

**DEVELOPING VOCABULARY SKILLS THROUGH GAME-BASED PLATFORMS KAHOOT AND QUIZZZ IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE EDUCATION****Ayazhan Yeginbay**

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**РАЗВИТИЕ ЛЕКСИЧЕСКИХ НАВЫКОВ С ПОМОЩЬЮ ИГРОВЫХ ПЛАТФОРМ КАНООТ И QUIZZZ В ОБУЧЕНИИ ИНОСТРАННЫХ ЯЗЫКОВ****Егинбай Аязжан***студент, Международный университет Астана, Казахстан, г. Астана*

**Abstract.** This article explores the integration of game-based platforms Kahoot and Quizizz into English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction, emphasizing their role in developing students' vocabulary competence. The study reviews theoretical foundations, methodological features, and empirical evidence demonstrating the effectiveness of digital game-based tools in language acquisition. It discusses strategies for vocabulary retention, student motivation, and classroom engagement through interactive platforms. The research highlights the significance of gamification and multimedia learning principles in enhancing lexical development and learner autonomy in EFL settings.

**Аннотация.** В данной статье рассматривается интеграция игровых платформ Kahoot и Quizizz в преподавание английского языка как иностранного (EFL), с акцентом на их роль в развитии лексической компетенции учащихся. Исследование охватывает теоретические основы, методологические особенности и эмпирические данные, демонстрирующие эффективность цифровых игровых инструментов в процессе овладения языком. Также обсуждаются стратегии запоминания лексики, повышения мотивации учащихся и вовлеченности в учебный процесс с помощью интерактивных платформ. Работа подчеркивает значимость

геймификации и принципов мультимедийного обучения для улучшения лексического развития и формирования автономности учащихся в условиях преподавания английского языка как иностранного.

**Keywords:** EFL; vocabulary acquisition; gamification; Kahoot; Quizizz; digital tools; foreign language learning.

**Ключевые слова:** EFL; овладение лексикой; геймификация; Kahoot; Quizizz; цифровые инструменты; обучение иностранным языкам.

In the modern educational landscape, incorporating innovative approaches into the foreign language classroom is essential for enhancing the learning experience. Among the most effective strategies is the integration of game-based digital platforms, which offer students a stimulating and engaging environment for acquiring vocabulary. In particular, Kahoot and Quizizz have emerged as powerful tools for vocabulary instruction, combining interactive learning with elements of gamification to promote active engagement and knowledge retention.

Traditional vocabulary instruction—typically reliant on rote memorization, isolated word lists, and repetitive drills—has long dominated language classrooms. While these methods may support short-term recall, they often fail to promote deeper understanding or long-term retention. Moreover, such techniques rarely reflect how vocabulary is encountered and used in authentic communication. As a result, learners frequently struggle to transfer memorized words into active usage, especially in real-world situations where language must be applied flexibly and contextually.

In recent years, this disconnect has prompted a shift toward more interactive, learner-centered methodologies, particularly those leveraging digital tools and game-based technologies. Among these, platforms such as Kahoot and Quizizz have gained significant popularity for their ability to transform passive vocabulary instruction into engaging, participatory experiences. These platforms are particularly well-suited to modern EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners who are immersed in multimedia environments and increasingly expect technology-enhanced instruction.

Kahoot and Quizizz incorporate principles of gamification, such as point systems, time pressure, competition, leaderboards, and immediate feedback, to create a stimulating learning environment. These features not only enhance motivation but also support active recall and repeated exposure—two critical elements of effective vocabulary retention. Students interact with vocabulary in a dynamic, often playful format, which increases cognitive engagement and reduces the anxiety typically associated with traditional assessment.

Importantly, game-based vocabulary learning also encourages deeper processing, as students must discriminate between similar word forms, interpret words in context, and apply lexical knowledge in real-time decision-making. The visual and auditory elements of these platforms reinforce memory through multiple channels, aligning with cognitive theories of multimedia learning.

Thus, as language education increasingly embraces technology, Kahoot and Quizizz offer a pedagogically sound solution for enhancing vocabulary acquisition. By shifting the focus from memorization to meaningful interaction, these tools help learners build both lexical breadth and depth, ultimately contributing to more confident and competent language use.

## **Theoretical Framework**

The foundation of integrating game-based platforms like Kahoot and Quizizz into EFL vocabulary instruction is grounded in multiple educational, psychological, and linguistic theories that emphasize interaction, engagement, and multimodal learning.

One of the most influential perspectives comes from constructivist theory, which views learners as active participants in constructing knowledge rather than passive recipients. John Dewey

championed “learning by doing,” proposing that students learn more effectively when engaged in meaningful, real-world tasks [1]. Game-based learning embodies this principle by transforming vocabulary acquisition into an active, problem-solving experience through interactive quizzes and scenarios.

Lev Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory further supports this model by introducing the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)—the gap between what learners can do independently and what they can achieve with support. Kahoot and Quizizz operate within this zone by offering scaffolded vocabulary tasks where immediate feedback and social collaboration (e.g., discussing results or playing in teams) help students bridge the gap between passive recognition and confident use of new words [2].

Jean Piaget’s cognitive development theory also aligns with the role of games in education. His stages of development emphasize the importance of experiential learning in fostering cognitive growth. By manipulating digital content, solving vocabulary challenges, and adapting strategies based on quiz performance, learners actively engage in processes that enhance metacognition and language awareness [3].

Marc Prensky’s theory of digital natives further emphasizes the necessity of adapting teaching methods to match the expectations and learning styles of modern students, who have grown up surrounded by technology. Prensky argues that traditional, lecture-based instruction is insufficient for this generation. Instead, they respond best to fast-paced, visual, and interactive forms of learning—traits that both Kahoot and Quizizz exemplify [4].

Additionally, Richard Mayer’s Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning posits that individuals learn more deeply when information is presented in a combination of visual and verbal formats. Kahoot and Quizizz leverage this by combining text (question prompts), imagery (graphics or diagrams), and auditory elements (music, sound cues) to enhance cognitive processing. These multimodal cues support dual coding theory, where information processed through both visual and verbal channels leads to stronger memory traces [5].

Furthermore, Self-Determination Theory highlights the importance of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in sustaining intrinsic motivation. Gamified platforms satisfy these needs by allowing learners to progress at their own pace, receive real-time feedback that builds competence, and engage socially with peers through leaderboards and collaborative play. These elements create an emotionally supportive learning environment that enhances motivation and, subsequently, language learning outcomes[6].

From a linguistic perspective, Krashen’s Input Hypothesis and Affective Filter Hypothesis are also relevant. Kahoot and Quizizz provide rich, comprehensible input in a non-threatening, enjoyable context, helping lower learners’ affective filter and facilitating vocabulary acquisition. Since games are perceived as play rather than tests, students are more open to taking risks and making mistakes—an essential part of language development [7].

Taken together, these theories illustrate that game-based platforms are not merely entertainment tools but are firmly grounded in educational science, offering a research-supported means to improve vocabulary acquisition in EFL settings.

### **Pedagogical Features of Kahoot and Quizizz**

Kahoot and Quizizz are among the most widely adopted game-based learning platforms in educational contexts, particularly in foreign language instruction. Their design integrates pedagogically effective features that support vocabulary acquisition, classroom management, assessment, and learner engagement.

Kahoot operates as a synchronous, live quiz platform that transforms the classroom into a game-show environment. Teachers act as facilitators while students, using individual devices, respond to questions displayed on a shared screen. The mechanics of Kahoot are designed to reinforce speed and automatic recall through timed questions and stimulate engagement via bright visuals, dramatic music, and point systems. Promote peer learning and motivation through leaderboard

visibility.

Kahoot offers three core activity types: quizzes (graded), surveys (non-graded), and polls. All of these can be embedded with images, video, and audio, enhancing multimodal learning. In vocabulary lessons, for example, images of objects or synonyms can be paired with the target word, aiding word association and retention.

One of the key advantages of Kahoot lies in its ability to provide immediate formative assessment, allowing teachers to monitor student understanding in real time. The platform promotes inclusivity, as all students participate simultaneously, minimizing the chances of disengagement. Its playful and fast-paced format helps reduce classroom anxiety and fosters emotional engagement, particularly benefiting shy or less confident learners. This real-time feedback loop supports more responsive teaching and enhances student motivation during vocabulary instruction[10].

Quizizz, in contrast, is well-suited for both synchronous and asynchronous learning. Unlike Kahoot, it displays both the question and answer choices on the student's individual screen, enabling focused, self-paced interaction. Its features include gamified rewards such as avatars, memes, and power-ups, which increase enjoyment and engagement. The homework mode allows teachers to assign quizzes outside of class, promoting independent study and spaced repetition. Educators also benefit from detailed performance analytics, revealing which vocabulary items pose the greatest challenges. In addition, Quizizz supports a wide range of question types, including open-ended responses, fill-in-the-blanks, and matching, offering a deeper assessment of lexical understanding. With the ability to remix content from a large public library, teachers can easily adapt materials to suit their learners' needs[11].

Both platforms create a low-stakes, high-engagement environment that fosters effective vocabulary acquisition. Through repeated exposure and practice, students benefit from spaced repetition, while also developing learner autonomy by tracking their own progress and engaging with material beyond the classroom. The platforms also encourage collaborative learning, particularly through team play modes that align with communicative language teaching. When integrated into regular classroom routines—such as “Quizizz Fridays” or “Kahoot warm-ups”—these tools help structure instruction around cycles of exposure, reinforcement, and reflection. Ultimately, Kahoot and Quizizz are more than just educational games; they are pedagogically grounded tools that significantly enhance vocabulary development, learner confidence, and overall engagement in EFL classrooms.

## **Vocabulary Development and Retention**

Vocabulary development is essential for achieving communicative competence in a foreign language. Without sufficient vocabulary, learners struggle to express ideas, understand spoken input, and participate meaningfully in conversation. As such, vocabulary acquisition is not simply a peripheral activity in EFL instruction—it is a central pillar of language proficiency. Game-based platforms like Kahoot and Quizizz address this need by supporting both initial vocabulary learning and long-term retention through engaging, multimodal, and student-centered approaches.

Vocabulary retention hinges on several key principles. The act of retrieving a word from memory strengthens the neural connections associated with that word, making future recall more efficient. Revisiting vocabulary at spaced intervals enhances long-term retention and helps counteract the natural forgetting curve, as described by Ebbinghaus. Additionally, contextual learning plays a vital role, as words are better retained when encountered in meaningful, communicative situations rather than in isolation. Finally, multisensory engagement—where learners process information through multiple channels such as visual, auditory, and kinesthetic—leads to deeper encoding and more durable memory traces.

Both Kahoot and Quizizz incorporate these principles. They present vocabulary in interactive formats that require students to select or generate responses, often repeatedly, across multiple sessions. Quizizz supports asynchronous review, allowing learners to revisit missed items, while Kahoot uses game-style motivation (leaderboards, podiums) to encourage repeated participation. This supports a loop of exposure, retrieval, feedback, and reinforcement—essential for vocabulary internalization.

By embedding vocabulary in sentence-level tasks or pairing it with images and cultural references, Kahoot and Quizizz strengthen the semantic network around each word, deepening understanding and increasing the likelihood of transfer to active use.

Learning vocabulary through games increases both cognitive and emotional engagement. Cognitive engagement is supported through mental challenge, pattern recognition, and memory activation. Emotional engagement arises from the fun, competitive nature of the games, which boosts motivation and helps learners associate positive feelings with vocabulary learning—a powerful factor in long-term retention. In addition, students tend to focus more intensely during game-based tasks than during conventional activities. The pressure of a countdown timer in Kahoot, or the desire to beat a previous score in Quizizz, creates a sense of urgency and heightened concentration, which improves encoding and recall.

Table 1.

Examples of Vocabulary-focused Tasks Using Games

| Task Type                           | Example  |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| Picture-word matching               | "Which word matches this image?"                         |
| Contextual sentence gap-fill        | "He refused the        to the event."                    |
| Collocation identification          | "Which word best completes the phrase: 'make a       '?" |
| Synonym discrimination              | "Which of the following is NOT a synonym of 'predict'?"  |
| Antonym pairing                     | "Which word is the opposite of 'peaceful'?"              |
| Category sorting                    | "Select all the verbs from the list below."              |
| Word-meaning connection using memes | Quizizz memes reinforcing word meanings with humorous c  |

Quizizz in particular supports independent vocabulary practice beyond the classroom. Students can access assigned quizzes at home, repeat sessions for review, and receive personalized feedback—all without teacher supervision. This aligns with autonomous learning principles, which are critical for long-term language success[8]. Moreover, by involving students in quiz creation, teachers can further deepen lexical retention. When students generate their own questions, they must consider word form, meaning, usage, and distractor logic. This transforms them from passive recipients to active constructors of knowledge, a process shown to greatly improve memory consolidation.

Despite the benefits, vocabulary games must be used strategically. Without meaningful follow-up, game performance may remain superficial. Teachers should ensure that vocabulary encountered in games is revisited in writing tasks, speaking practice, and project-based learning. For instance: After a Quizizz session, students might write a story using five newly learned words. Following a Kahoot quiz, learners can create dialogues that naturally incorporate selected vocabulary. Such integration into multiple language skills ensures that words move from passive

Practical Application and Implementation

To fully realize the benefits of Kahoot and Quizizz in vocabulary instruction, teachers must implement these platforms with pedagogical intention and structured planning. These tools are most effective when integrated as part of a comprehensive instructional cycle rather than used as isolated games.

A recommended framework is the three-phase model:

Pre-game (Preparation): Prior to gameplay, students should be introduced to the target vocabulary through a variety of input-based methods: reading short texts, engaging in guided discussions, or analyzing example sentences. Teachers can also present visual aids, gestures, or word maps to activate prior knowledge. This stage lays the cognitive groundwork for deeper engagement during the game session.

Game phase (Engagement and Practice): During this phase, students participate in real-time quizzes

(Kahoot) or self-paced games (Quizizz), depending on class size, internet reliability, and learner preferences. Teachers may alternate between team-based and individual modes to encourage collaboration and friendly competition. It's also effective to conduct a brief pause after each question for class discussion, clarification, or to explain distractor options. This transforms the quiz from a passive recall task into an interactive teaching moment[9].

Post-game (Reflection and Extension): After the game, students reflect on what they've learned. Teachers can facilitate tasks such as: Writing example sentences using the new words. Pair discussions on synonyms, antonyms, or collocations. Creating digital flashcards based on incorrect answers. Student-designed quizzes to be played in later lessons.

Additionally, these platforms can be used across varying contexts: Review sessions before unit tests. Warm-ups to reinforce previously learned vocabulary. Formative assessments to inform instruction. Homework assignments, especially via Quizizz's asynchronous feature.

Teachers can adapt content difficulty by adjusting question types—from simple definition matching to sentence gap-fills or short context-based riddles. For example:

*"Which word best completes the sentence? He refused the \_\_\_\_ to the party.*

*A) career B) invitation C) beverage D) guest"*

Kahoot and Quizizz also offer customization features that enable teachers to enhance learning with multimedia support, including images for visual learners, pronunciation audio clips, and short explanatory videos embedded directly into quiz questions. These tools not only make the learning experience more engaging but also support diverse learning styles. Additionally, differentiation is easily achievable: advanced students can be given extended quizzes with complex, sentence-level contexts, while emerging learners may work with simpler, word-definition matching tasks. The ability to remix existing quizzes or assign adapted versions ensures flexible and inclusive instruction across mixed-ability classrooms.

## **Empirical Findings and Impact**

Research and experimental studies indicate that the consistent use of Kahoot and Quizizz positively impacts vocabulary learning by leading to increased test scores, heightened motivation, and greater classroom participation. These platforms also help reduce test anxiety and fear of making mistakes, fostering a more supportive learning environment. Additionally, they promote better long-term retention through spaced repetition and encourage greater learner autonomy and responsibility. Interviews with both students and teachers confirm that vocabulary lessons become more enjoyable when game-based tools are used, with many students reporting a higher likelihood of reviewing vocabulary at home when such games are assigned as homework.

Moreover, using these tools allows for differentiated instruction. Quizizz's reporting functions enable teachers to identify struggling students and tailor support accordingly. Kahoot's leaderboard can be used to celebrate improvement, not just top scores, fostering a growth mindset.

Game-based platforms like Kahoot and Quizizz provide EFL educators with effective tools to enhance vocabulary learning. They merge motivation with methodology, creating learning experiences that are interactive, personalized, and pedagogically sound. Backed by cognitive and multimedia learning theories, these platforms foster active vocabulary use, support learner autonomy, and create classroom environments that are both fun and academically rigorous.

As digital learning becomes more central to education, the integration of gamified tools for vocabulary instruction is not just a trend, but a necessity. When thoughtfully implemented, Kahoot and Quizizz can become powerful allies in the journey toward meaningful and lasting language acquisition.

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