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GAMIFICATION - The use of KAHOOT! in the classroom (English as a foreign language).

Recife, 2022

GAMIFICATION - The use of KAHOOT! in the classroom (English as a foreign language).

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Article written as a requirement for the attainment of the degree of Bachelor in English Language Teaching

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Recife, 2022

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to analyze how motivation can help students in the process of English as a Foreign Language Acquisition (L2), limiting the research on the spectrum of motivation and the use of *Kahoot!* in the classroom. The current article is based on Language Acquisition theory and deals with the following question: Does the use of games in classrooms provide any benefits to the acquisition of L2? In order to analyze the problem question, the methodology used in this article was qualitative. The selected game analyzed for this study was the game-based student response system Kahoot!. A perception questionnaire was applied to the use of the game Kahoot! in High School English language classes. The research sampled students from a third-grade of High School class at the public reference school in High School named Ginásio Pernambucano (GP). The instrument used for data collection was the Google Forms digital platform. The results demonstrated that the students who responded to the survey felt the benefits of Kahoot! as a more healthy competitive and dynamic class in the classroom, which shows that motivation and healthy competition were essential for interaction during the learning process. This study concludes that pedagogical practices are frequently updated, and researchers face challenges daily and seek solutions to the technological changes we face as students and teachers. Despite all these challenges, learning any language or subject can happen in a funnier way, avoiding stressful and demotivating contexts.

Keywords: Kahoot!; Gamification; Learning Motivation; English as a Foreign Language (EFL); Language Acquisition.

RESUMO

Este trabalho tem como objetivo analisar como a motivação pode auxiliar os alunos no processo de Aquisição de Inglês como Língua Estrangeira (L2), limitando as pesquisas sobre a motivação e o uso de jogos em sala de aula. O presente artigo baseia-se na teoria da Aquisição da Linguagem e trata da seguinte questão: O uso de jogos em sala de aula traz algum benefício para a aquisição da L2? Para analisar a questão problema, a metodologia utilizada neste artigo foi qualitativa. O jogo selecionado para este estudo foi o Kahoot!, um sistema de jogo de respostas. Foi aplicado um questionário de percepção ao uso do jogo Kahoot! nas aulas de inglês do Ensino Médio. A pesquisa teve como amostra alunos do terceiro ano do Ensino Médio da escola pública de referência do Ensino Médio, Ginásio Pernambucano (GP). O instrumento utilizado para coleta de dados foi a plataforma digital Google Forms. Os resultados obtidos demonstraram que os alunos que responderam à pesquisa sentiram os benefícios do Kahoot! como uma aula com mais competição saudável e dinâmica em sala de aula, o que mostra que a motivação e a competição de forma saudável foram essenciais para a interação durante o processo de aprendizagem. Este estudo conclui que as práticas pedagógicas são atualizadas com frequência, e os

pesquisadores enfrentam desafios diariamente e buscam soluções para as mudanças tecnológicas que enfrentamos como alunos e professores. Apesar de todos esses desafios, aprender qualquer idioma ou assunto pode acontecer de uma forma mais divertida, evitando contextos estressantes e desmotivadores.

Palavras-chave: *Kahoot!*; Gamificação; Motivação de aprendizagem; Inglês como língua estrangeira; Aquisição da língua.

1. Introduction

Barton (2007) believes that reading and writing are not simply encoding and decoding letters, words, and sentences. Language has many social aspects in our life. Through symbols, peoples can communicate, which makes human beings the only ones capable of reproducing various utterances from linguistic elements and sets of words. Thus, daily communication is mediated through tools such as cell phones, computers, letters and speeches as well.

We currently live in a society with a constant increase in technological innovations. For many decades, researchers changed the concept of Technology according to the innovations created. According to Brey (2009), although it is challenging to develop a definition for Technology, people can discern between human-made things and those that occur naturally.

As a result, it is possible to observe relevant interferences not only in the forms of how communication has been made between individuals and communities but also in new perspectives on educational methodologies. For instance, increasingly, the teachers and students are connected to the Internet. For this reason, it influences the way of teaching and learning, bringing benefits in motivation through good narratives, feedback, rewards, cooperation, competition, goals and rules, levels, fun, and so on

One of the main challenges teachers face nowadays is to keep the students focused on classes since the current generation is very connected and active on social networks. For that reason, teachers could use tools that help them to catch students' attention, such as games. Many researchers try to explain the ideal definition for the question ‘What is a game?’. Salen

and Zimmerman (2004) define a game as “a system in which players engage in an artificial conflict, defined by rules, that results in a quantifiable outcome” (p. 80).

The theme was chosen as a way to give new ideas for technological changes in Education and a perspective on how motivation can help and provide benefits to the students who study English as a foreign language besides using elements of Gamification in the Brazilian educational context for students.

This paper aims to analyze how motivation can help the students in the process of English as a Foreign Language Acquisition (L2), limiting the research on the spectrum of the use of games in the classroom. The current article is based on Language Acquisition theory and deals with the following question: Does the use of games in classrooms provide any benefits to the acquisition of L2?

In order to analyze the problem question, the methodology used in this article was qualitative. The selected game analyzed for this study was the game-based student response system *Kahoot!*. A perception questionnaire was applied to the use of the game *Kahoot!* in High School English language classes. The research sampled the students from a third grade of High School class at the public reference school in High School named Ginásio Pernambucano (GP). The instrument used for data collection was the Google Forms digital platform.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Foreign Language Acquisition

Many scholars argue about the best way to acquire a new language. Several types of research are done in Schools and Universities to study effective methods in the teaching and learning process. One of these subjects is English as a Foreign Language. Many scholars discuss the pillars of this process and that it encompasses areas such as education, psychology, and culture. Littlewood (2004) discusses in his studies how the acquisition is based on cognitive elements and must also take into account the learning context.

To summarize, language needs agents to happen, and it changes according to social groups since language is a living and changing phenomenon, which assumes different roles depending on the contexts of use and speech. In the educational model, the teacher can use tools to support the students in acquiring a foreign language, using techniques to motivate

through gamification. Regarding the digital age, ICT (Information and Communication Technologies) can help in this process of language acquisition. According to Moraes; Daros (2019), ICTs are a set of diverse digital media, such as Youtube, Zoom, and Facebook, that can use active, immersive, and hybrid methodologies.

In this sense, it is possible to realize that ICTs can be used to create a new environment in education through technologies in a more interactive, cooperative space. As the use of ICTs is recent, many tutors and the students are concerned about the real pedagogical meaning of using them in the classroom and what would be the benefits and implications. For Moreira and Schlemmer (2020, p.6), "technology does not change pedagogical practices. It is only a new way of maximizing benefits through technological innovations [...]." Therefore, to understand the Brazilian educational system and the acquisition of a foreign language through English classes in schools, it is necessary to consider the entire Brazilian school context and it is implications, such as lack of infrastructure, access to new media, and new teaching methodologies.

2.2. Teaching and the Learning Motivation

According to Busarello (2016, p. 44), engagement refers to the process through which subjects immerse themselves in an activity, interact and relate to others, purposefully getting involved with the resources and available tools. The use of strategies to motivate and engage the students should take social issues into account. This development and use of educational approaches should encourage students to actively participate in the foreign language acquisition process, even if there are some barriers, such as a lack of internet, demotivation, and methods used by some teachers, which almost always differ from the way that the generation today uses the internet and social networks.

Since the creation of the internet in the 21st century, Gamification began to be explored in educational environments such as academic research and educational centers. Nevertheless, the elements of Gamification are not recent. For instance, analyzing History, we will see that gamification possibilities already were present in various areas such as fights, hunts, and sales. The elements of competitiveness, reward, and fun have accompanied humans practically every century in History.

As a result of the changes in educational methodologies and the advent of the internet, maintaining students' motivation became more and more a challenge. The teacher, indirectly, influences through its approaches, and gamification is an ally in the motivation process.

Researching motivation, we can notice that it is a concept with different meanings, depending on the studied area. Several internal and external factors influence how motivated or unmotivated individuals are. Therefore, motivation interferes with the way a person behaves in certain situations. Brown (1994) states, in his theory of Self-Control, that motivation emerges from the individual's ability to make choices or decide for themselves. However, many L2 teachers and researchers do not adopt the concept of motivation.

Another point to be mentioned about the 'motivation' in learning a Foreign Language is that studying a new language is a long-term process, which causes a lack of motivation in some students who consider that part of the learning process is not worth the effort. It is possible to see some intrinsic and extrinsic factors that may help in this process. In the acquisition studies, there is a relationship between motivation and English achievements. Intrinsic motivation originates from within the individual and results in enjoyment of the process of increasing one's competency in regard to particular academic tasks. Extrinsic motivation is motivation induced by rewards or punishment dependent upon success or failure in the task (Deci & Ryan 2000; Walker, Greene, & Mansell, 2006). In addition to the factors included in learning a new language, it is necessary to consider learning strategies to improve and perfect new ways of acquiring the English language and provide more future benefits to the teachers and the students.

2.3. Gamification

Firstly, it is essential to understand the concept of 'Gamification.' According to Zichermann & Cunninngham (2011), gamification is the process of game-thinking and game mechanisms to engage users to solve some problems. It is the act of bringing playful and game elements aiming to achieve goals, but not necessarily using a game. Gamification elements such as good narratives, feedback, rewards, cooperation, competition, goals and rules, levels, fun, and so on help the students in the process of acquisition.

Secondly, according to Iaremenko (2017), games have great educational value by offering learners a fun-filled and non-stressful learning atmosphere reducing the anxiety and the fear of being negatively judged in front of other people. In addition to teachers taking into account how the students learn, it is necessary to understand that motivation may be a way to encourage the students to learn a Foreign Language. In terms of motivation, technology can be an ally to reduce stress and anxiety in the classroom. Games such as *Kahoot!* have

elements that bring several benefits, such as a more inviting environment, multiplayer space, and stressless, in general.

Digital games influence the creation of an ideal atmosphere and stimulate and develop the creativity of the individuals who play them. For instance, the teacher can use game elements in the classroom to create a 'simulation' and achieve pedagogical purposes by contextualizing the information, respecting the students' level, allowing the hits and misses or errors, and developing the student's skills as well as avoiding causing frustration.

Pimentel et al (2021, p. 27) state that "gamification must go beyond engagement and motivation, as well as the intention that learning is fun." Therefore, the teacher must explain all the benefits of a gamified class before applying the games in their English classes. It is not recommended that teachers use games 100% of the time since the focus is to create an environment that is adaptable to the reality of students, focusing on the affordances and resources offered by the school. According to Gibson (1977), the term 'affordances' addresses forms of providing support in a particular way which varies depending on the environment and its potentialities. In the educational model, the teacher could adopt the gamification technique using tools such as Kahoot! to guide students in their process of learning a Foreign Language and also improve some cognitive, cultural, and social aspects; the digital development; motivation to perform activities and, of course, enhance the learning processes.

2.4. Kahoot!

Kahoot! (https://kahoot.com/) was founded in 2012 by Morten Versvik, Johan Brand, and Jamie Brooker who, in a joint project with the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU), teamed up with Professor Alf Inge Wang, and were later joined by entrepreneur Åsmund Furuseth which aimed to motivate students around the world. *Kahoot!* is a global learning platform company that wants to empower everyone, including children, students, and employees, to unlock their full learning potential.

According to Alves (2014), promoting conditions for the teaching-learning process as something motivating and pleasurable for all involved is one of the considerable challenges of education. Currently, educational games are enabling new forms of teaching and learning in classrooms. Over the past decade, games such as Kahoot*!* have been used in various subjects such as Biology, Chemistry, English, and others.

Kahoot! enables students to participate in a less stressful environment because it creates new ways of interacting. Krauskopf, Zahn and Hesse (2012) state that the potential use

of technologies can be maximized if teachers combine them with suitable learning objectives. For this reason, English language teachers must explain the functionality of *Kahoot!* in the classroom to students. In addition to teachers taking into account the forms in which students learn, it is also necessary to notice that motivation may be a form to encourage students to learn a Foreign Language through games. In this sense, creating a possible gamified scenario in classrooms broke many paradigms in traditional teachings, such as memorization, repetition, and lists. It is possible to see how society begins to understand that games have great educational value if applied correctly through the gamification of school curriculum themes.

3. Methodology

This research is guided under the perspective of the Language Acquisition theory. The methodology used in this article was qualitative. The selected game analyzed for this study was the game-based student response system *Kahoot!*.

A perception questionnaire was applied to the use of the game *Kahoot!* in English language classes. The research was carried out during an academic period and sampled 16 students from a third grade of High School class (3rd year A) with an average age of 14-19 years-old, 8 boys and 8 girls. All the students who participated in the research studied at the public reference school in High School named Ginásio Pernambucano (GP), located in the city of Recife, and are students of the same teacher.

The present study was developed in the High School of a public school to verify if the game *Kahoot!* would motivate the students during the English classes and, as a result, provide them with any benefits for the process of the acquisition since that game contributes to a dynamic and interactive learning environment.

The instrument used for data collection was the Google Forms digital platform. The questionnaire was elaborated in Portuguese since not all the learners would feel confident in answering them in English. The form was composed of two closed questions that characterized the grade and age of the students and ten open questions of perception about the use of the game *Kahoot!* in English language classes:

1) Did you find it difficult to participate during classes where Kahoot! was used?; 2) Did Quiz games like Kahoot! help you participate more during English classes at school?; 3) Have you noticed any improvement in your interaction with your peers during English classes after using Kahoot!?; 4) Did your school's English teachers explain the real contribution of

using Games like Kahoot! in your English classes?; 5) After using Kahoot!, did you feel more interested in learning English?; 6) What are the main differences that you felt between classes with and without Kahoot! ?; 7) Did the classes with Kahoot! help you learn about more complex topics in an 'easier' way?; 8) Did the classes using new technologies such as educational apps help you feel more motivated?; 9) Did you have any difficulties after implementing new technologies in English classes?; 10) After using Kahoot! Did you feel an improvement in your performance in your English grades?

The purpose of the form was to check the perception of *Kahoot!*, seeking to hear the students' opinions about the daily life of classrooms in a more technological context. The major search for the results was to analyze how ICTs can benefit daily motivation, engagement, and healthy competition among students from the 3rd year of High School at GP school.

4. Results and Analysis

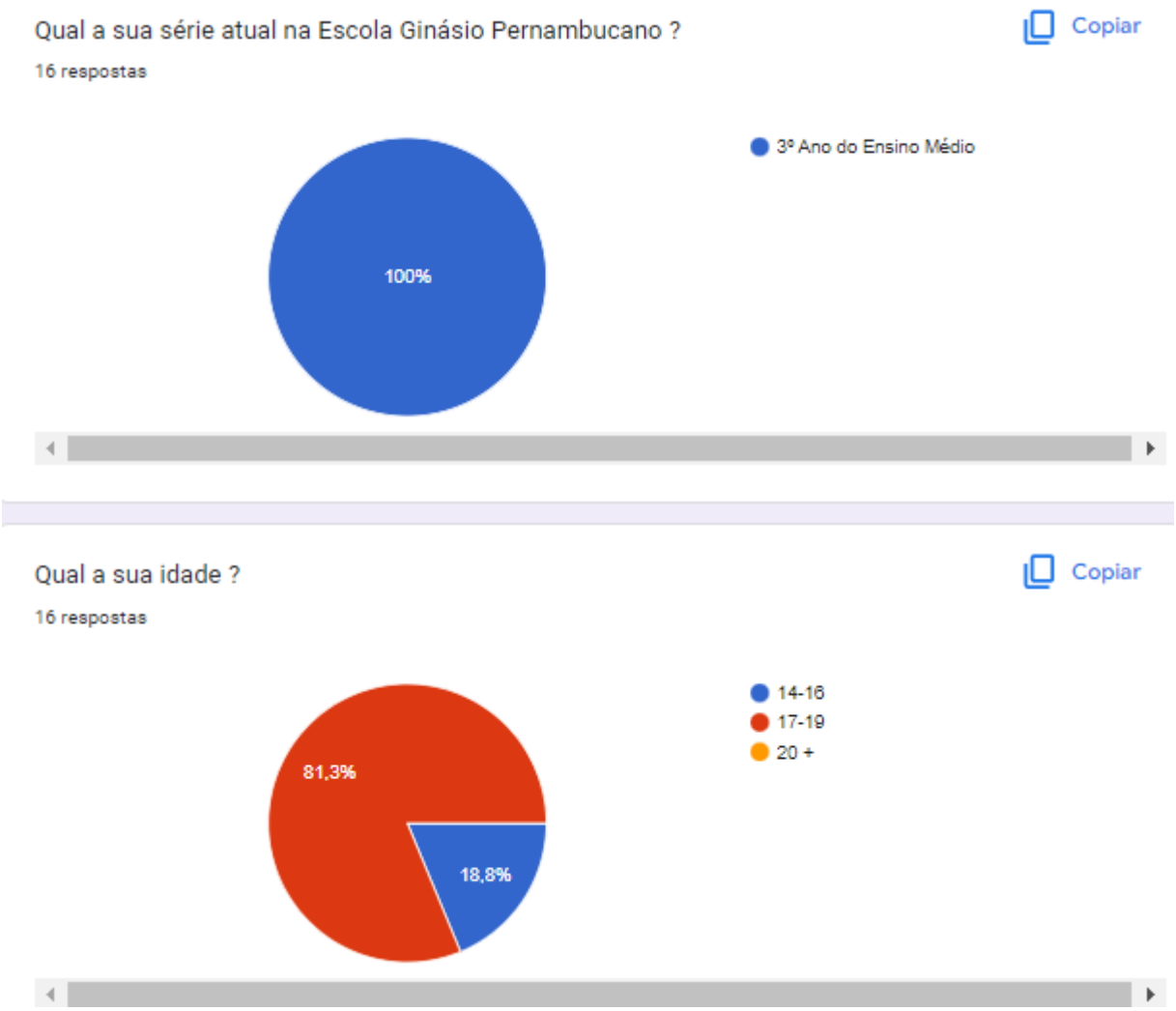

FIGURA.1 - Google Forms

1) Did you find it difficult to participate during classes where Kahoot! was used?

Students 1,2,3,4,5,6,7 and 8 - No

S-9 None. Even when there was no internet, the teacher provided her own 4g.

S-10 Sometimes because kahoot does not work well on the cellphone.

S-11 The only difficulty was the access to the internet.

S-12 No! On the contrary.

S- 13,14,15 and 16 - No.

The National Curricular Common Base (BNCC) provides that the schools allow students to appropriate the languages of digital technologies and become fluent in their use. However, according to question 1, we can observe that some students from public schools as the GP still feel the need for better access to ICTs, even if part of the students is considered digital natives.

According to Prensky (2001), who coined the term, digital natives constitute an ever-growing group of children, adolescents, and nowadays young adults (i.e., those born after 1984; the official beginning of this generation) who have been immersed in digital technologies all their lives. Despite being digital natives, some students face primary problems accessing information and using technological tools
such as Kahoot! or even using the Internet in the classroom.

2) Did Quiz games like Kahoot! help you participate more during English classes at school?

Student 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8 - Yes.

S-9 Yes! It's a way of making us want to get more and more right through the competition.

S-10 Yes. They made the classes more dynamic.

S-11 Yes because they are dynamic.

S-12 Yes, for sure.

S-13 Let’s say yes.

S-14 Yes, a lot.

S-15 Certainly.

S-16 A lot.

3) Have you noticed any improvement in your interaction with your peers during English classes after using Kahoot!?

Students 1,2,3,4,5 - Yes.

S-6 I realized it when we corrected our mistakes and justified our successes.

S-7 Yes. It improves communication because of competition to win.

S-8 Yes. It has improved performance and learning.

S-9 Good interaction between the teacher and the students.

S-10 Yes. Everyone is excited and engaged.

S-11 We do not use it much, but I think so.

S-12 Yes. During and after kahoot.

S-13 Yes. It is very good.

S-14 Certainly.

S-15 Maybe.

S-16 A lot.

About questions 2 and 3 - Technological tools such as computers, tablets, online teaching, and learning applications can enhance students' engagement and active participation in the classrooms in an effective manner (Bransford, Brown & Cocking, 2007; Cox & Rogers, 2005; Kim & Reeves, 2007; Koile & Singer, 2006). Analyzing the answers from questions 2 and 3, almost all the students who responded to the survey felt the benefits of *Kahoot!* as a more competitive and dynamic class in the classroom, which shows that motivation and competition were essential for interaction during the learning process. Only one student was in doubt about the improvements in interaction with peers and replied that “We don't use it much, but I think so”, but nothing other answers such as “Yes. Improved performance and learning” and “Yes, everyone gets excited and engaged.”, It is possible to verify that most students have benefited in the process.

4) Did your school's English teachers explain the real contribution of using Games like

Kahoot! in your English classes?

Student 1 -13 - Yes S-14 Yes, they warn that it is for better interaction and to avoid the blackboard. S-15 It started at Remote Learning, so I don't remember. It's been a while. S-16 Not that I remember.

Gorder (2008, p. 64) outlines four-valued pedagogical principles practiced regarding technology in the classroom for foreign language learners. Before implementing new educational technologies such as *Kahoot!,* it is relevant for the principal or the teacher to indicate the benefits of this implementation. A considerable part of society still does not know the benefits of classes with educational games or gamification elements such as fun, interaction, joy, and rewards.

5) After using Kahoot!, did you feel more interested in learning English?

Students 1,2,3,4,5,6 and 7 - Yes.
S-8 It is very interesting, and learning the English language itself already makes me interested beyond Kahoot.
S-9 Well, it didn't influence me much, but other people for sure.
S-10 Too much because you learn while having fun which is even better.
S-11 For sure. I felt more motivated to learn.
S-12 I have always been interested in the English language.
S-13 Yes, although I've always been interested in it.
S-14 and 15 - I was already interested before it.
S-16 I got more excited.

Hamari & Koivisto (2014) states gamification as "the phenomenon of creating gameful experiences". As previously mentioned, gamification elements can help in the acquisition process. Analyzing the students' responses we can notice that in some cases, it influenced their interest in learning the English language as it can be seen in the answer from S-11 in the table “Certainly, I felt more motivated to learn," and others were not so influenced because there was already interest before as in the answer from S-9 “-Well, it didn’t influence me much but other people for sure”.

6) What are the main differences that you felt between classes with and without Kahoot! ?

Student 1 - With: More interaction with the class and the teacher, learning is really cool. Without: Pretty good too, but Kahoot helps many people to socialize.

S-2 The use of kahoot makes English classes more practical in exercises with questions, more fun, and competitive in a healthy way.

S-3 I can see classes with Kahoot in the way of interaction and communication, the classes without Kahoot are something more focused.

S-4 Without the use of kahoot there is nothing that really motivates us to want to know more about that subject.

S-5 With Kahoot, it's more fun and playful. It's the best way to learn.

S-6 The use of Kahoot makes us learn while having fun and playing.

S-7 The dynamics, because the classes with Kahoot became lighter and funnier.

S-9 The classes with Kahoot become more dynamic and fun.

S-10 With Kahoot, the class participates more.

S-11 A more playful and dynamic class with Kahoot.

S-12 Without Kahoot, the class gets a little more still.

S-13 Dynamics and competitiveness.

S-14 Focus, interest, concentration.

S-15 The excitement of the class.

S-16 The fun and the focus. It’s more dynamic.

7) Did the classes with Kahoot! help you learn about more complex topics in an 'easier' way?

Student 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10 and 11 - Yes

S-12 Yes. Even complex subjects are easy because of the tips learned in class.

S-13 Yes. It helps a lot to know the basics.

S-14 Yes. It is more practical.

S-15 In a certain way, yes.

S-16 No.

According to Gozcu (2016, p.128), the approval for using games in language classrooms characterizes the fact that learners obtain several benefits through games which are educationally valuable. The benefits cited by Gozcu may vary from student to student as in the answer to question 5, Student "With *Kahoot!,* it is more fun and playful. It's the best way to learn" or when another student compares classes with and without *Kahoot!* in their experience "Classes with *Kahoot!* I can see in a way of interaction and communication, those without are something more focused". The benefits range from better concentration, interest, animation, focus and dynamism, according to the students who responded to the survey.

According to Zichermann & Cunningham (2011), Gamification is the process of game-thinking and game mechanisms to engage users to solve some problems. Observing questions 5, 6 and 7, it is possible to notice that *Kahoot!* motivates the learning of more complex topics since it uses the elements of Gamification to engage, motivate, and solve problems.

8) Did the classes using new technologies such as educational apps help you feel more motivated?

Student 1 ..2...3.5.7.9. 12- Yes.

S-13 Yes, since it is something that most students have access to and live with daily.

S-14 Not motivated but participative, so in this way I learn faster.

S-15 Yes, for sure.

S-16 No doubt.

According to Iaremenko (2017, p. 127), there are two types of human motivation: intrinsic and extrinsic. As previously mentioned, in the questions above, motivation plays an essential role in the foreign language process. The term 'Motivation' is quite complex. It comes from the Latin *movere* and means "to move". The motivation comes from internal and external factors. Human behavior varies according to the context in which the individuals are inserted. For instance, when games are used in education with rewards and possible punishments, the focus is on extrinsic motivation, while in intrinsic motivation, the focus is

on fun and not rewards since it is a natural process of the individual, as discussed by several researchers in Psychology. In question 8, it is possible to observe that the majority of the students felt motivated as in the answers “Yes” or when another Student answered “Yes, since it is something that most students have access to and live within their daily lives”.

9) Did you have any difficulties after implementing new technologies in English classes?

Students-1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10 and 11 - NO
S-12 and 13 - Yes
S-14 No. My difficulties had decreased.
S-15 No. It's simple to adapt itself.
S-16 No. On the contrary.

10) After using Kahoot! Did you feel an improvement in your performance in your English grades?

Students 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10 -Yes.

Student -11,12 - No.

S-13 Kahoot, like it or not, reinforced knowledge, so yes, I felt an improvement.

S-14 As it was little used, I didn't see much, but I think so.

S-15 I am always surprised by my English grades.

S-16 Yes, for sure.

Regarding questions 9 and 10: Many students suffer in the process of changing to active methodologies, such as using games in the classroom. Most of them feel the effect of the lack of structure and access which is a problem yet to be solved. Therefore, the principal must decide which mechanisms they will offer in this implementation, although the benefits are visible in different contexts in which *Kahoot!* was implemented such as to engage people, have fun, solve problems and achieve goals.

Ybarra and Green (2003) mention that technology use plays an essential part in providing L2 learners with a valuable language experience as they learn a new language. The theory proves that when implemented in the right way, new technologies help in the acquisition of a new language.

5. Conclusions

The purpose of this article was to present a perspective on how Quiz games such as Kahoot! can help motivate students to learn a foreign language, in this case, English.

In the first discussion about the theory of Acquisition, we can verify the possibility of using new technological tools, such as mobile phones and desktop computers to motivate interaction in learning a foreign language.

A major issue found in research using Kahoot! is that some students have some issues related to internet access, although some have claimed that in these cases of the lack of internet access, the teacher shared her 4G internet in order that all the students in the room could participate in the games in the classroom.

In my opinion, pedagogical practices are frequently updated, and researchers face challenges daily and seek solutions to the technological changes we face as students and teachers.

Despite all these challenges, learning any language or subject can happen in a fun way, avoiding stressful and demotivating contexts, not necessarily through games, but through new possibilities that are reused over time with a new vision.

Throughout the research, we could see that different views are mentioned when it comes to new technologies, such as Kahoot!. In my conclusion, we could see how gamification should be included, especially in public schools in Brazilian states, since it is a form of digital inclusion.

Although the teacher and the student share the same spaces in the foreign language classroom, we have to take into account that, in some cases, new technologies cause strangeness. One of the reasons for this strangeness is due to the different perspectives of generations. Most of the 3rd year students of the Ginásio Pernambucano High School are Digital Learners, people who were born immersed in technologies and social networks, while the teacher is from another generation, who despite having access to new technologies, had to go through a process of learning by using new technological tools.

Despite all the points mentioned above, I believe that it is essential that we create an inviting space that allows mutual learning between students and the teacher so that new pedagogical practices can improve in the future in such a way that they generate benefits in motivating the learning process of an individual foreign language or any other discipline.

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