their presence in a population of interest, specific features, experiences, or other relevant criteria. Typically, purposive research is designed to gain insight into a specific research question.

Design of the Study

A mixed-methods approach guided this study. Shorten and Smith (2017) describe mixed-methods as a research approach whereby researchers collect and analyze both qualitative and quantitative data within the same study. Creswell (2014) states that this approach provides stronger inference than using either approach on its own. He further emphasizes that the overall objective of the mixed-methods research design is to provide a more comprehensive understanding, offering a richer picture that can enhance the description and understanding of

the phenomenon being studied. Put differently, mixed-methods research helps to understand the holistic picture by combining meanings obtained from different data collection tools.

The online questionnaire items were inspired by the relevant literature and adapted from Alawadhi and Abu-Ayyash (2021) and Anane (2024). The questionnaire is structured into two sections. The first section focused on gathering demographic and students' exposure and attitude towards French, while the second section included both open- and closed-ended questions that examined the impact of Kahoot! and gamification on FL learning and the role of the teacher in Kahoot! games. The primary questions are as follows:

- Do you find that Kahoot helps to improve your French?
- How frequently do you believe Kahoot should be used in class?
- Does knowing that the teacher will play Kahoot motivate you to revise your notes in advance?
- Are there any negatives to the Kahoot games?
- How do you feel when playing Kahoot?
- What are some benefits of using games in foreign language classrooms?
- What role should the teacher play throughout the Kahoot game?

Data collection & analysis

The data were gathered over a five-week period using a questionnaire designed in *Google Forms*. The questionnaire link was shared in class via the Moodle platform and subsequently via the class WhatsApp group. Although 18 students were registered in the course, only 16 completed the questionnaire, which was voluntarily done. Descriptive statistics, which highlight frequencies and patterns, were used to summarize quantitative data through the presentation of graphs, while content analysis was used to analyze qualitative data. Gheyle and Jacobs (2017) note that content analysis seeks to make sense of the (often unstructured) content of messages, such as audio recordings, images, texts, and symbols with the aim of determining textual meaning. The researchers pulled the qualitative responses from the questionnaire and underwent a phase of familiarization and observation to understand certain patterns. Thereafter, the data were systematically coded, by highlighting significant phrases, sentences, or ideas with relevant keywords. During the process, the researchers noted that some of the data were difficult to categorize into codes due to the diverse responses provided.

Validity and Reliability

Various measures were employed to ensure the validity and reliability of the study. The use of quantitative questions followed by qualitative ones enabled triangulation and cross-verification of data, providing a deeper understanding of students' perceptions of the phenomenon studied. The questionnaire was independently reviewed by all the researchers (N = 4); subsequently, the items were refined to eliminate redundancy and enhance content validity.

Ethical Considerations

The data were stored and treated confidentially throughout and after the analysis process. The participants' information was anonymized and no personal data is traceable. The data were kept in a secure manner on a password-protected computer, accessible only to the lead researcher. All this information was communicated to the students prior to them completing the questionnaire.

Results/Findings

In terms of familiarity with Kahoot!, the majority of the respondents (N = 11) indicated that they had prior exposure to the platform, while the remaining (N = 5) did not have any previous knowledge of it. Those with prior experience were exposed to Kahoot! primarily in educational contexts, whether at the high school or university level.

Students' Perceptions of Kahoot!

When asked if playing Kahoot! helped with improving their French, an overwhelming majority of the respondents (N = 14, 87.5%) selected yes, while the remaining (N = 2, 12.5%) noted somewhat, as seen in Figure 2. This shows that Kahoot! is effective in FL learning.

Figure 2

The effect of Kahoot!' in improving students' French.

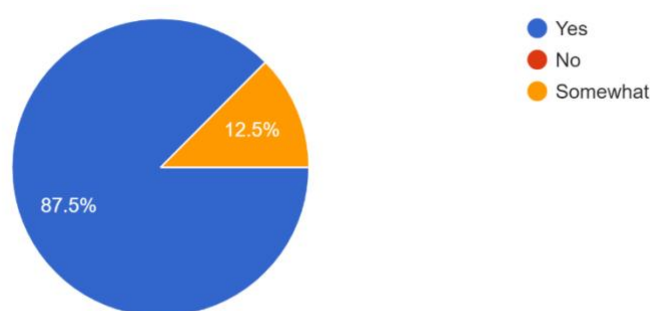
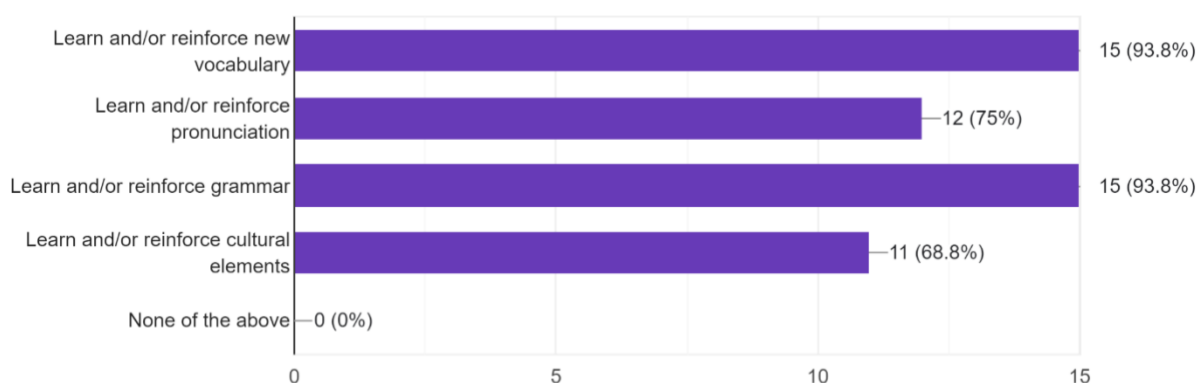


Figure 3 details how Kahoot! helps to improve students' French. Students learned and reinforced new vocabulary and grammatical rules (N = 15, 93.8%), learned and reinforced pronunciation (N = 12, 75%), and learned and reinforced cultural elements (N = 11, 68.8%).

Figure 3

Ways in which playing Kahoot! improved students' French.



Students (N = 4) explained how playing Kahoot! helped to enhance their French competence.

Excerpt 1: *“It helps with understanding more about the language being that there are multiple options, and with my lecturer he always explains why it couldn't be the others.”*

Excerpt 2: “Kahoot helps reinforce vocabulary through fun quizzes that challenge me to recall words quickly. It also improves pronunciation, as some questions require listening and repeating phrases. The competitive aspect motivates me to focus on grammar rules to answer correctly, making learning enjoyable.”

Excerpt 3: “They help me learn everything in regards to French because our teacher asks us about the wrong answers instead of just telling us the right ones, which makes us think.”

Excerpt 4: “Very engaging and requires the recollection and application of your knowledge of French.”

In terms of the frequency with which Kahoot! should be played, the majority of respondents (N = 9, 56%) suggested playing it every class, (N = 6, 37.5%) suggested once a week, while (N = 1, 6.3%) mentioned doing it after each unit, as can be seen in Figure 4.

Figure 4

Frequency with which Kahoot! should be played.

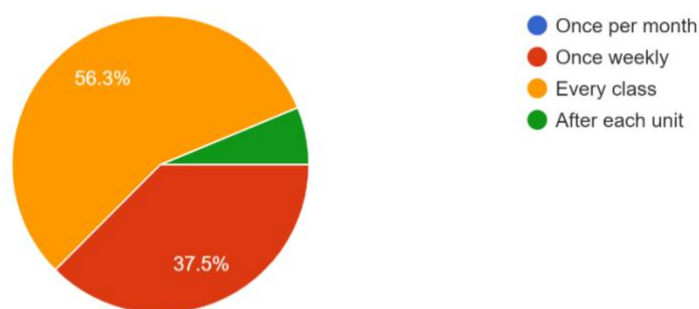
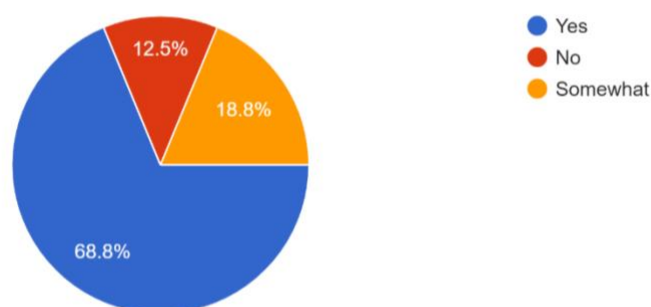


Figure 5 illustrates the correlation between prior knowledge of Kahoot! games and learner motivation to revise their notes. Most students (N = 11, 68.8%) indicated that having foreknowledge of the game prompted them to review their notes. Three students (18.8%) said it had some impact on them, while 2 (12.5%) reported that it had no effect on them.

Figure 5

Correlation between foreknowledge of Kahoot and learner motivation to revise.



Concerning possible negatives associated with playing Kahoot!, (N = 4) students indicated that they had none, while others mentioned problems related to connectivity and technical issues, and the pressures of the game being competitive.

Excerpt 1: *“Sometimes it doesn’t accept the answer.”*

Excerpt 2: *“The questions don’t come up on screen if using your phone. So if you join class using a phone, it might not be so much of a good idea to participate in the game.”*

Excerpt 3: *“One negative could be the pressure of the competitive environment, which might cause anxiety for some students. Additionally, technical issues can disrupt the flow of the game, leading to frustration.”*

Excerpt 4: *“Not necessarily a negative but it inspires and entices competition.”*

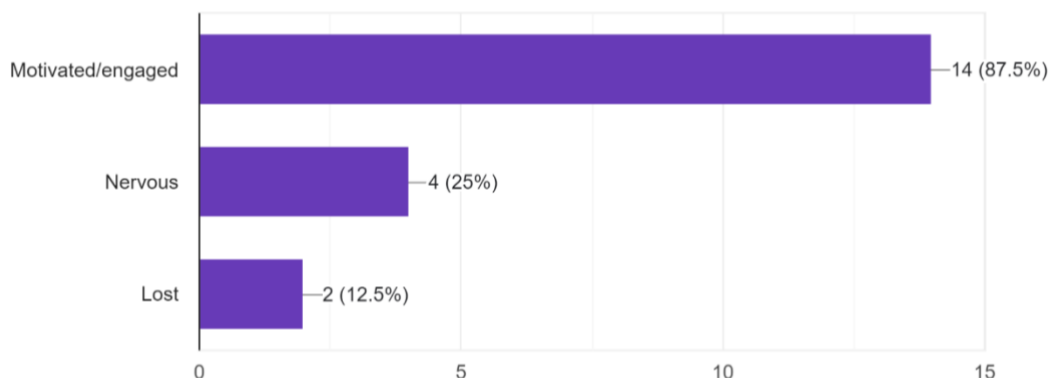
Excerpt 5: *“The questions are not shown on the game, but rather on Zoom which gives little to no time to respond.”*

Excerpt 6: *“Wifi connection”*

Figure 6 shows students’ feelings when playing Kahoot!. Most students (N = 14, 87.5%) reported being motivated, while (N = 4, 25%) felt nervous, and (N = 2, 12.5%) felt lost.

Figure 6

Students’ feelings when playing Kahoot!



Their self-reported declarations provide insight into the reasons behind their feelings.

Excerpt 1: *“It motivates me to compete with my classmates.”*

Excerpt 2: *“Being a part of the game keeps me engaged, resulting in learning opportunity. Whenever I get any wrong, after the explanation by the lecturer, I will learn what I did wrong.”*

Excerpt 3: *“I feel motivated because the game makes learning fun and interactive. However, I also feel nervous due to the competitive nature and the pressure to perform well against my classmates.”*

Excerpt 4: *“Because I have previous knowledge of the language, I just need refresher on some stuff; so when I see multiple words that are familiar with my memory, I get nervous because I don’t want to choose the wrong thing.”*

Excerpt 5: *“I am not familiar with most of the terms, so whenever a question is asked, I’m not sure what it is saying.”*

Excerpt 6: *“Kahoot is about speed and accuracy, so it is a challenge.”*

Excerpt 7: *“Nervous due to wanting to win and not sure if you will. Motivated/ engaged since you want to learn or revise words and statements.”*

Excerpt 8: *“It a competitive and engaging game.”*

Excerpt 9: *“I want to win so I am engaged and actively thinking.”*

Concerning the limitations of Kahoot!, a few students highlighted technical problems such as internet connectivity issues and device navigation difficulties, while others mentioned anxiety provoked by the competitive nature of the game.

Excerpt 1: *“The questions don’t come up on screen if using your phone. So if you join class using a phone it might not be so much of a good idea to participate in the game.”*

Excerpt 2: *“One negative could be the pressure of the competitive environment, which might cause anxiety for some students. Additionally, technical issues can disrupt the flow of the game, leading to frustration.”*

Excerpt 3: *“The questions are not shown on the game, but rather on Zoom which gives little to no time to respond.”*

Excerpt 4: *“Sometimes it doesn’t accept the answer.”*

Excerpt 5: *“Not necessarily a negative but it inspires and entices competition.”*

Excerpt 6: *“Wifi connection”*

Gamification in Foreign Language Learning

Among the primary benefits of gamification in FL teaching and learning, students highlight its positive impact on learner engagement and motivation, as well as the reinforcement and retention of content learned, and the overall classroom climate.

Excerpt 1: *“It keeps students engaged while having fun, helps them to be relaxed and eager to learn if they participate.”*

Excerpt 2: *“Games make learning more engaging and enjoyable, which can lead to better retention of information. They also encourage collaboration among students, fostering a supportive learning environment. Additionally, games often involve friendly competition, motivating students to improve their skills.”*

Excerpt 3: *“They provide an interesting way to learn the content and makes it more beginner-friendly and approachable.”*

Excerpt 4: *“It helps to familiarize with new words and reinforce the ones you already know. Additionally, it helps you to think quickly as there is a time frame in which you are to answer each question.”*

Excerpt 5: *“Competition builds motivation and engagement.”*

Excerpt 6: *“It helps you to understand more and be more focused.”*

Excerpt 7: *“It promotes learning engagement.”*

Excerpt 8: *“Reinforce what was learned in class”*

Excerpt 9: *“Improve the knowledge and learning”**Role of the Teacher during Kahoot! Games*

In terms of the teacher’s role during Kahoot! games, the respondents provided a variety of responses including facilitating the game, correcting and explaining answers, and motivating students.

Excerpt 1: *“Give the question then the answer after we have all answered and explain why.”*

Excerpt 2: *“The teacher should facilitate the game, provide encouragement, and clarify any questions or concepts that arise during the game. They can also offer insights into why specific answers are correct or incorrect, enhancing the learning experience.”*

Excerpt 3: *“Help the persons who get answers wrong understand the differences between the provided answers.”*

Excerpt 4: *“The teacher should continue the role of teaching and asking students about why certain results are incorrect and what makes them that way.”*

Excerpt 5: *“Explain and read through the questions, ensuring that any misunderstanding is cleared up.”*

Excerpt 6: *“Motivating competition”*

Excerpt 7: *“Guidance”*

Additionally, some students noted that the lecturer’s innovative approach and enthusiastic demeanor would encourage them to recommend the course to other students.

Excerpt 1: *“I would recommend the French course to other students. The structured approach, combined with interactive tools such as live worksheets and Kahoot, makes learning both effective and enjoyable. It also opens up opportunities to engage with a rich culture and community.”*

Excerpt 2: *“Our teacher is very cool and very informative as well as enthused. Sometimes his enthusiasm will rub off on you, and that is good. Having someone who loves what they do and enjoys the language they speak/teach is a very good motivator.”*

Discussion

The findings suggest overwhelming support for the inclusion of Kahoot! in FFL classes, as all the participants indicated that the game helped them, in some shape, to improve their French. Kahoot! has a positive influence on different language skills, such as vocabulary (93.8%), pronunciation (75%), grammatical (93.8%), and cultural development (68.8%), as supported by previous studies (Madden, 2022; Ahmed et al., 2022; Kapsalis et al., 2020). This explains why most students want the game to be played in every class (56.3%) or once weekly (37.5%). Unsurprisingly, therefore, most students (87.5%) reported feeling motivated and engaged – a common highlight of Kahoot! (Bicen & Kocakoyun, 2018; Chaiyo & Nokham, 2017). However, a few felt nervous and lost. Nervousness is linked to the competitive aspect of the game, as well as the quick response time required to select an answer (Madden, 2022). Those who are lost are either unfamiliar with the course content or the features of Kahoot! itself. It is therefore important for students to have the right composure participating in the game so that they are not consumed by anxiety, which can cause them to quit participating or select the wrong

answers.

The competitive nature of the game can have a significant impact on students' motivation and preparation (Bicen & Kocakoyun, 2018). To this end, most students (68.8%) indicated that they would revise their notes ahead of the game, while 18.8% said they would somewhat, once they were forewarned. Consequently, to encourage students to participate actively in the learning process, instructors could utilize gamification, especially in formative assessment contexts, by informing them of the game schedule. This would not only propel them to compete but also recall and apply the knowledge they have learned. Implementing a rewards system for podium finishers (see Figure 7) could also enhance students' motivation to perform well. Basnet (2022) notes that positive reinforcement boosts students' learnability and develops their confidence, knowledge horizon, and cooperative learning strategies in FL contexts.

Figure 7

Screenshot of podium finishers in Kahoot! games



Students encourage the incorporation of gamification in FL classes, highlighting benefits with regard to learner motivation and participation, knowledge retention, reinforcement, and application, and classroom climate. As mentioned by Rincon-Flores et al. (2022), gamification brings dynamism to the classroom, moving from traditional learning methods to creative and innovative strategies that increase learning attention and motivation (Pingmuang & Koraneekij, 2022). Educators who teach in online contexts should, therefore, diversify the learning environment by incorporating the technological tools that will not only engage learners but also improve their FL skills. As noted by a participant, “The structured approach, combined with interactive tools like live worksheets and Kahoot, makes learning effective and enjoyable. It also opens up opportunities to engage with a rich culture and community.”

Despite the many advantages of the game, students expressed some challenges that affect their participation, such as issues with wifi connection and difficulties manipulating their devices to play the game effectively. This supports Sianturi and Hung's (2023) study, which noted that students experienced technical errors such as low connection and inadequate expertise in using technology. Instructors, therefore, have to carefully guide students throughout the process, especially those unfamiliar with the game. Students need to understand the implications of using a smartphone versus a laptop to play the game, as the full extent of the game may not display on a phone. As one participant said, “Technical issues can disrupt the flow of the game, leading to frustration.”

The findings also suggest that the teacher plays a critical role throughout Kahoot! games, from preparation to implementation. The teacher decides on the questions to be asked, the format in which they are posed, the content to be addressed, the length of the game, and when it is played

during the class. Being able to customize the games helps the teacher to focus on specific and troublesome points and deliberately infuse cultural knowledge (Madden, 2022). Having the flexibility to incorporate the game at any point in a lesson helps the teacher to strategize to maximize on enriching learning opportunities. Additionally, the teacher facilitates the game, giving relevant instructions throughout, and corrects and explains the answer. Importantly, during the response moments, the teacher should not only focus on the correct answers but also ensure that students understand all response choices. As stated by one participant, “The teacher should continue the role of teaching and asking students about why certain results are incorrect and what makes them that way.” This approach helps them to mobilize their metacognitive skills (Madden, 2022). Additionally, the teacher should motivate students throughout the game. As explained in the theories of motivation, some students rely on extrinsic motivation to unearth their untapped potential. As a result, the teacher can encourage each student to work hard to make it onto the scoreboard and secure a podium finish.

Another important aspect entails the teacher’s enthusiasm for their subject area, as this can also influence students’ motivation and interest in the target language. This is necessary for foreign language enjoyment (FLE) – “a constructive accomplishment emotion with high motivation emerging from progressive learning action or assignment” (Liu et al., 2021, p. 2). FLE has profitable results for various FL learning outcomes, including FL motivation, commitment, and learning success (Li, 2019; Dewaele & Li, 2021). Pavelescu and Petric (2018) posit that FLE significantly affects communication with animated language instructors who provide diverse engaging and challenging classroom activities to keep learners engaged. FL learning, especially for young adults, requires energy, passion, and innovative pedagogy. Nowadays generations are digitally perceptive and surrounded by technology. Given that it occupies a significant part of their daily lives, infusing it in their learning will prove beneficial and improve pedagogical outcomes.

Conclusion

The study has found that Kahoot! and gamification bring several benefits to the teaching and learning of FLs. Kahoot! has a positive impact on students’ FL linguistic development in the areas of vocabulary, pronunciation, and syntax, as well as cultural development. Given its affordances, students welcome the game being played regularly in classes, as it helps them feel engaged and motivated. Playing Kahoot! also helps with knowledge application, retention, and reinforcement. Additionally, Kahoot! and gamification bring creativity, dynamism, and innovation to the classroom, which help diversify pedagogical practices and shift away from traditional teaching methods through the integration of technology. Despite its positives, Kahoot! has its challenges, including issues with internet connectivity and technical problems. The competitive nature of the game can also provoke students’ anxiety. The instructor must prepare for these eventualities and be knowledgeable about how to guide students to resolve them, where possible. The instructor plays a vital role in the Kahoot! game, including preparation, implementation, and debriefing. The teacher should tailor the game to focus on areas where students struggle, thereby capitalizing on learning opportunities. While reviewing the responses, the teacher should not only focus on the correct answers but also on allowing students to explain their incorrect answers. This would help them to develop their metacognitive skills. Where there are gaps, the instructor can provide further explanations. Additionally, critical to gamification are the teacher’s level of enthusiasm and expertise in their content area. An instructor who is passionate about their work and competent in their subject discipline can also serve as motivation to their students. Overall, technology occupies a significant part of

students' daily lives; therefore, instructors should incorporate it in a fun way to enhance the classroom climate and learning experiences.

Future research could explore the use of Kahoot! and other gamified tools in French and other FL taught in the Jamaican classrooms at different levels of the education system. Additionally, as this study focused on Kahoot! in an online teaching context, it could be interesting to incorporate the game into in-person classes to determine its effects. Another study could investigate the correlation between gamification and foreign language excitement (FLEX). This would provide new insights into the concept and create avenues for frameworks.

This study had some limitations. The sample size ($N = 16$) is quite limited, making generalizations of the findings difficult. Therefore, they must be carefully contextualized. However, continuous research on gamification within the university context should be encouraged, even in subject areas such as Academic Literacy, which has vast number of students.

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Biodata

Oneil Madden: Oneil Madden is a linguist and lecturer of Academic Literacy and French at the Language Teaching and Research Centre (LTRC) within the Faculty of Education and Liberal Studies (LTRC) at the University of Technology, Jamaica. He is completing doctoral studies in Language Sciences (English and French) at the Laboratoire de Recherche sur le Langage (LRL), attached to Clermont Auvergne University (UCA) in France. He is an international researcher with interests in Computer/Mobile/Technology-Assisted Language Learning (CALL/MALL/TALL), artificial intelligence (AI), intercultural communication, online pedagogical scenarios, and second/foreign language learning and acquisition. He has published articles in international peer-reviewed journals.

Rashad Higgs: Rashad has been a teacher of Spanish for three years and currently works for

the Bahamian Ministry of Education and Vocational Training at Sherlin C. Bootle Secondary School in Cooper's Town, North Abaco, Abaco. He holds a Master of Education in Curriculum & Instruction, Foreign Language and has research interests in second/foreign language pedagogy, innovative teaching strategies, and foreign language emotion and motivation.

Sheldon Gordon: *Sheldon works as an adjunct faculty at the University of the Commonwealth Caribbean (UCC), Jamaica, where he teaches Data Science. He had previously worked as a high school teacher in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) subjects. He is currently pursuing a Master of Science in Mathematics at Eastern University, Pennsylvania, USA. His research interests include AI and Natural Language Processing in education and industries.*

Rovel Chambers: *Rovel Chambers is an emerging educator in the field of information technology who is poised to be a master educator in educational technology as he describes himself as a digital disrupter and innovator. He obtained a Bachelor of Education in Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) for Business and Computer Studies, with a primary focus on Computer Technology. He currently serves as the Head of Department for the ICT & Business Education Department at the Discovery Bay High School (STEM Academy) in Jamaica. His research interests include artificial intelligence (AI) in education and educational technologies.*