

Kahoot! to Enhance Irregular Verbs Learning

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Abstract: With 21st Century Learning being emphasized in today's education world, it has come to most of ESL teachers' realization that plain chalk and talk might not fully work in classroom anymore, especially in teaching English grammar to the Primary level pupils. Although some might still believe in the traditional method such as rote learning, the nature of the current alpha gen who are more prone towards the integration of technology caused many of the believers to have second thoughts about it. Besides that, the conventional classroom might not be entertaining and fun anymore as they are exposed to mobile phones and laptops daily, they require lessons that require them to move around, engage and do a lot of hands-on activities. Though it is not the central end of English language acquisition, teachers are still concern of how they get to assess their learners' comprehension on the subject matter effectively. Irregular verbs is one of the greatest challenge in second language learning as it involved functioning brute memory. Hence, the main issue at hand is how to activate the brute memory if there's no active engagement within the learners during the learning process? This led to another question on what can teachers do to make their learners motivated, engaged and actively involved in the learning process. As we are looking forward to find the solution to this matter, this paper is aimed to explore the benefits of using Kahoot! (an online student response system) in teaching irregular verbs to the younger learners. It is hoped that the outcome of this study will benefit both teachers and primary level pupils in teaching and learning English grammar especially the irregular verbs.

Index Terms: Gamification, Irregular verbs, Kahoot!, Motivation, Students Response System.

I. INTRODUCTION

In this modern age, it is synonymous to ESL teachers that Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) plays at least a significance role in passing down the knowledge to the alpha generation learners. Hence, this shift from the traditional teaching is indeed influenced with the notion of 4th industrial revolution where technology meets every aspects of lives including education [21]. Generally, Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) can be defined as any tools and resources which based on technology with the purpose of communicating, creating, disseminating and managing information. One of the advantage of infusing ICT in teaching and learning is the revelation of its impact in enhancing learners' attention [23]. Even so, the same research carried out by Yunus et al. [23] also proved that the use of ICT contributes to difficulty in managing classroom as the learners got overexcited over using the technology in class. As a matter of fact, even social media platforms are useful when it comes to ICT

integration in learning. This is proven when "askme" property in Instagram provides a conducive learning besides enhancing their English writing skill as a whole [10]. This goes hand in hand with what has been summed up by Yunus, Salehi and Amini [22] that computer technologies can be manipulated into teaching and learning experience in so many ways. Due to this awareness, gamification - based learning has been given a fair consideration as one of the parts of the tools that might be handful for teachers in stimulating younger learners to pay more attention with their lessons. However, less attention was given to explore the aforementioned method in executing Irregular verbs teaching and learning, which is proven to be one of the most confused part of learning English language. As suggested by many linguists, one of the tips in learning irregular verbs is by memorizing them by heart. Even so, the method is arguable to be effective with the younger learners of alpha generation who is believed to have shorter attention span compared to the predecessors (learners of previous generations).

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Irregular Verbs and Overgeneralization

The simple past tense represents the idea of actions that had taken place in the past. The verbs in this time changed forms according to their respective groups mainly the regular and irregular verbs. The regular verbs are the most common among the English language user as the words ended with the inflection of -ed, -ied or -d. Irregular verbs on the flipside is seen to be more challenging and complicated. As explained by Prapobaratanakul & Pongpairroj [14], the irregular verbs are identified using methods such as ablaut (vowel change; eg: **run** becomes **ran**), pseudo-inflection (from a long vowel to short vowel; eg: **feed** becomes **fed**), suppletive (completely different; eg: **go** becomes **went**) and identical forms (does not change; eg: **put** becomes **put**). Steven, & Alan [18] added that getting hold of irregular inflection (e.g., *sing - sang*) requires brute - force memory due to its varying degrees of unpredictability. A child would be familiar with the irregular verb such as *sang* if he heard the same words being mentioned for a number of times by his parents. In addition, Brown [2] claimed that, for an English-speaking child, acquisition of irregular past tense inflection comes earlier than the regular counterpart (-ed). However, to second language learners, some words may appear as aliens to them. Therefore, once they are being taught of the rules to regular inflections in past tense, they tend to overgeneralized the same rule for irregular verbs as well. Hence errors such as *goed, eated, wented and felled* occur in their English acquisition of the subject matter [2], [3], [6], [15], [16]. Not only that, findings from a study conducted by Kuczaj [11] shows that "once the child has achieved sufficient amount of control of the regular past

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tense form, he begins consistently to make two types of errors with irregular past tense forms. He either attach the -ed suffix to an irregular generic verb form (*eated*) or attach the suffix to the past tense form itself (*ated*).

B. Gamification to Improve Engagement

It is arguably normal for younger learners to have short attention span. Their mind would wander off within 10 to 20 minutes of the lesson. Sadly, dealing with grammar lessons mean a lot of confusing rules and memorization, and as a result the younger learners lose their interest and motivation. The element of fun and competitiveness embedded in the application such as *Kahoot!* resulted a higher level of engagement as it is more motivating particularly for the younger learners. As reiterated by McCallum [13], games provide teachers with many opportunities to amplify teaching and learning in classroom especially by arousing the learners' motivation. Learners benefit more from a gamification learning as it decreases their anxiety towards the target language and at the same time increases their positive feelings and self-confidence as they can freely use the language without being punished or criticized. Moreover, games are learner-centered strategy by nature and require active involvement by the learners. The undertaking of active role in the process resulted learners to have a more self - directed learning [4]. Brad & Jim [1] added that motivation in instruction is best understood from a model developed by John M. Keller of Florida State University called ARCS Model: (A)ttention (R)elevance (C)onfidence (S)atisfaction. *Kahoot!* however, fit right into this model as it aroused the learners' attention, relevant to the learners' needs to have fun and meaningful learning, be confident in achieving the target via language learning and eventually be satisfied with the lesson when they unlock an achievement throughout the session.

C. Gamification and Grammar Learning

The participants of a study conducted by Gulin & Arda [9] to see the effectiveness of using game-based application in teaching grammar summed up that this method enables grammar learning to be more enjoyable and permanent as a result of games' benefits the learners with a "meaningful context for practicing grammar communicatively". Because of this "meaningful context" opportunity, *Kahoot!* has become more apparent in aiding younger learners to grasp the concept of irregular verbs which normally achieve its maximize comprehension through rote learning. In addition, 63.33% of the same participants of the same study disagree with the statement that learners' knowledge of grammar cannot be measured when games are used in classroom. This indicator proves that gamification has great potential to be used in aiding grammar learning. Cross [5] summed up in his paper that through games, teachers have the opportunity to create contexts which allows for unconscious learning to take place because learners' attention is on the message, not on the language. As a result, once learners are paying attention to the game as an activity, they are acquiring the language in the same way they acquired their mother tongue which is by not being aware of it. This element of unconscious learning would be very fitting with this study especially in applying the irregular verbs learning which is said to be prompted even before than the regular verbs. Another research conducted by Ganesan, Idris and Yunus [8] on the use of *Kahoot!* in improving the learners'

comprehension of certain grammar parts also brought up successful outcome when almost 80% of the participants showed improvement in tests which focused on the use of the Simple Past Tense, Simple Present Tense and Conjunction.

D. Kahoot! Features

Ideally, games allow social interaction and participation to take place. Younger learners, especially, benefit a lot from learning with their peers. At times, while the learners are cooperating within their teams, they, at the same time, compete against the other team and this step encouraged them to have better level of interaction among peers. Based on an interview conducted by Licorish, et. al [12], among the response given by the participant was, "Yes it made it more interactive. I supposed I don't talk in any other class ... [I talked] with my classmates more than the teacher. I probably wouldn't have volunteered any information to the teacher. But I definitely did have more discussions in terms of the actual content with people around me than I did in other classes". The variation of 'game mode' resulted to the learners' personal growth. The timer feature in *Kahoot!* is among of the important element in sparking cooperation and competition within the learners. Hence, making it one of the tools in learning complicated aspect such as irregular verbs. Not only that, it is worthwhile to consider the level of the game when considering gamification in teaching and learning. Most of the games available online might only cater to certain levels of learners. However, with *Kahoot!* such concern may not be relevant as teachers have the autonomy to construct their questions based on their learners' capabilities.

E. Students Response System

According to a study conducted by Stowell & Nelson [19] on students' attitudes towards response system, the clicker group showed significance participation rates compared to the response card groups and hand - raising groups. This comparison could be linked back to the use of student response system (SRS) in a form of clicker gamification such as *Kahoot!* In traditional classroom, teachers tend to go easy by simply asking learners to raise their hands to signal their stand towards an issue or questions posed. Even though some may opt for card systems at times, clicker based SRS seems to attract younger learners even more. This may be due to the fact these alpha generations are very prove to technological devices when compared to the earlier generations. The study also proves that, learners enjoy themselves more when using clickers compared to the other assessment techniques. Simultaneously, the study also shows that learners' who used clickers are more honest with their answers while those who were in hand - raising group appeared to be more cautious with their peers' responses. In conclusion, even though hand-raising technique is quicker and easier to assess learners' comprehension, the result may be irrelevant and biased. In conclusion, learning irregular verbs via *Kahoot!* could be the most potential strategy as it provides an absolute clarity to the assessment when compared to traditional students response techniques.

III. WORKING KAHOOT! IN THE CLASSROOM

For ESL younger learners to fully benefit from irregular verbs lessons, a gamification student-response system must be parallel in order to increase their self-motivation and in-class engagement. With regards to motivation, a research carried out by Zarzycka-Piskorz[7] has proven that 70% of the participants in the study feel motivated to learn grammar after being exposed to *Kahoot!*. Relatively, once the learners are motivated to learn, the brute force memory would kick in and ease the learning process by absorbing and retaining the content which has been registered voluntarily hence making the process as natural as the first language acquisition. In a way, this is the idea of integrating *Kahoot!* in an ESL classroom. Another significance of practicing this application in class is due to the fact that learners of alpha gens are more prone to repetition and images.

Now that the benefits of using this application has been laid open, the further step is to plan its usage in classroom. To see the effectiveness of this *Kahoot!* in an ESL classroom, teachers must first list down the list of irregular verbs which will be focused on. Then, a simple pre-test is given to the learners pertaining the focused irregular verbs. Once the test is collected, teachers can walk the learners through the how to operate *Kahoot!* Since *Kahoot!* works mainly as a quiz, teachers can collect the data gained from this online quiz as a reliable data for the final findings.

Some may wonder the difference between rote learning and *Kahoot!*? Ideally, the concept is actually similar to each other because both are intended to get learners to retain the information gained for a longer period of time. However, instead of drilling (*ride, rode, ridden*) for several times, *Kahoot!* enables the learners to experience the concept of memorization through gaming. Therefore, instead of seeing the quiz in *Kahoot!* as merely quizzes (which eventually intimidate them), they would be ‘deceived’ to treat it more like “*in it to win it*” game. In fact, while preparing the quiz questions, teachers must also consider adding in relevant images that go hand in hand with the focused irregular verbs because as mentioned earlier the alpha gen learns better with images and repetition. After a few sessions of these ‘quizzes’, teachers may hand in another test (post – test) to test the effectiveness of *Kahoot!* in improving the younger learners’ retention on the irregular verbs. This idea is similar to the one carried out by Zakaria et. al [24] on using *Kahoot!* to assess the pre-service teachers which resulted positive improvement by the participants.

Another midpoint of this application is that teachers will have the upper hand of assessing how their learners are doing for that particular content (from the displayed result) as compared to asking each and every child to answer their questions verbally. This result may or may not be displayed in the main screen which made it more discreet and personal. Apart from using it as a main quiz, teachers can also use this application as a warm-up activity or as an exit slip (making it more practical and effective in assessing the learners understanding of the lesson rather than asking them to give thumbs up and down or even lifting their traffic light cards).

As learners play an important role in their own learning, it is fair to find out what do they think of the application and how does it impacted their learning. Therefore, a follow-up to the pretest-posttest quiz would be a simple questionnaire and/or a semi-structured interview. Throughout this process,

a teacher could have a better view on which parts of *Kahoot!* that works well towards their learners’ learning. Simple questions such as “Which part of *Kahoot!* that you like the most, and why?”, “Would you like *Kahoot!* to be used regularly?”, “Did *Kahoot!* allows any positive interaction between you and your friends?”, and “How does *Kahoot!* helps your learning?”

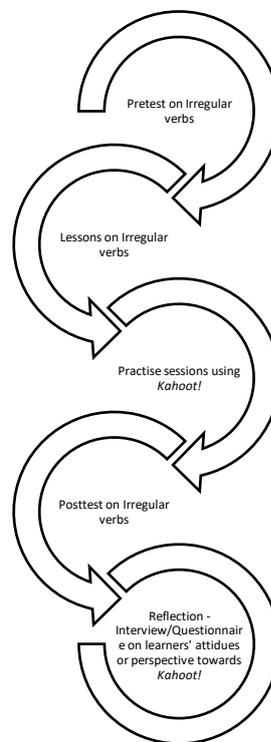


Fig. 1 Suggested circular experiment stage

IV. DISCUSSION

Initially, this paper is focusing on irregular verbs as it is intended to bring teachers’ awareness that the mattered topic must be given a fair amount of attention as it appears to be quite dominant in English language. In fact, there are up to 160 irregular verbs out there which makes up to 58% of all verbs in the English language. Such persuasion proves that mastery of irregular verbs is essential in English language learning. Realizing such significance is vital for teachers to make sure that follow up actions are to be taken in making sure that effective lessons on irregular verbs to be executed in class.

One may wonder how does this alternative to normal educational setting helps in supporting the idea of effective learning on the subject matter (the Irregular verb) and the Fourth Industrial Revolution? Well, it is no doubt that humans are invincible against machines in terms of future job creation considering aspects such as creative endeavors, social interaction as well as physical dexterity and mobility, however as education is at the heart of prepping the present and future generations against the limitless possibility machines have to offer, it is only fitting that application such as *Kahoot!* to be applied in today’s classroom to ensure that there is an existence of collaborative problem solving in learners’ learning. In fact, according to Toffler in his book *Future Shock* [20], “the illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who



cannot learn, unlearn and relearn". From this statement itself, it can be speculated that the author is trying to posit that the most important element to be emphasized in current education is not recitation of facts and procedures but the skill on learning how to learn. In other words, we have to "work alongside the machines instead of competing with them, by programming them instead of being programmed by them". However, in this case, it is wise to sum up that the proposition is for learners to be able to learn about understanding how the irregular verbs are formed rather than to simply repeat and memorize the forms.

As some might argue that the younger learners may treat the application as a mere 'game' instead of lessons, but it is important to know that some of the gamification concepts are goal, challenge, reward, competition, user engagement, achievement, skill and learning. Therefore, it is best to conclude that any form of gamification learning does benefit the learners especially the younger learners. *Kahoot!* stands out the most as one of the pioneer and leading application as it combines all of the gamification concepts which makes it the best candidate in executing lesson on dry and complicated topic such as Irregular verbs makes more sense and appealing. Based on the testimonials shared by teachers who had practiced *Kahoot!* in their English lesson proved that their learners had more enjoyable learning experience in classrooms. Some even claimed that their learners improved significantly as compared to chalk and talk method.

Another highlight of *Kahoot!* is the heavy influence of student response system. Traditionally, teaches find learners in normal classroom to be more passive. Occasionally, one or two may stand out compared to the rest but how does this ensure the others' participation in class? With *Kahoot!* however, learners are obliged to share their responses with the others as being verbal is not the only option to share their thoughts. They can simply show their commitment by choosing and clicking their responses without being judged in any way possible. Despite of being highly engaging, *Kahoot!* is also easy to use. Teachers may need to do the demonstration once or twice and learners can be independent right after. All they need to do is key in the game pin, type in their username and click their answer choices. It is also safe to conclude that this application is very much inclusive as no man is left behind, hence there is no need for any learners to overshadow the others (by keep raising their hands to answer leaving the others with thin chances to speak or share their answers).

As mentioned earlier, *Kahoot!* makes to the top of the list due to its credibility in helping learners to be more engaging with the lessons. Traditionally, learners of all types are easily distracted in class. They lose focus easily and sometimes boldly showed disinterest in the lesson especially English lesson which bores them. However, once they are given the opportunity to do hands-on activities especially ones that integrates ICT in it, their attention span will increase hence resulted a better learning outcome. As it is the learners nature especially the younger one to appreciate more fun in learning, *Kahoot!* simply hits the bullseye.

V. CONCLUSION

Most teachers would find the use of ICT is hefty and time consuming. However, one must always bear in mind that diversity in teaching and learning helps to maximize the learning experience for the learners. This paper, on the other

hand, serves as an eye opener to teachers and educators to incorporate gamification learning such as *Kahoot!* in classroom as part of their regular teaching practices in class. As rote learning might work when it comes to learning the list of irregular verbs there are, however, meaningful learning will do more constructive and positive benefit to the learners. Hence, making gamification tools such as *Kahoot!* to be one of the go-to pedagogy. As was emphasized in this paper, the benefits of using this current teaching trend is endless, from motivating and engaging the learners to ensuring better means of assessment. Bottom line is, technology is not here to replace the normal teaching and learning but to assist the process in ensuring better result and satisfaction for both teachers and learners. Therefore, teachers must always be opened and positive to changes with a thinking that there are always more than one teaching strategies which can be applied in classroom and *Kahoot!* is one of the many that is worth to be explored particularly in coping with one of most confused word forms such as the irregular verbs.

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