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## Playing to Learn: How Kahoot Enhances Vocabulary Mastery and Motivation in Indonesian EFL Classrooms

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Received: May 03, 2025

Revised : Aug 01, 2025

Accepted : December 26, 2025

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### ABSTRACT

This study investigates the effectiveness of the Kahoot application in enhancing vocabulary skills among senior high school students within the Indonesian EFL context. The research aims to explore both teachers' and students' perspectives on how gamified learning influences vocabulary mastery, motivation, and classroom engagement. Employing a qualitative phenomenological design, data were collected through semi-structured interviews with English teachers and questionnaires distributed to students who had used Kahoot in vocabulary lessons. The findings reveal that Kahoot significantly improves students' vocabulary comprehension, retention, and participation by transforming learning into an interactive and enjoyable experience. Teachers reported that the platform fosters active engagement, supports formative assessment, and creates a positive competitive atmosphere that enhances motivation. Students expressed high levels of satisfaction, noting that Kahoot's visual and auditory features made vocabulary learning more accessible and memorable. However, challenges such as limited internet connectivity, unequal device access, and character restrictions in quiz creation were identified as barriers to consistent use. Despite these obstacles, the study demonstrates that Kahoot contributes to effective and student-centered vocabulary instruction by integrating digital play and pedagogical rigor. These results underscore the potential of gamified learning platforms to strengthen English vocabulary acquisition and suggest that sustainable implementation requires adequate infrastructure and teacher training.

*Keywords:* Kahoot, vocabulary learning, gamified learning, student motivation, EFL education

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### INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary is widely recognized as the foundation of language competence and communication. As Haerudin (2018) defines, vocabulary refers to the words taught in a foreign language such as English, encompassing meaning, form, and usage. Similarly, Rohamtillah (2020) emphasizes vocabulary as a core element of linguistic expression, while Susanto (2017) asserts that learning vocabulary is the essential first stage in mastering a new language. Vocabulary knowledge is not only crucial for reading comprehension and writing ability but also determines overall English proficiency. Nirwana (2023) further argues that students' vocabulary mastery directly influences their ability to interact, comprehend texts, and express themselves fluently. Consequently, vocabulary acquisition plays a central role in English as a



Foreign Language (EFL) learning, especially in Indonesian contexts where students often face persistent challenges in retaining and using new words effectively.

The learning of vocabulary, however, is far from straightforward. It demands significant time, repeated exposure, and active engagement. For EFL learners, especially non-native speakers, acquiring and retaining new words is often the most difficult part of language learning. Ng et al. (2022) note that limited vocabulary restricts students' ability to speak, comprehend academic content, and perform effectively in school. Students frequently experience anxiety, discouragement, and low confidence when faced with unfamiliar vocabulary. Kusnierek (2016) highlights those traditional approaches relying solely on speaking practice or rote memorization without engaging media often fail to sustain students' motivation and attention. As a result, English vocabulary learning becomes monotonous and ineffective. To overcome these challenges, educators have turned to digital media and interactive learning environments to make the process more enjoyable and effective. One such innovation is \*Kahoot!\*, a game-based learning platform designed to transform passive learning into an engaging, competitive experience (Rieska, 2022).

Kahoot! represents one of the most popular tools in the global movement toward technology-enhanced language learning. According to Angela (2019), the platform has over 70 million active users worldwide and has become a vital educational tool that makes vocabulary learning interactive and visually stimulating. Licorish et al. (2018) underline that technology integration in English language teaching can significantly improve learner interaction, motivation, and participation. Kahoot, in particular, incorporates elements of gamification—points, leaderboards, and instant feedback—that align with students' digital habits and learning preferences. Jamil et al. (2020) regard Kahoot as one of the most significant educational innovations in recent years, as it encourages learners to actively participate and enhances comprehension through competitive engagement. Through its design, Kahoot transforms vocabulary exercises into dynamic activities where learners are intrinsically motivated to recall and apply their knowledge.

Bicen and Kocakoyun (2018) identify Kahoot as a game-based learning tool that allows teachers to create, share, and administer quizzes quickly and effectively, offering real-time feedback to both instructors and students. Slamet (2023) adds that Kahoot's adaptability makes it suitable for learners across various levels and subjects, including senior high school English classes. Zhang et al. (2021) highlight the platform's ability to enhance student collaboration and teacher-student interaction, fostering a more participatory learning environment. Kaur and Nadarajan (2020) emphasize that Kahoot's gamified design not only supports assessment but also improves learning outcomes, making it an effective instructional tool that bridges motivation and achievement. These studies collectively suggest that the integration of Kahoot in English vocabulary instruction holds promise for addressing motivational and cognitive barriers that often hinder student progress.

Empirical evidence also supports the positive impact of Kahoot on students'



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learning performance and attitudes. Heni (2021) conducted a study at SMPN 8 Cilacap and found that students who used Kahoot to learn descriptive texts demonstrated significant improvement in reading comprehension. The results revealed that game-based activities helped learners concentrate, reduce boredom, and remain motivated to complete tasks. Similarly, Nirwana et al. (2023) investigated students' perceptions of using Kahoot for vocabulary learning and reported that the platform increased motivation, engagement, and curiosity while promoting active participation and vocabulary retention. Octa Pratama et al. (2022) observed that Kahoot fosters positive competition, enhances focus, and motivates students to continue learning. These findings are reinforced by Udur (2022), who found that learners viewed Kahoot as a beneficial tool that significantly improved their English vocabulary acquisition and sustained their motivation to learn new words. Together, these studies suggest that game-based learning tools like Kahoot can effectively transform conventional classroom dynamics into more engaging, student-centered environments.

Despite growing evidence of Kahoot's benefits, several gaps remain. Much of the existing literature focuses primarily on student outcomes, with limited exploration of how teachers perceive and implement the platform in vocabulary instruction. The present research addresses this gap by examining the perspectives of both teachers and students regarding Kahoot's effectiveness in enhancing vocabulary learning. Understanding these perspectives is crucial, as the success of digital learning tools depends not only on technological design but also on pedagogical integration and users' attitudes. Teachers' strategies in implementing Kahoot—such as quiz design, timing, and feedback—determine the degree to which the platform fosters meaningful learning rather than superficial engagement. Hence, exploring these dual perspectives provides a more holistic understanding of Kahoot's pedagogical value in real classroom contexts.

Furthermore, this study is grounded in the concept of perspective or point of view, as defined by Muhammad (2018), which refers to one's cognitive and evaluative stance toward an issue. The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines perspective as "the capacity to see things in their true relationship or relative importance." Similarly, the \*Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia\* (KBBI) describes perspective as a human viewpoint shaped by beliefs and experiences. Sarlinto, as cited in Nyanyu Soraya (2018), adds that perspective encompasses perceptual abilities such as differentiation, categorization, and focus, explaining why individuals may perceive the same phenomenon differently based on their personal values and experiences. In educational contexts, perspective is critical because teachers and students may interpret the same instructional tool—such as Kahoot—through distinct lenses of usefulness, difficulty, or enjoyment. Therefore, investigating both groups' viewpoints provides a balanced picture of how Kahoot influences vocabulary learning processes and outcomes.

Building on this conceptual foundation, the present study explores teachers' and students' perspectives on the effectiveness of the Kahoot application in improving

vocabulary skills at a senior high school in Sumenep, Indonesia. The research also examines how teachers employ Kahoot strategically in classroom instruction to support students' vocabulary acquisition. This dual focus responds to calls in recent literature for more context-sensitive analyses of digital learning tools in developing educational systems, where technological access, infrastructure, and pedagogical training often vary widely. By situating the study within the Indonesian EFL context, it contributes localized insights to the global discourse on gamified learning and technology integration in language education.

In summary, vocabulary learning remains a persistent challenge for EFL learners due to motivational, cognitive, and contextual barriers. Digital innovations such as Kahoot offer promising solutions by combining technology and pedagogy to create interactive, competitive, and enjoyable learning experiences. Previous research consistently reports that Kahoot enhances engagement, collaboration, and language performance. However, the extent to which teachers and students perceive it as an effective tool for vocabulary instruction, and the strategies teachers use to optimize its implementation, remain underexplored. Therefore, this study aims to fill that gap by investigating the perceived effectiveness of Kahoot in enhancing vocabulary skills from both teacher and student perspectives, providing empirical evidence and pedagogical implications for the broader field of technology-enhanced language learning.

## METHOD

This chapter presents the methodological framework applied to explore teachers' and students' perspectives on the effectiveness of the Kahoot application in enhancing vocabulary skills. The research design, participants, data collection instruments, procedures, and analytical techniques are described systematically to ensure methodological rigor and transparency.

### Research Design

This study employed a qualitative phenomenological approach to examine the lived experiences and perceptions of teachers and students who used the Kahoot application in vocabulary instruction. The phenomenological design was chosen because it allows researchers to capture the essence of participants' subjective meanings and interpretations regarding a phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). As the study's objective was to understand how participants perceive the effectiveness of Kahoot, qualitative inquiry offered the most suitable framework for generating rich, contextualized insights rather than statistical generalizations. The research explored attitudes, experiences, and teaching strategies from two participant groups teachers and students to build a comprehensive understanding of the platform's pedagogical value.

### Research Site and Participants

The study was conducted at a senior high school in Sumenep, Indonesia, where English is taught as a foreign language. A total of 42 participants were involved,

comprising 16 English teachers from various grade levels and 26 students from Grade 12 language Program. Participants were selected through purposive sampling, a technique appropriate for qualitative research that targets individuals with specific experience and knowledge of the phenomenon being studied (Palinkas et al., 2015). All participants had prior exposure to the use of Kahoot in English vocabulary lessons.

Among the teacher participants, three were selected for in-depth interviews based on their active integration of Kahoot in vocabulary teaching. Their insights offered valuable details about instructional strategies, observed outcomes, and classroom dynamics. The student group was invited to complete an online questionnaire distributed via Google Forms, ensuring accessibility and convenience during data collection. Participants were informed about the study's objectives, procedures, and confidentiality measures, and participation was entirely voluntary.

## Research Instruments

Two main instruments were used for data collection: semi-structured interviews and questionnaires

### *a. Semi-Structured Interviews:*

Interviews were conducted with three English teachers to explore their experiences in using Kahoot for vocabulary instruction. Semi-structured interviews provided flexibility for probing deeper into participants' responses while maintaining a consistent framework across sessions. Each interview consisted of open-ended questions focusing on (1) teachers' perceptions of Kahoot's effectiveness, (2) implementation strategies, (3) challenges encountered, and (4) perceived student engagement and outcomes. Interviews were conducted online via WhatsApp, recorded with consent, and transcribed for analysis.

### *b. Questionnaire:*

The student questionnaire was developed and administered through Google Forms to gather data on learners' perceptions of Kahoot. The questionnaire contained Likert-scale items ranging from "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree," alongside open-ended questions to allow elaboration. The Likert-scale responses were used to quantify the degree of agreement toward statements related to motivation, vocabulary improvement, ease of use, and satisfaction. This instrument was particularly suited to the study context because it facilitated efficient data collection from a dispersed population and encouraged reflective responses in a low-pressure environment.

## Data Collection Procedures

Data collection was carried out in several stages to ensure systematic and comprehensive coverage:

### *Preparation*

The researcher first sought approval from the school administration and informed teachers about the research objectives. Consent was obtained from all participants, ensuring adherence to ethical guidelines.

### *Questionnaire Distribution*

Student questionnaires were distributed online via Google Forms. The link was shared through the class communication platform, and students completed the questionnaire at their convenience. This digital approach addressed geographical limitations and minimized classroom disruption.

### *Interview Process*

Semi-structured interviews with teachers were conducted online using the WhatsApp application. Each session lasted approximately 30–45 minutes. The researcher used guiding questions while allowing participants to elaborate on their experiences freely. The interviews provided qualitative insights that complemented quantitative responses from the student questionnaire.

### *Data Triangulation*

To enhance the validity of findings, data from different sources—teacher interviews and student questionnaires—were triangulated. This approach allowed the researcher to identify converging patterns and discrepancies between the perspectives of both groups.

### *Data Analysis*

The data analysis process followed Miles and Huberman's (1994) interactive model, consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing.

#### a. Data Reduction:

All interview transcripts and questionnaire responses were reviewed and organized. Repeated readings allowed the researcher to identify significant statements and emerging themes related to the perceived effectiveness of Kahoot in vocabulary learning. Coding was performed manually by grouping responses into thematic categories such as \*effectiveness, motivation, strategy, challenge, and engagement.

#### b. Data Display:

The categorized data were presented in tables and narrative summaries to facilitate interpretation. Quantitative data from the Likert-scale responses were analyzed descriptively using percentages. For instance, results showed that 65.4% of students found Kahoot "Very Helpful," while 33.6% rated it as "Helpful." These descriptive results were then aligned with qualitative findings from the teacher interviews.

#### c. Conclusion Drawing and Verification:

The researcher synthesized themes to generate comprehensive conclusions. Patterns across teacher and student responses were compared to determine consistencies and divergences. Conclusions were continuously verified by cross-checking the data sources, ensuring that interpretations were grounded in the evidence.

### *Trustworthiness of the Research*

To ensure methodological rigor, the study adhered to the four trustworthiness criteria proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985): credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

*Credibility:* Achieved through triangulation of data sources (teachers and students)



and methods (interviews and questionnaires). Member checking was performed by sharing summaries of interview transcripts with teacher participants for verification.

*Transferability:* Detailed descriptions of the research context, participant demographics, and procedures were provided to allow readers to assess applicability in other settings.

*Dependability:* A clear audit trail was maintained, documenting all stages of data collection and analysis. This ensured the research process could be replicated.

*Confirmability:* The researcher maintained neutrality by avoiding personal bias and relying on verbatim data excerpts to support findings.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Ethical standards were strictly observed throughout the research process. Participants were fully informed about the study's aims, procedures, and voluntary nature. Their anonymity and confidentiality were guaranteed. Data were stored securely and used exclusively for academic purposes. Since data collection occurred online, digital consent was obtained through the questionnaire form and interview confirmation messages. No identifying information was disclosed in the final report.

### **Summary of Methodological Framework**

This research employed a qualitative phenomenological design to capture the authentic perspectives of English teachers and senior high students on the use of Kahoot in vocabulary instruction. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews and questionnaires involving 42 participants. The instruments enabled the collection of both narrative and descriptive data that were analyzed through coding and thematic analysis. The study's methodological integrity was upheld through triangulation, ethical rigor, and adherence to established qualitative research criteria.

Overall, this methodological framework was chosen to align with the study's aim of understanding how Kahoot functions as an effective, engaging, and pedagogically meaningful tool for vocabulary learning. By combining teacher and student perspectives, the research provides a multidimensional understanding of how digital gamification contributes to vocabulary mastery in the Indonesian EFL classroom context.

## **RESULTS**

This chapter presents the findings derived from both teacher interviews and student questionnaires, exploring the effectiveness of the Kahoot application in enhancing vocabulary skills. The results are organized into five thematic sections corresponding to the main objectives of the study: effectiveness of Kahoot in vocabulary learning, teachers' strategies in implementing Kahoot, advantages of Kahoot as a learning medium, weaknesses and challenges in its use, and students' responses toward the application. Data from both qualitative and quantitative sources are synthesized to provide a comprehensive understanding of teachers' and students' perspectives.



creating healthy competition. Post-game discussions reinforced correct answers and clarified misconceptions.

*Participant 3* stressed post-activity feedback, where students played vocabulary-related word puzzles in small groups. The teacher used this activity to strengthen memory retention and collaborative skills: After Kahoot sessions, I ask students to play word puzzles in groups. Each group must solve vocabulary challenges quickly and accurately. This maintains engagement and reinforces learning outcomes.”

These practices reflect diverse pedagogical uses of Kahoot as a diagnostic tool, interactive quiz, and reinforcement medium demonstrating how teachers transform the platform into a dynamic vocabulary-learning environment.

### **Advantages of Using the Kahoot Application**

The advantages of Kahoot were reported consistently across teachers and students. Participants described it as an enjoyable, accessible, and effective medium that transformed vocabulary learning into an engaging activity.

*Teachers highlighted several pedagogical benefits:*

- Increased engagement: Students became more active and attentive, responding eagerly to questions.
- Motivation and competition: The timer, score, and ranking systems stimulated participation and healthy rivalry.
- Immediate feedback: Kahoot provided instant evaluation, helping teachers monitor progress in real time.
- Interactive learning: Multimedia features, including images and sounds, supported visual and auditory learners.

*Participant 3* summarized: “Kahoot is a wonderful medium. There are many benefits because students can learn while playing. For instance, vocabulary such as eraser and ruler becomes easier to remember even after one explanation.”

Similarly, students described Kahoot as fun, interactive, and motivating. They appreciated how quizzes combined entertainment and learning, reducing anxiety and boredom. Several noted that the application’s design helped them memorize vocabulary effortlessly. These findings confirm Bicen and Kocakoyun (2018) and Kaur and Nadarajan (2020), who reported that gamified digital tools like Kahoot foster active engagement and intrinsic motivation in language classrooms.

### **Weaknesses and Challenges of the Kahoot Application**

Despite its strengths, the study identified several obstacles limiting Kahoot’s effectiveness. Both teachers and students reported technical and contextual challenges:

- a. Internet instability: As an online platform, Kahoot requires stable internet connectivity. Unreliable connections disrupted gameplay and reduced classroom flow.
- b. Device limitations:\*\* Not all students owned smartphones, requiring them to share devices, which sometimes hindered participation.

- c. Character restrictions:\*\* The limited character count for questions constrained teachers when designing complex or contextual vocabulary tasks.
- d. Infrastructural gaps:\*\* Some schools lacked Wi-Fi or sufficient technological support, making consistent use difficult.

A teacher participant explained: “When the internet connection is weak, students cannot play properly and often miss answering before the timer ends. Also, some students don’t have devices, so they must share, which slows down activities.”

These issues indicate that successful integration of Kahoot in Indonesian schools depends on improving digital infrastructure and providing equitable device access. Teachers also highlighted the need for additional training to design effective game-based tasks that align with learning objectives. Nonetheless, they agreed that such challenges are logistical rather than pedagogical and can be mitigated through institutional support.

### Students’ Responses toward Kahoot

Student responses were overwhelmingly positive. Table 2 summarizes the distribution of satisfaction levels:

Alternative Answe	Frequency	Percentage
Highly Satisfied	22	
Satisfied	10	
Quite Satisfied	6	
Not Satisfied	4	
<b>Total</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>100%</b>

Students expressed enthusiasm for Kahoot’s competitive nature and multimedia features. They found that the app made vocabulary lessons more memorable, especially when visual cues (e.g., pictures of objects) were combined with sounds and animations. For instance, during a quiz on classroom objects, students correctly identified eraser and ruler and were able to use them in sentences afterward, such as “It is an eraser.” Teachers confirmed that these interactive exercises improved vocabulary retention and application.

Moreover, students enjoyed the immediate feedback and ranking system, which made them feel recognized for their efforts. One participant stated, “I like seeing my name on the top of the scoreboard—it makes me want to do better next time.” This aligns with the motivational mechanisms of gamification discussed by Licorish et al. (2018), demonstrating how achievement feedback sustains learners’ intrinsic drive.

### Synthesis of Findings

The triangulated results from interviews and questionnaires provide a holistic understanding of how Kahoot enhances vocabulary learning. The following key insights emerged:

- Pedagogical Effectiveness: Kahoot fosters active engagement, concentration, and retention through its interactive quiz format. Both teachers and students acknowledged improvements in vocabulary acquisition and sentence construction

skills.

- Motivation and Classroom Dynamics: The gamified structure of Kahoot – points, timers, leaderboards cultivates enjoyment and healthy competition, resulting in higher motivation and focus during lessons.
- Instructional Strategies: Teachers utilize Kahoot flexibly, incorporating pretests, group games, and post-lesson feedback. The adaptability of these methods ensures that the platform supports multiple learning stages.
- Technological Barriers: Despite strong pedagogical outcomes, technical issues such as poor internet connectivity and unequal device ownership remain significant challenges that require systemic solutions.
- Student Perceptions: Learners perceive Kahoot as both enjoyable and beneficial for vocabulary mastery, demonstrating high satisfaction and recommending its continued use.

These findings corroborate prior studies (Octa Pratama et al., 2022; Nirwana et al., 2023; Heni, 2021) that emphasize Kahoot’s role in promoting engagement and learning outcomes through gamification. The convergence between teacher and student perspectives reinforces the conclusion that Kahoot is a valuable medium for improving vocabulary learning in EFL contexts.

### Summary of Results

In summary, this study identified Kahoot as an effective, engaging, and motivating educational technology for vocabulary learning in Indonesian junior high schools. Students reported substantial gains in vocabulary mastery and satisfaction, while teachers confirmed improvements in classroom interaction and learning enthusiasm. However, infrastructural limitations such as unstable internet and insufficient devices still restrict its full implementation.

The findings underscore that technology-based gamified learning, when combined with sound pedagogy and adequate infrastructure, can transform traditional vocabulary instruction into an active, student-centered process. Kahoot not only enhances lexical knowledge but also nurtures learners’ confidence, curiosity, and autonomy key components of successful language acquisition.

## DISCUSSION

This chapter interprets and contextualizes the findings presented in the previous section, examining their significance within the broader framework of English language learning and technology-enhanced pedagogy. The discussion is organized into five main sections: the pedagogical implications of Kahoot’s effectiveness in vocabulary learning, the role of motivation and engagement in gamified instruction, teachers’ strategic practices in integrating Kahoot, challenges and limitations of technology-based learning, and the study’s contributions to EFL pedagogy and future directions. The analysis follows an inductive logic, moving from empirical evidence toward theoretical interpretation and pedagogical implication.

### Pedagogical Effectiveness of Kahoot in Vocabulary Learning

The results demonstrate that Kahoot serves as an effective medium for vocabulary learning, corroborating earlier studies that identify gamified learning tools as powerful aids in language instruction (Bicen & Kocakoyun, 2018; Nirwana et al., 2023). The majority of students over 95% rated Kahoot as helpful or very helpful, indicating that the platform significantly supports vocabulary mastery. These findings align with research by Licorish et al. (2018) and Kaur & Nadarajan (2020), who highlight that interactive quiz-based applications foster learner autonomy, engagement, and cognitive retention.

From a pedagogical perspective, the effectiveness of Kahoot can be attributed to three interconnected mechanisms. First, it enhances attention by converting passive learning into dynamic interaction, sustaining students' focus through time-bound challenges and visual stimuli. Second, it strengthens memory through repetition and reinforcement; vocabulary items are encountered multiple times across quizzes, aiding retention and recall. Third, it promotes active retrieval practice, a process shown to improve long-term vocabulary retention more effectively than passive study methods. These mechanisms collectively explain why students in this study demonstrated improved vocabulary comprehension and greater confidence in word usage.

The teachers' observations further validate these conclusions. They reported noticeable improvements in student participation, enthusiasm, and vocabulary recall. Such consistency between teacher and student perspectives reinforces the claim that Kahoot does not merely entertain but functions as a legitimate instructional tool that enhances learning outcomes when implemented purposefully.

### **Motivation, Engagement, and the Gamification Effect**

A central theme emerging from the study is motivation. Both teacher and student data emphasize that Kahoot's game-like design incorporating points, music, leaderboards, and instant feedback creates a stimulating and competitive environment that motivates learners. These findings are consistent with Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), which posits that intrinsic motivation arises when learners experience autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Kahoot addresses all three: students feel autonomous as they control their responses, competent as they see their scores improve, and socially connected through shared competition and collaboration.

The emotional aspect of engagement also plays a critical role. Learners described the activity as "fun," "exciting," and "motivating," which aligns with Jamil et al. (2020), who found that gamified platforms reduce anxiety and promote a sense of enjoyment that facilitates learning. Emotional engagement, in turn, supports cognitive engagement—students become more attentive, process vocabulary more deeply, and retain new information longer. This synergy between affective and cognitive engagement is what makes gamification particularly powerful for vocabulary instruction, where repetition and memorization are otherwise perceived as tedious.

Furthermore, the competitive dynamics of Kahoot foster positive interdependence among learners. Even though competition is individual, the shared classroom experience generates collective excitement, which enhances social learning and classroom cohesion. Teachers observed that students who were initially reluctant to participate in English activities became more active and cooperative, suggesting that gamified learning contributes to inclusive participation and reduced language anxiety.

### **Teachers' Strategies and Pedagogical Integration**

The success of Kahoot in the classroom depends largely on how teachers integrate it into their instructional routines. As the findings reveal, teachers adopted various strategies – using Kahoot as a pretest, formative assessment, or post-lesson reinforcement. This flexible integration reflects the principles of blended learning, where digital tools complement traditional instruction (Garrison & Vaughan, 2008).

The first teacher emphasized the importance of preparatory mastery understanding Kahoot's features and limitations before classroom implementation. This aligns with Mishra and Koehler's (2006) TPACK framework, which stresses the need for teachers to balance technological, pedagogical, and content knowledge. When teachers are technologically competent, they can design tasks that align the platform's affordances with specific learning goals.

The second teacher's emphasis on procedural flow structured timing, clear instructions, and feedback discussions demonstrates the pedagogical importance of scaffolding within gamified learning. Kahoot's effectiveness increases when teachers guide students not only during gameplay but also in post-activity reflection. This reflection transforms competition into meaningful learning.

The third teacher's post-quiz activities, such as vocabulary puzzles, indicate a deliberate effort to extend learning beyond the digital platform. Such hybrid strategies reinforce vocabulary acquisition through multimodal repetition bridging digital engagement with collaborative, hands-on tasks. Thus, effective use of Kahoot requires intentional design that integrates digital play, assessment, and reflection into a cohesive learning cycle.

### **Challenges and Limitations**

While the findings affirm Kahoot's pedagogical value, they also highlight contextual challenges that influence its implementation, especially in Indonesian schools. Technical limitations such as unstable internet connectivity, limited device access, and character restrictions within the platform constrained classroom use. These challenges mirror those reported by Slamet (2023) and Zhang et al. (2021), who note that infrastructural and digital literacy issues remain persistent barriers in developing educational contexts.

Internet instability disrupted gameplay and reduced student enthusiasm, particularly when quizzes froze or delayed scoring. Moreover, the unequal access to personal devices created disparities in participation, as some students had to share smartphones, diminishing the individualized learning experience that Kahoot

promotes. These findings underscore the digital divide that persists in many EFL classrooms and reaffirm the need for institutional support, such as school-provided devices or improved Wi-Fi networks.

Another limitation involves pedagogical overreliance on gamification. While Kahoot enhances motivation, its novelty effect may diminish over time if not combined with varied instructional approaches. As teachers in this study observed, some students became more focused on winning than understanding the content, which risks turning learning into superficial engagement. Therefore, educators must balance game-based activities with deeper cognitive tasks that promote critical thinking, contextual application, and reflection.

These constraints do not diminish Kahoot's pedagogical potential but rather illustrate the contextual factors that determine its effectiveness. Addressing these barriers requires systemic collaboration among teachers, administrators, and policymakers to integrate technology sustainably into the curriculum.

### **Contribution to EFL Pedagogy and Theoretical Implications**

This study contributes to the growing body of literature on technology-enhanced vocabulary learning by offering a context-specific analysis of teacher and student perspectives within an Indonesian EFL setting. While much of the prior research (e.g., Heni, 2021; Nirwana et al., 2023; Octa Pratama et al., 2022) focused primarily on student outcomes, the inclusion of teacher perspectives provides a more holistic understanding of pedagogical practice. Teachers not only implement Kahoot but also mediate its impact through instructional design, feedback, and classroom management. Their viewpoints reveal how gamified tools can be transformed into platforms for assessment, interaction, and formative evaluation.

The findings also extend theoretical discussions on learner-centered pedagogy. Kahoot exemplifies constructivist principles (Vygotsky, 1978) by positioning students as active agents who build knowledge through interaction and social participation. Its real-time feedback mechanism fosters metacognitive awareness, allowing students to monitor their learning progress immediately after each quiz. Furthermore, Kahoot operationalizes the concept of gamified formative assessment\*, where assessment becomes continuous, engaging, and non-threatening.

From a broader pedagogical standpoint, the integration of Kahoot supports the shift toward Technology-Enhanced Active Learning (TEAL) environments. Such environments merge entertainment and education, aligning with 21st-century learning competencies that emphasize creativity, collaboration, communication, and critical thinking. By engaging students in interactive tasks that demand quick thinking and recall, Kahoot indirectly cultivates these competencies while reinforcing linguistic skills.

### **Implications and Recommendations**

The implications of this research are twofold: pedagogical and institutional. Pedagogically, teachers should adopt gamified tools not as replacements for



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instruction but as supplements that enrich traditional methods. Structured integration pre-quiz orientation, guided gameplay, and post-quiz reflection maximizes both cognitive and affective gains. Teachers are also encouraged to design vocabulary questions that balance entertainment with linguistic depth, ensuring that learning outcomes remain the central focus.

Institutionally, schools and policymakers must address infrastructural limitations. Investments in reliable internet access, device availability, and teacher training are essential for sustaining technology-based instruction. Moreover, professional development programs should train educators to integrate platforms like Kahoot with pedagogical creativity rather than relying solely on ready-made templates.

Finally, future research should expand on this qualitative foundation through mixed-method or longitudinal designs to measure the long-term effects of Kahoot on vocabulary retention and overall language performance. Comparative studies across educational levels and cultural contexts could also deepen understanding of how gamified learning functions within diverse EFL environments.

In summary, the discussion confirms that Kahoot is an effective and engaging tool for vocabulary learning, supported by both student enthusiasm and teacher endorsement. Its success lies in its ability to merge motivation, interaction, and formative assessment within a single platform. Nevertheless, sustainable implementation requires attention to contextual barriers such as infrastructure and teacher preparedness. This study demonstrates that when properly integrated, Kahoot embodies the principles of active, student-centered, and technology enhanced learning offering valuable insights for educators aiming to modernize vocabulary instruction in EFL classrooms.

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the Kahoot application serves as an effective and engaging digital medium for enhancing vocabulary mastery among junior high school students in the Indonesian EFL context. The findings demonstrate that Kahoot not only improves students' vocabulary retention and comprehension but also significantly increases their motivation, focus, and classroom participation. Teachers' strategic integration of the platform—as a pretest, formative assessment, and reinforcement tool—proved essential in transforming traditional learning into an interactive, student-centered process. Despite its effectiveness, challenges such as unstable internet connectivity, limited device availability, and the need for pedagogical training remain critical factors influencing implementation. Theoretically, this research contributes to the growing body of knowledge on gamified learning by highlighting how digital tools like Kahoot align with constructivist and motivational learning frameworks to promote active engagement and metacognitive awareness. Practically, it offers insights for educators seeking to integrate technology meaningfully into language instruction. Future research should extend this work





through longitudinal and comparative studies to examine the long-term impact of Kahoot and other gamified applications on language acquisition, learner autonomy, and engagement across diverse educational contexts.

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