The Efficacy of Kahoot! In Enriching Students' English Vocabulary during Covid-19 Pandemic

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ABSTRACT

If language is a big highway, the words in it are the vehicles without which it looks empty. It is applicable to any language and English is no exception to it. As the English language has been the professional language that connects people globally, learners are obliged to master it to communicate and even to procure their dream careers in India or abroad. But mastery of a language is proportional to the enhancement of its vocabulary which is the currency of one's communication. We know our words are our ambassadors which program us for either success or failure. But in a traditional classroom, we often tend to see some students become hard up for vocabulary while speaking or writing English. With COVID-19 wreaking havoc, the chances of getting students synchronously to improve their vocabulary slowed down. Yet this pandemic compelled the teachers to have dug out a plethora of tools of educational technology to sustain the lost spirit of teaching and learning. Kahoot! is one of the various Edtech tools which has been instituted exclusively to gamify learning in the form of quizzes of various types. Our research analyzes the role of Kahoot! in enriching students' English vocabulary online and further, brings forth the outcome of experimentation with Kahoot! through a new approach to asynchronous teaching and learning during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Keywords: Vocabulary, enrichment, gamify, Kahoot!, asynchronous learning

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INTRODUCTION

There have been various traditional methods and approaches followed and proved successful prior to the pandemic but with COVID-19 still lingering, teachers and educationists had to dig out various EdTech tools not only to teach students online synchronously but also to engage the students in online learning asynchronously. Thus, the gap caused by the COVID-19 pandemic is being filled.

Acquisition of vocabulary is the best recipe for learning any language and English is no exception to it. Burgeoning job opportunities demand students to master English which helps them seize the opportunities that come their way. The growing interest in global trade, the availability of most of scientific resources, and literature in English escalated the necessity of mastering the English Language. But to learn English, students must enrich their vocabulary on a regular basis through rigorous practice. There are four skills; listening, speaking, reading, and writing that the students need to learn to master English. Yet the students should understand the importance of words, pronunciation, and grammar to have command over English and the most significant component of language is its vocabulary [12]. As part of mastering English as a second/foreign language, learning vocabulary in a traditional way seems monotonous to many students. But the technology that can gamify the learning of vocabulary makes it more engaging. Students with technical backgrounds can easily acclimatize to digital learning as they prefer edutainment; a way of making activities both educational and enjoyable [14]. Learning English using various language learning applications makes it more interesting and entertaining. This way the gap between traditional classroom instruction and students' interest in the acquisition of English vocabulary is bridged [2]. Teaching online, especially during this COVID-19 pandemic is not an easy task for teachers. Keeping the students motivated throughout the class and engaging them in serious learning needs herculean efforts from the teachers. This case becomes more difficult in the case of higher education if there is no active response from the students during online classes. Though there are many language learning tools in use, Kahoot! stands out from the rest in helping students learn English vocabulary because it gamifies the quizzes [13].

Kahoot! A Tool of Gamification

Kahoot! is a game-based learning application that intrigues the activities of students in the form of quizzes. Around half of the teachers in the US utilize Kahoot! the biggest Norwegian tech application, in their classrooms, to make learning fun and engaging. Kahoot! brings a positive impact on the learners to learn vocabulary through gamified quizzes, so that learners can accelerate their proficiency in English vocabulary within the stipulated time [4]. Kahoot! develops the spirit of competition among the students and it tests both the speed and accuracy of the learners. The music effect in Kahoot and the way it helps improve students' active participation hold a fascination for the learners [3]. Kahoot! has over 70 million monthly users and 100 million quizzes created by its users. It is used by over 200 countries. Kahoot! greatly affects students' learning vocabulary and their performance, as students can find their activities on Kahoot more interesting and entertaining. This tech application is used by 50% of K-12 students in the US. This stipulates the reliability of Kahoot in learning through gamification [10]. Reynolds et al. claimed that the Game-Based Student Response System (GBSRS) Kahoot! significantly gamifies vocabulary learning and intrigues motivation among students through instant assessment [9]. Quiroz et al. proved that Kahoot can be implemented to achieve subtle differences in scores when compared to conventional learning methodologies [8]. Wang & Tahir concludes that Kahoot! has a positive effect on the learning performance of the students as it gamifies the learning. It also changes the classroom dynamics, improves students' engagement in learning, and mitigates students' anxiety [16].

Kahoot! for Synchronous and Asynchronous Learning

When Kahoot was synchronously used in the classroom, its effectiveness was considered to an extent where over 90% of the students found it easy to use, over 70% of the students said that it helped them improve their English vocabulary and 80% of the students identified it as a tool that helped them engage in the tasks given by their teachers [5].

During COVID-19, Kahoot came in handy for the students to learn any subject in the form of gamification where they found traditional ways of teaching online monotonous but enjoyed taking quizzes on Kahoot! over 90% of the students used Kahoot which took away their boredom of listening to traditional lectures during the pandemic [7]. In the process of acquiring English vocabulary, the learners should not neglect its pronunciation which may change the meaning of the words uttered. Most importantly learning pronunciation needs a lot of attention and it should be employed in an interesting, amusing, and engaging way and in other words, it should be like playing a game that makes us stress-free. However, Kahoot is considered the most sought-after tech application which makes learning easy by gamifying the activities. Thus, learning pronunciation would be a game on Kahoot! [15]. Excessive online classes and relentless lectures make students' academic lives miserable and being attentive to online classes for about 6-8 Hours a day is a soul-destroying task for students. But the choice of asynchronous learning outside the classroom and allowing students to do their work at home at their convenience is certainly a relief for them during this pandemic.

Engaging students in a flipped classroom is possible through Kahoot which converts busy, boring learning into a breathtaking experience, and learning English vocabulary is no exemption from it [11]. Not only does Kahoot! gamify the learning but also throws instant feedback on students' learning that helps students know how competent and competitive they are. Thus, interactive learning takes place via Kahoot!. However, Kahoot! has been used in many ways earlier to enhance students' vocabulary. Medina and Hurtado [5] claimed that Kahoot helped students learn vocabulary when it was synchronously used in the classroom. Going further, Siok, T. H., et al. [11] proved that Kahoot helped students with vocabulary through flipped classrooms.

Yet, it is significant to know that our research was carried out using Kahoot in an asynchronous way which doesn't need both the students and teachers to be online simultaneously, and moreover, it encourages students to learn independently.

Research Question

Does an asynchronous way of using Kahoot! help students enrich their English vocabulary?

Hypothesis

It is assumed that the use of Kahoot! in an asynchronous way would enrich students' English vocabulary. This research is exclusively carried out to study two groups; Experimental and Control and also to train the Experimental group in particular in order to prove productive in learning English vocabulary by using Kahoot! asynchronously. This experimentation may produce a substantial outcome in the enhancement of students' English vocabulary through a meticulous methodology in our research. Then the targeted set of students would prove to be exemplary in their approach to using Kahoot! asynchronously to enrich their English vocabulary. This study is supposed to culminate in enriching the English vocabulary of over 90% of the targeted students with their concerted efforts by using Kahoot! asynchronously.

METHODOLOGY

Participants

The participants were students from different disciplines and branches in Sri Vasavi Engineering College, Tadepalligudem, West Godavari District, Andhra Pradesh, India. There were 211 students and they were between 18 and 20 years of age. The students were from B. Tech 1st year, 2nd semester in the academic year 2020-2021. They were divided into a couple of groups; an Experimental group which consisted of 121 students and the other, a Control group with 90 students.

Materials

Students used 'Word Power Made Easy' in their online classes for the acquisition of vocabulary and in their preparation for the quizzes. They have used their smartphones and laptops with good internet connectivity and practiced English vocabulary in online classes in the form of one-word substitutes, matching the words, true or false, and typing answers. The Experimental group took quizzes every day of the vocabulary asynchronously at their convenience. During Kahoot assigned tasks, students used only one device each but during online teaching live sessions students needed 2 devices each to have taken the quizzes on Kahoot!. One was to attend the class and the other was to take the test. Students in the Experimental group were notified about shared links of their daily quizzes and the quiz Pin numbers on Telegram and the results were sent on WhatsApp. Two different social platforms have been used to avoid confusion among the students.

Procedure

As part of our research, we have taken a sample of 211 students and conducted a pretest for them on Kahoot!. After the pre-test, we learned that there were some students behind with vocabulary and some students excelled in the test. Then we categorized all 211 students into 2 groups. Then one group which couldn't perform up to the mark was the Experimental group with 121 students and the other group which excelled in the test was the Control group with 90 students. An experiment has been conducted for the students of the Experimental group to improve their vocabulary asynchronously on a regular basis for a period of 3 months from April 23, 2021, to July 18, 2021. The students have undergone experimentation with Kahoot! to have enriched their vocabulary gradually as part of their 1st-year 2nd semester English Laboratory course work during the academic year 2020-2021. Kahoot! has been instituted to engage the chosen groups of students in learning vocabulary synchronously during online classes and asynchronously as assigned tasks for the Experimental group every day. Kahoot! already proved to be instrumental both in synchronous learning and in flipped classrooms. But our research was carried out on a novel approach to learning English vocabulary through asynchronous training during the pandemic. Through this asynchronous way of assigning tests online, the students' vocabulary has been continuously tested, evaluated, and given instant feedback for the scholarship and mastery of their new vocabulary.

The book titled " Word Power Made Easy" by Norman Lewis was taken as the knowledge resource to have cemented the students' vocabulary. The first part of the book, which has 18 sessions, was intermittently taught in the classes online, using Google slides, Kahoot Flashcards, quizzes, and Google forms and tested asynchronously through assigned tasks on Kahoot! every day for a period of 3 months as aforementioned. These tests, which consisted of 25 questions each, were conducted in different quizzes such as root words, phonetic transcription, matching words, true or false questions, and type answer questions after each session of the vocabulary were taught. Thus, students' pronunciation skills also improved. This students' asynchronous way of learning vocabulary was continuously gauged and given instant feedback and marks concerning their performance. Students' doubts about their unknown vocabulary had been clarified in online classes before they took the tests every day.

Both the Experimental group and the Control group underwent a Pre-test and a Post-test in common and the Experiment group exclusively went through asynchronous training for about 3 months for the enrichment of their vocabulary and eventually proved progressive in their knowledge of vocabulary through Post-test. Thus, the Experimental group benefited from asynchronous learning and improved their English vocabulary.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Our research was carried out with a view to investigating a novel approach to using Kahoot! asynchronously to help students master their English by improving the proficiency of their vocabulary which helps them to communicate effectively and seize their job opportunities. 211 students were given the pre-test on 23 April 2021 and 42.65% (Control group) students made it correct and 57.35% of the students (Experimental group) failed to do well in the pre-test. Considering these facts and figures, both the Control group and the Experimental group were given synchronous teaching through online classes, but the Control group was exempt from asynchronous learning and the Experimental group was given 3 months of asynchronous training through assigned tasks on Kahoot! everyday. As a result, over 90% of the students could improve their vocabulary, and their performance was gauged through the post-test, conducted on July 18, 2021. Considerable growth can be seen in the diagrams with relevant statistics

below between the students' results in the pre-test and those in the post-test. This way Students could reap the rewards of their continuous efforts for learning English vocabulary using Kahoot! asynchronously.
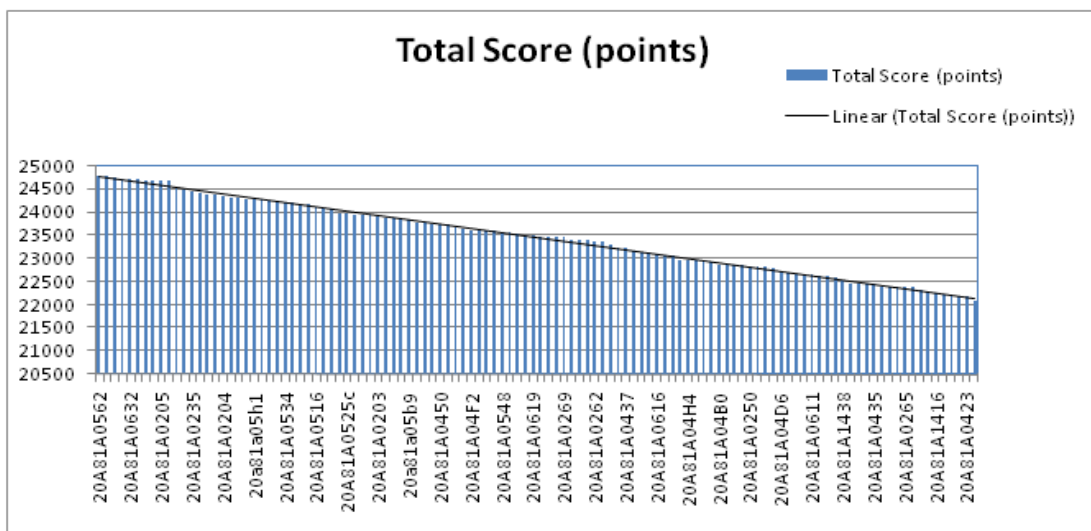
Pre-test

In the results of the Pre-test, 90 students could get over the mark and stood as the Control group while 121 students could not perform up to the expectations of the research expectations and were considered the Experimental group. The image below implies that 57.35% of the students were from the Experimental group and 42.65% were from the Control group.

WPME Session -1 (1)	
Played on	28 April 2021
Hosted by	venkataramana
Played with	211 players
Played	26 of 26

Overall Performance	
Total correct answers (%)	42.65%
Total incorrect answers (%)	57.35%
Average score (points)	15000.78 points

The images below are the indicator of the performance of the students in the Pre-test

During Asynchronous training

The following images depict the training sessions conducted as part of the research. These are some of the evidential images of the tests taken by the students under the tutelage of the researchers.
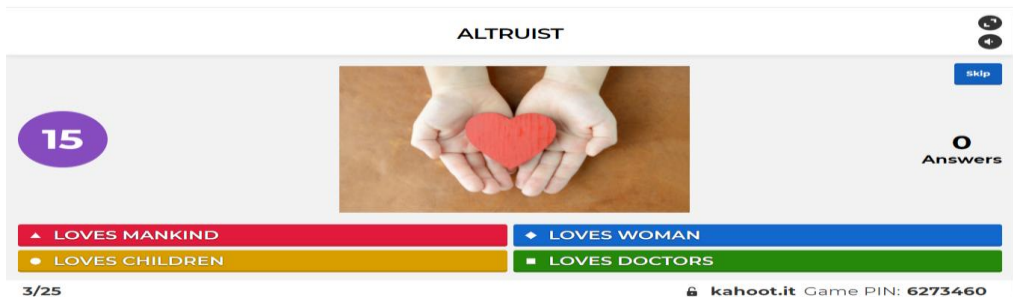

Post-test

In the Post-test conducted on July 18, 2021, over 90% of the students i.e. 191 students could make an impact by having excelled in learning vocabulary. Surprisingly 115 students from the Experimental group could get over 20 marks while 77 students from the Control group equated with them. However, in the three-month training, the Experimental group could showcase their ability to learn and retain their vocabulary on par with their counterpart in the post-test.
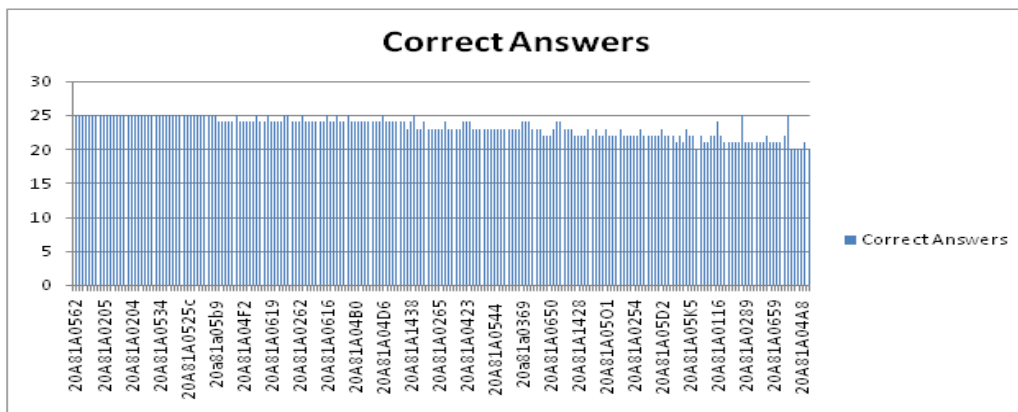
WPME Session -18 (2)	
Played on	18 July 2021
Hosted by	venkataramana
Played with	211 players
Played	26 of 26

Overall Performance	
Total correct answers (%)	90.98%
Total incorrect answers (%)	9.02%
Average score (points)	15000.78 points

Rank	Player	Total Score (points)	Q1	/ˌɒstiˈɒpəθi/	Q2
1	20A81A0625(cst)	23995	976	Osteopathy	941
2	20A81A0415	23834	964	Osteopathy	930
3	20A81A1458	23750	954	Osteopathy	928
4	20A81A0651	23679	959	Osteopathy	945
5	20A81A05H4(cse)	23607	953	Osteopathy	976
6	20A81A0633(cst)	23569	967	Osteopathy	937
7	20A81A0222(EEE)	23476	985	Osteopathy	973
8	20A81A1432	23303	947	Osteopathy	925

The image below clearly depicts the numerical facts of the research such as the number of students taking the Pre-test, Post-test, subsequent results, and considerable improvement in learning vocabulary in the due course of the research.
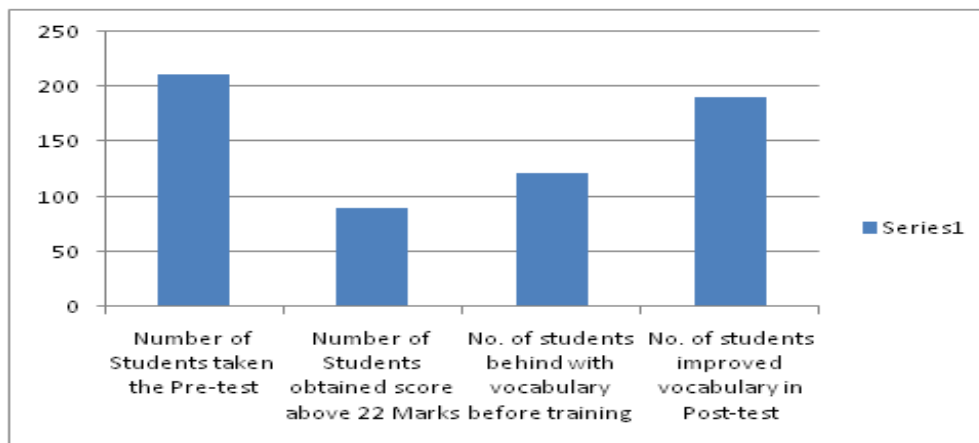
As many students lack English vocabulary to meet the needs of communication and the job market nowadays, it is highly essential for the students to focus on the sub-skill of the language; vocabulary to listen, speak, read, and write English. Yet the use of Kahoot improved students' vocabulary gradually [1]. Kahoot! helped the teachers and students maintain good academic interaction throughout the research. Using Kahoot, we could make discussions and quizzes for our students. Even the instant feedback for the responses received from students was given at ease. Kahoot! also saved us lots of energy because of its feature gamification. It would also increase students' active participation and serious attention. Kahoot! stood out in our research in terms of its speed and accuracy [6].

CONCLUSION

During the COVID-19 Pandemic, the concept of gamification and edutainment has come into the limelight despite its presence in education even prior to the pandemic. The pandemic wreaks havoc, but the other side of the coin is that it brings about many changes in education. It opened a way to have dug out various methods to keep students engaged in online learning both synchronously and asynchronously and to bridge the gap between teacher's instruction and students' reception as well. Particularly in ELT, the role of EdTech tools is instrumental in delivering the goods and helping students hone their skills during the pandemic. In our research, the employment of Kahoot in online learning broke the students' monotony and gave the students a breathtaking experience of learning English vocabulary in all its excellence. Kahoot! has been extensively used in students' (Experimental group) asynchronous way of learning English vocabulary. Over 90% of the students benefited from the use of Kahoot! and the reports attached stipulate the efficacy of Kahoot in enriching the English vocabulary of the targeted set of students and hence our research proved to be successful in using Kahoot! asynchronously.

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