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Level Up: How Gamified Learning with Kahoot! and Quizizz (Wayground) Transforms the English Language Classroom

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The familiar chime of a notification, the vibrant splash of colours on the screen, and the intense buzz of anticipation; these are not the typical silence of a traditional language lesson. Instead, it is the sound of students deeply engaged, motivated, and actively constructing their understanding of the English language. In contemporary education, the integration of active learning strategies, particularly through gamified platforms like Kahoot! and Quizizz (now Wayground), is proving to be a revolutionary force. These tools do more than digitise quizzes, as they fundamentally reshape the classroom dynamic, fostering unprecedented levels of student motivation, enhancing language acquisition, and cultivating essential soft skills through both individual and collaborative play, all of which are essential for lifelong learning.

For decades, language pedagogy has shifted from passive memorisation to active use, encouraging students to engage with the material, make connections, and apply their knowledge. Yet, the challenge has always been how to consistently foster this engagement. Gamification, or the use of game-design elements in non-game contexts, addresses this gap by incorporating features such as points, leaderboards, instant feedback, and a narrative of challenge and reward. Platforms like Kahoot! and Quizizz (now Wayground) tap into intrinsic motivational drivers that traditional methods often fail to reach and, more importantly, support lifelong learning in students through a mindset of curiosity, adaptability, and resilience.

The motivational power of these tools is profound and is strongly supported by contemporary educational research. A key theory

underpinning this is Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000), which identifies competence, autonomy, and relatedness as essential to intrinsic motivation, all of which gamified learning directly addresses. When students answer correctly and watch their names climb the leaderboard, they feel competent. Students experience autonomy through self-paced platforms like Quizizz (now Wayground) or by creating their own quizzes. Perhaps most importantly, the shared experience of a live Kahoot! game fosters a strong sense of relatedness and communal excitement. Research confirms that such environments significantly increase students' motivation and engagement compared to traditional review sessions (Çakıroğlu et al., 2021).



The beauty of these platforms lies in their flexibility to cater to different learning preferences. Individually, Quizizz (now Wayground) excels by allowing students to progress at their own pace, thereby reducing anxiety, providing students with time to process questions, and offering immediate, corrective feedback that is essential for language development.

When a student struggles with irregular past-tense verbs, they can take extra time without the pressure of peers racing ahead, transforming the activity into a personal mastery challenge rather than a public competition. Collaboratively, Kahoot!'s team mode transforms the classroom into a lively hub of discussion, where students debate answers, justify their reasoning, and explain concepts to their peers. Explaining the difference between "affect" and "effect" to a teammate requires a deeper cognitive grasp than simply selecting an answer. This process mirrors peer instruction (Mazur, 1997), making learning both interactive and enjoyable.

Beyond mere content knowledge, this collaborative gamification is a fertile ground for developing crucial language and interpersonal skills. The English language classroom is uniquely positioned to benefit from this, as the game itself becomes a context-rich environment for practising all four key language skills — reading comprehension, listening accuracy, spoken fluency, and creative writing —as well as for developing interpersonal abilities such as teamwork, leadership, and empathy.

Natural leaders often emerge to facilitate discussion and ensure consensus, while quieter students, who feel supported and safe within their team, are more likely to contribute ideas. They learn to advocate for their perspectives, listen actively to others, and work towards a common goal—a microcosm of real-world collaborative projects. Another study on ESL learners highlighted that gamified group activities significantly enhanced students' communicative competence and willingness to communicate, since the game environment lowered their affective filter and made risk-taking feel safe and rewarding (Som & Megawati, 2024). This safe, yet stimulating environment reflects the principles of lifelong learning, where students build resilience and confidence to face challenges.



The evidence for the efficacy of these tools continues to grow. Dikcius et al. (2021) observed higher material retention, while Zainudding et al. (2022) reported significant positive impacts across subjects, including language acquisition. Wang and Tahir (2020) further emphasised the importance of immediate feedback, which supports the principle of continuous improvement that is central to lifelong learning. These findings suggest that gamification is not a passing trend but a sustainable approach that empowers learners for ongoing development.

Of course, the goal is not to replace pedagogy with play. The effectiveness of Kahoot! and Quizizz (now Wayground) pivots on their strategic implementation by skilled educators. Its greatest strength lies in formative assessment, which checks understanding, reviews concepts, and stimulates reflection. Post-game debriefs led by educators help to consolidate learning, clarify misconceptions, and deepen understanding. Thus, gamification complements pedagogy rather than replacing it, reinforcing the iterative and reflective nature of lifelong learning.

In conclusion, Kahoot! and Quizizz (now Wayground) represent a significant leap forward for the English language classroom. It successfully dismantles the dichotomy between rigorous learning and genuine enjoyment. By harnessing the motivational power of game mechanics, these tools transform students

from passive listeners into active, motivated participants. Whether working individually to build confidence or collaborating in teams to develop understanding, communication, and leadership skills, students are not just learning English; they are living it. More than a classroom innovation, gamified learning prepares students not only for immediate classroom success but also for the demands of lifelong learning. In an era where technology and global communication constantly reshape the skills required, students must cultivate habits of continuous inquiry, adaptability, and self-motivation. Platforms such as Kahoot! and Quizizz (Wayground) nurture these habits by encouraging learners to take ownership of their progress, reflect on feedback, and collaborate meaningfully with peers. These are not short-term benefits but long-lasting competencies that empower learners to thrive in future academic, professional, and personal contexts. By equipping students with a mindset that views learning as an ongoing, dynamic process, gamification strengthens the bridge between classroom engagement and lifelong learning readiness.

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