

STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF KAHOOT! IN MITIGATING CLASSROOM BOREDOM IN EFL CLASSROOMS: A QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY

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Abstract

Classroom boredom continues to be a common challenge in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms, often reducing students' attention, participation, and enthusiasm for learning. To address this issue, many teachers have begun incorporating gamified learning platforms such as Kahoot! to create a more interactive classroom environment. This study explores how students perceive the use of Kahoot! in reducing classroom boredom during English lessons. A qualitative case study was conducted with 35 tenth-grade students at SMAN 2 Slawi, Indonesia. Data were gathered through classroom observations, open-ended questionnaires, and semi-structured interviews with 15 purposively selected students. The data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis. The findings reveal that students generally viewed Kahoot! as a learning tool that made English lessons more engaging, enjoyable, and interactive. Features such as quizzes, leaderboards, immediate feedback, and time-based challenges encouraged students to stay focused, participate actively, and interact more confidently during classroom activities. Although a few students reported feeling slightly nervous because of the competitive atmosphere and time limits, they considered these challenges motivating rather than discouraging. Overall, students believed that Kahoot! helped create a more dynamic learning environment, making English lessons less monotonous and reducing feelings of classroom boredom. These findings suggest that integrating gamified learning tools into EFL classrooms can support students' engagement while fostering a more positive learning experience.

Keywords: Kahoot!; classroom boredom; EFL classrooms; students' perceptions; qualitative case study;

1 INTRODUCTION

English plays an important role in preparing students to communicate and participate in an increasingly interconnected world. In Indonesian senior high schools, English learning is expected to help students develop not only linguistic competence but also confidence in using the language in meaningful situations. Achieving these goals, however, depends on students' active participation and sustained engagement throughout the learning process. When classroom activities fail to capture students' interest, learning becomes less effective because students tend to lose attention, participate less, and disengage from classroom interactions.

One factor that often interferes with effective learning is classroom boredom. Rather than being a temporary feeling, boredom is considered an academic emotion that can influence students' motivation, cognitive engagement, and learning outcomes. It commonly emerges when classroom activities are repetitive, predictable, or provide insufficient challenge, causing students to perceive learning as monotonous and lacking personal value (Pekrun & Stephens, 2011; Kruk & Zawodniak, 2020). In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms, where language learning requires continuous interaction and practice, prolonged boredom may discourage students from participating and reduce their willingness to communicate. Li et al. (2023) further argue that boredom is closely associated with low emotional engagement and limited classroom interaction, making it one of the emotional barriers to successful language learning.

To create more engaging learning experiences, many teachers have begun integrating gamification into classroom instruction. Gamification refers to the use of game design elements in non-game contexts to encourage participation, increase motivation, and enhance learners' engagement (Kapp, 2014). Instead of changing learning objectives, gamification transforms the way learning activities are presented by incorporating elements such as points, leaderboards, competition, immediate feedback, and time-based challenges. These features encourage students to participate more actively while creating a learning environment that is both enjoyable and meaningful.

Among various gamified learning platforms, Kahoot! has become one of the most widely used digital tools in language classrooms. Kahoot! allows teachers to deliver quizzes in an interactive format while providing immediate feedback and fostering friendly competition among students. Previous studies have consistently reported positive outcomes from its implementation. Licorish et al. (2018) found that Kahoot! increased classroom participation and promoted more active engagement during learning activities. Similarly, (Noori et al., 2023) reported that Kahoot! created a more interactive learning environment by encouraging students to participate enthusiastically and collaborate with their peers. Other studies have also shown that Kahoot! contributes to higher motivation, greater enjoyment, and improved learning experiences in English classrooms (Salsabila et al., 2024; Chen et al., 2024).

Although these studies demonstrate the educational benefits of Kahoot!, most of them primarily examine its impact on motivation, engagement, participation, or academic achievement. Comparatively less attention has been given to how students themselves perceive Kahoot! as a tool for mitigating classroom boredom, particularly in Indonesian senior high school EFL contexts. Because boredom is closely connected to students' emotional experiences during learning, understanding learners' perceptions is essential for explaining not only whether Kahoot! is effective but also how and why it influences students' classroom experiences. Exploring students' perspectives can therefore provide a more comprehensive understanding of how gamified learning contributes to creating a more engaging classroom environment. This focus also aligns with the findings of the present study, which indicate that students' perceptions were shaped not only by Kahoot!'s game features but also by the learning experiences those features created, including greater attention, participation, emotional engagement, and reduced boredom.

Based on this gap, the present study explores students' perceptions of using Kahoot! to mitigate classroom boredom in English learning at SMAN 2 Slawi. Specifically, the study seeks to understand how students perceive Kahoot! as a learning tool and how they describe their experiences of using it during classroom activities. The findings are expected to contribute to the growing body of research on gamified learning by providing insight into the relationship between students' perceptions, classroom boredom, and engagement in EFL classrooms.

To achieve these objectives, the study addresses the following research questions:

1. How do students perceive the use of Kahoot! in mitigating classroom boredom in EFL classrooms?
2. How do students describe their experiences of using Kahoot! to mitigate classroom boredom during English learning?

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research Design and Approach

This study adopted a qualitative case study design to explore students' perceptions of using Kahoot! to mitigate classroom boredom in English learning. According to Creswell (2018), a qualitative case study is appropriate when researchers seek to develop an in-depth understanding of a bounded system within its real-life context. Therefore, a qualitative approach was considered appropriate because the study sought to understand how students interpreted and experienced Kahoot! within their own classroom context rather than to measure its effectiveness quantitatively. Since perceptions are shaped by personal experiences and interactions, a qualitative design allowed participants to describe their views in greater depth. The case study approach was selected because the research focused on a single group of students in a real educational setting, enabling a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon being investigated.

2.2 Research Setting and Participants

The study was conducted at SMAN 2 Slawi, Central Java, Indonesia, involving one tenth-grade class consisting of 35 students. The participants were selected because they had experienced English learning activities using Kahoot!, making them well positioned to share their perceptions and learning experiences.

All 35 students participated in the classroom observations and completed the open-ended questionnaire. To obtain richer and more detailed accounts, 15 students were purposively selected for semi-structured interviews. The participants were chosen based on their willingness to participate and their ability to provide diverse perspectives on the implementation of Kahoot! during English lessons.

2.3 Data Collection

Data were collected through classroom observations, open-ended questionnaires, and semi-structured interviews. Using multiple data sources allowed the researcher to examine the phenomenon from different perspectives and gain a more comprehensive understanding of students' perceptions.

Classroom observations were conducted during Kahoot!-based English lessons to document how students responded throughout the learning process. Particular attention was given to observable behaviours, including students' attention, participation, classroom interaction, emotional responses, and signs of boredom. An observation checklist was used to ensure that these aspects were recorded systematically.

After the classroom activities, students completed an open-ended questionnaire designed to encourage them to express their opinions and learning experiences in their own words. Unlike closed-ended questions, this format enabled students to explain what they liked, the challenges they encountered, and how Kahoot! influenced their engagement during English lessons.

To complement the questionnaire findings, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 15 selected students. The interviews provided opportunities for participants to elaborate on their responses and describe their experiences more openly. This flexibility allowed the researcher to explore issues that emerged during the conversation while maintaining consistency across participants through a common interview guide.

2.4 Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2021) thematic analysis, which provides a systematic approach to identifying and interpreting patterns within qualitative data. The analysis began with repeated reading of the observation notes, questionnaire responses, and interview transcripts to develop familiarity with the dataset. Initial codes were then generated to capture meaningful features of the data relevant to the research questions. Similar codes were grouped into potential themes, which were reviewed and refined until they represented coherent patterns across the dataset. Finally, the themes were clearly defined and interpreted to explain students' perceptions and experiences of using Kahoot! during English learning.

2.5 Trustworthiness

To enhance the trustworthiness of the findings, the study employed methodological triangulation by comparing evidence obtained from classroom observations, open-ended questionnaires, and semi-structured interviews. Examining the consistency of information across these three sources helped strengthen the credibility of the interpretations. In addition, the research instruments were reviewed by the research supervisors before data collection to ensure that the observation checklist, questionnaire, and interview guide were relevant to the research objectives and sufficiently clear for participants.

2.6 Ethical Considerations

Ethical principles were observed throughout the research process to ensure that participants' rights and well-being were protected. Before the study was conducted, permission to carry out the research was obtained from the school. Students were informed about the purpose of the study, the research procedures, and the voluntary nature of their participation. They were also assured that their responses would be treated confidentially and used solely for academic purposes. To protect participants' identities, pseudonyms in the form of participant codes (e.g., P1, P2, and P3) were used when reporting questionnaire responses and interview excerpts. Throughout the study, participants were free to express their opinions without pressure, and no personal information that could reveal their identities was included in the findings.

3 RESULTS

The findings are presented based on the themes generated through Braun and Clarke's (2021) thematic analysis of the classroom observations, open-ended questionnaires, and semi-structured interviews. Rather than reporting the findings separately for each data source, the results are organized into four interconnected themes that capture students' perceptions and experiences of using Kahoot! during English learning. Bringing together evidence from the three sources provides a more comprehensive understanding of how students experienced Kahoot! in the classroom. Overall, the

findings indicate that students perceived Kahoot! as more than a game-based quiz platform. They viewed it as a learning tool that encouraged active participation, promoted positive emotional engagement, created meaningful learning experiences, and helped reduce classroom boredom. These themes are discussed in the following sections.

Table 3. 1 Themes Generated Through Thematic Analysis

Theme	Description	Primary Data Source
Theme 1	Kahoot! Enhanced Students' Attention and Classroom Participation	Observation, Interview, Questionnaire
Theme 2	Kahoot! Fostered Positive Emotional Engagement	Observation, Interview, Questionnaire
Theme 3	Kahoot! Created Meaningful Learning Experiences	Observation, Interview, Questionnaire
Theme 4	Kahoot! Helped Mitigate Classroom Boredom	Observation, Interview, Questionnaire

3.1 Kahoot! Enhanced Students' Attention and Classroom Participation

One of the most consistent findings across the three data sources was that Kahoot! helped students stay focused and participate more actively during English lessons. Students explained that the interactive nature of the platform encouraged them to pay closer attention to the learning activities, while classroom observations showed that they remained engaged throughout the quiz sessions. Instead of passively listening to the teacher, students became actively involved by answering questions, following the leaderboard, and responding to immediate feedback. These behaviours suggest that Kahoot! created a more dynamic classroom environment that encouraged continuous participation.

The questionnaire responses further showed that students associated their increased attention with several features of Kahoot!, particularly the quizzes, background music, time limits, and competitive elements. Many students felt that these features made the lessons more interesting and prevented them from losing focus, especially when compared with conventional classroom activities. One student commented:

"It makes me feel more energized and focused compared to traditional lectures." (P25) Another student explained:

"I become more focused because I want to get a higher score and enter the leaderboard." (P5)

Similarly, another participant noted:

"The music and the timer make me focus much more than just looking at a textbook." (P3)

The interview findings reinforced these responses. Several students described Kahoot! as an activity that encouraged everyone to participate because each student had the opportunity to answer questions individually while competing in a friendly atmosphere. Unlike traditional lessons, where some students tended to remain passive, Kahoot! motivated them to stay involved from the beginning to the end of the activity. Classroom observations also supported this pattern, showing that students were attentive to the quiz, interacted with their classmates, and responded enthusiastically throughout the lesson. The consistency across observations, questionnaires, and interviews suggests that students' positive perceptions were reflected not only in what they said but also in how they participated during classroom activities.

These findings are consistent with previous research highlighting the role of gamified learning in promoting classroom engagement. Licorish et al. (2018) reported that Kahoot! encourages active participation by involving students in interactive learning tasks, while Noori et al. (2023) found that its competitive and collaborative features help sustain students' attention during classroom activities. Similarly, Ali & Abdalgane (2022) argued that interactive digital quizzes stimulate learners' cognitive engagement, making them more attentive throughout the learning process. From students' perspectives,

the findings suggest that Kahoot! was valued not only for incorporating game elements but also for transforming students from passive listeners into active participants in English learning.

3.2 Kahoot! Fostered Positive Emotional Engagement

Beyond encouraging students to participate more actively, Kahoot! also influenced how they felt during English lessons. Across the observations, questionnaires, and interviews, students consistently described the learning experience as more enjoyable, exciting, and engaging than their regular classroom activities. These emotional responses appeared to play an important role in maintaining students' interest and involvement throughout the lesson. Rather than viewing English as a routine subject, many students described Kahoot!-based activities as something they looked forward to because the learning process felt more interactive and enjoyable.

Many students explained that the game-like features of Kahoot!, such as quizzes, background music, points, and the leaderboard, created an enjoyable classroom atmosphere. These elements encouraged them to stay involved while adding a sense of excitement to the lesson. Several participants mentioned that answering questions through Kahoot! felt less intimidating than traditional classroom activities because the experience was more playful and interactive. As one student shared:

"I feel excited because learning becomes more fun, and I don't get bored easily." (P6) Another participant commented:

"The competition makes the lesson more exciting, and I become more enthusiastic about answering the questions." (P11)

Although positive emotions were reported by most participants, the findings also revealed a more nuanced picture. Some students admitted that the countdown timer and competitive ranking occasionally made them feel nervous, especially when they had limited time to answer. However, these feelings were generally described as temporary and did not reduce their willingness to participate. Instead, many students perceived the pressure as part of the challenge, motivating them to think more quickly and stay focused during the activity. This suggests that the competitive elements of Kahoot! did not simply generate excitement but also encouraged students to remain actively engaged with the learning tasks.

The classroom observations reflected these emotional responses. Students frequently smiled, laughed, celebrated high scores, and reacted enthusiastically when the leaderboard appeared after each question. They also encouraged one another during the activity, creating a lively and supportive classroom atmosphere. These behaviours reinforced the interview and questionnaire findings, indicating that students' emotional engagement was visible not only in their reflections but also in their interactions during the lesson.

These findings support previous studies suggesting that gamified learning environments can foster positive emotions that contribute to students' engagement. Noori et al. (2023) reported that Kahoot! creates an enjoyable learning environment that encourages students to participate more enthusiastically, while Chen et al. (2024) argued that positive emotional engagement is closely associated with higher levels of behavioural and cognitive involvement. From the perspective of the present study, students' emotional responses were shaped not only by the competitive features of Kahoot! but also by the opportunity to learn in a more interactive and enjoyable environment. Even when students experienced mild nervousness, they generally viewed it as a motivating challenge rather than a barrier to learning, contributing to a more engaging English classroom experience.

3.3 Kahoot! Created Meaningful Learning Experiences

Students' positive perceptions of Kahoot! extended beyond enjoyment and classroom participation. Many participants described the platform as a learning tool that helped them understand the lesson more effectively while making English classes feel more meaningful. Instead of seeing Kahoot! simply as a game, students viewed it as an activity that allowed them to review the material, check their understanding, and stay actively involved throughout the lesson. Their responses suggest that meaningful learning was shaped not only by the game elements themselves but also by the opportunities those elements created for active engagement.

The questionnaire responses showed that students appreciated the opportunity to answer questions immediately after learning the material. They felt that the quizzes helped them recall key concepts and identify mistakes through the instant feedback provided after each question. Rather than

passively memorizing information, students were able to evaluate their understanding as they participated in the activity. Several students also explained that receiving immediate feedback helped them recognize which answers were correct and encouraged them to improve in the following questions.

These views were echoed during the interviews. Students explained that learning through Kahoot! felt different from their usual classroom experience because they were directly involved in applying what they had learned instead of only listening to explanations or completing written exercises. As one participant stated:

"It helps me understand the lesson better because I can answer the questions directly and know the correct answers immediately." (P7)

Another student commented:

"Learning feels easier because we review the material while playing, so I can remember it better." (P12)

The classroom observations also reflected this pattern. During the Kahoot! sessions, students remained attentive while discussing answers with their classmates and responding to the teacher's explanations after each question. Rather than focusing solely on achieving high scores, many students appeared interested in understanding why a particular answer was correct. These interactions suggest that Kahoot! supported learning by encouraging students to reflect on the content instead of merely completing the quiz.

The findings indicate that students valued Kahoot! not only because it made learning enjoyable but also because it created opportunities to engage with the lesson more actively. This interpretation is consistent with Kapp (2014), who argues that gamification becomes meaningful when game elements are integrated with clear learning objectives rather than being used only for entertainment. Similarly, Licorish et al. (2018) found that Kahoot! supports learning by encouraging students to interact with instructional content while maintaining their engagement throughout classroom activities. In the present study, students' perceptions were shaped by the learning experiences they encountered during Kahoot!-based activities. The combination of active participation, immediate feedback, and opportunities for reflection helped students see Kahoot! as more than a digital quiz platform it became a tool that supported their learning in meaningful ways.

3.4 Kahoot! Helped Mitigate Classroom Boredom

The previous themes illustrate how Kahoot! influenced students' attention, participation, emotional engagement, and learning experiences. Taken together, these changes contributed to one broader outcome: students perceived that English lessons became less monotonous and more enjoyable. Across the observations, questionnaires, and interviews, participants consistently described Kahoot! as an activity that broke the routine of conventional classroom instruction and created a more engaging learning environment. Rather than simply making lessons more entertaining, Kahoot! appeared to change the way students experienced English learning as a whole.

Many students contrasted Kahoot!-based lessons with their regular classroom experiences. They explained that traditional English lessons often relied on teacher explanations, textbook activities, and written exercises, which could become repetitive over time. In contrast, Kahoot! introduced quizzes, competition, background music, and immediate feedback that encouraged students to remain involved throughout the lesson. As one participant explained:

"Yes, Kahoot helps reduce boredom because learning takes place in a fun and interactive way." (P31)

Another student shared:

"Kahoot makes the classroom atmosphere more exciting and fun with the games." (P20)

Similarly, another participant stated:

"Kahoot helps reduce boredom because it adds fun, competition, and interaction to the lesson." (P21)

These perceptions were consistent with what was observed in the classroom. During the Kahoot! sessions, students remained engaged from the beginning to the end of the activity. They paid attention to the questions, interacted with classmates, celebrated correct answers, and continued participating even when they encountered time pressure. Notably, there were few observable signs typically

associated with classroom boredom, such as disengagement, loss of focus, or passive behaviour. Instead, the learning atmosphere was lively, interactive, and centred on active student involvement.

The findings suggest that the reduction in classroom boredom did not result from the novelty of using a digital platform alone. Rather, it emerged because Kahoot! combined several elements that supported students' learning simultaneously. The opportunity to participate actively, receive immediate feedback, experience friendly competition, and interact with peers made the lesson feel more meaningful than conventional learning activities. As students became cognitively engaged, emotionally involved, and behaviourally active, they were less likely to experience boredom during English lessons.

This interpretation is consistent with previous research on boredom in language learning. Li et al. (2023) argue that boredom often develops when classroom activities are repetitive, predictable, and provide limited stimulation. Likewise, Kruk and Zawodniak (2020) identify monotonous instructional practices as one of the main sources of boredom in foreign language classrooms. The present findings suggest that Kahoot! helped interrupt this pattern by introducing greater interaction and variety into classroom activities. The findings also support Chen et al. (2024), who reported that lower levels of boredom are closely associated with higher behavioural and emotional engagement. In the present study, students consistently described themselves as more attentive, enthusiastic, and actively involved while using Kahoot!, indicating that these forms of engagement contributed to reducing their sense of boredom.

Overall, the four themes reveal that students' positive perceptions of Kahoot! were closely connected to the learning experiences it created. Students did not value Kahoot! solely because it incorporated game elements; they appreciated how those elements encouraged participation, supported learning, fostered positive emotions, and transformed the classroom atmosphere into one that felt more engaging and less monotonous. These findings suggest that Kahoot! can serve as a meaningful pedagogical tool for creating more engaging English learning experiences while helping to mitigate classroom boredom.

4 CONCLUSIONS

This study explored students' perceptions and experiences of using Kahoot! to mitigate classroom boredom in English learning. The findings indicate that students generally perceived Kahoot! as a positive and engaging learning tool. Rather than functioning only as a game-based quiz platform, Kahoot! encouraged students to pay greater attention, participate more actively, experience positive emotions, and engage more meaningfully with the learning process. These interconnected experiences contributed to reducing students' feelings of boredom during English lessons and created a more interactive and student-centred classroom environment.

The study also highlights that reducing classroom boredom involves more than introducing technology into the classroom. Students valued Kahoot! because its gamified features supported meaningful learning experiences through active participation, immediate feedback, and enjoyable interaction with peers. These findings suggest that thoughtfully integrating gamification into English instruction can enhance students' engagement while creating a learning environment that is both enjoyable and educational. Future studies may build on these findings by examining the long-term impact of Kahoot! or comparing students' experiences across different educational settings and digital learning platforms

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