

IMPROVING THE METHODOLOGY OF TEACHING ENGLISH THROUGH THE KAHOOT, WORDWALL, AND QUIZLET PLATFORMS (ON THE EXAMPLE OF GRADES 8-9)

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Abstract: The rapid digitalization of secondary education requires the modernization of methods for teaching English as a foreign language (EFL). This article examines the improvement of pedagogical methodologies through the integration of game-based interactive platforms—Kahoot, Wordwall, and Quizlet—focusing on students in grades 8–9. These grades represent a critical transitional phase where cognitive development shifts toward abstract thinking, demanding advanced lexical and grammatical competence. The study utilizes a mixed-methods approach, combining a quasi-experimental design involving 164 students with classroom observations and structured surveys to evaluate the platforms' impact on vocabulary retention, grammatical structural mastery, and intrinsic learning motivation. The empirical results demonstrate a statistically significant increase in post-test scores among the experimental group compared to the control group. Kahoot was found to optimize real-time engagement and formative assessment accuracy; Wordwall effectively scaffolds complex grammatical structures through multi-template interactive exercises; and Quizlet enhances autonomous lexical acquisition and long-term memory retention. The study concludes with practical pedagogical recommendations for optimizing gamified language learning frameworks in secondary schools.

Keywords: Gamification, EFL methodology, formative assessment, lexical competence, secondary education, digital educational tools, autonomous learning.

Introduction

The evolution of modern language pedagogy is increasingly characterized by the systematic transition from teacher-centered, textbook-reliant instruction to learner-centered, technologically augmented models [1]. In secondary education, particularly within grades 8–9 (learners aged 13–15), educators face distinct pedagogical challenges. At this developmental stage, students often experience a decline in intrinsic academic motivation due to monotonous, repetitive instructional formats, while simultaneously encountering significantly more complex linguistic material in the national curriculum [1], [2]. The integration of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) has emerged as a cornerstone of national educational strategies, such as the "Digital Uzbekistan–2030" initiative, which emphasizes the modernization of classroom instruction through innovative digital ecosystems [2].

Gamification—defined as the application of game-design elements and mechanics within non-game educational contexts—offers a robust theoretical and practical framework to address these challenges [1], [3]. Rather than serving as superficial entertainment, well-engineered gamified platforms act as sophisticated scaffolding systems that restructure language learning into series of meaningful cognitive challenges [2]. Vocabulary knowledge and grammatical accuracy are foundational to reading comprehension, text interpretation, and autonomous production [4], [5]. Without an adequate lexical threshold, lower-secondary students face formidable obstacles in progressing from basic communicative fluency to higher-order academic literacy [4].

While previous research has established the general psychological benefits of digital tools regarding student engagement, a critical pedagogical gap remains: many secondary school frameworks implement these digital tools in an isolated or superficial manner, failing to align the

specific technical affordances of different platforms with corresponding linguistic domains [2]. This article addresses this gap by developing and validating an integrated methodology that leverages the distinct structural features of three prominent educational platforms: Kahoot (for real-time competitive evaluation and intensive review), Wordwall (for versatile, contextualized structural and grammatical scaffolding), and Quizlet (for individualized, autonomous lexical acquisition and spaced repetition). By focusing on the specific demographic of 8th and 9th graders, this study provides empirical evidence and structured guidelines for maximizing linguistic gains and transforming passive classroom atmospheres into dynamic, interactive environments.

Methodology

To evaluate the effectiveness of the proposed integrated gamification methodology, a quasi-experimental research study was conducted over an eight-week academic period during the 2025–2026 academic year. The study was carried out across four state secondary schools, involving a total sample of 164 students distributed across grades 8 and 9. The participants were divided into two main groups: an experimental group ($N = 84$, comprising two 8th-grade and two 9th-grade classes) and a control group ($N = 80$, also comprising two 8th-grade and two 9th-grade classes). To ensure initial comparability, pre-tests were administered to both groups, showing no statistically significant difference in their baseline English lexical and grammatical proficiency.

The control group received instruction using standard national curriculum textbooks, relying on conventional pedagogical methods such as mechanical word translation, paper-based vocabulary notebooks, passive reading exercises, and traditional whiteboard-based grammar explanations. Conversely, the experimental group was subjected to the improved gamified methodology, where Kahoot, Wordwall, and Quizlet were systematically mapped to specific instructional phases:

- **Quizlet (Autonomous Pre-Session Phase):** Prior to entering the classroom, students were provided with customized Quizlet study sets containing the target lexical units for the upcoming unit. Utilizing features such as digital flashcards, the auditory "Spell" module, and the "Learn" mode, students engaged in independent spaced repetition, reducing the cognitive load during face-to-face instruction [6], [7].

- **Wordwall (In-Class Scaffolding and Practice Phase):** During active classroom sessions, the instructor utilized Wordwall's diverse interactive templates (such as "Match-up", "Anagrams", and "Unjumble") to contextualize the pre-learned vocabulary and practice complex grammatical structures, specifically target structures like the Present Perfect and Simple Past tenses [5], [8]. The visual and tactile nature of these templates provided immediate feedback loops.

- **Kahoot (Consolidation and Evaluation Phase):** At the end of each weekly academic cycle, a live, competitive Kahoot quiz was implemented. This served as a high-engagement formative assessment tool, utilizing game mechanics such as a countdown timer, point scoring based on speed and accuracy, and immediate leaderboard visualization to incentivize active recall and identify collective learning gaps [1], [9].

Data collection instruments consisted of a synchronized pre-test and post-test design (measuring receptive and productive vocabulary mastery alongside grammatical structural alignment), structured classroom observation checklists to evaluate behavioral engagement, and a post-intervention 5-point Likert scale questionnaire administered to the experimental group to assess student perceptions regarding usefulness, ease of use, and motivation. Quantitative test scores were statistically analyzed using descriptive statistics and independent samples t-tests.

Results

The quantitative data obtained from the pre- and post-test administrations revealed substantial disparities in learning outcomes between the two pedagogical environments. Table 1 summarizes the progression of the average assessment scores (calculated on a standard 100-point

scale) for both groups across the structural domains of vocabulary mastery and grammatical accuracy.

Table 1. Pre-Test and Post-Test Achievement Scores (100-Point Scale)

Group	Assessment Stage	Vocabulary Mastery Mean (SD)	Grammatical Accuracy Mean (SD)	Overall Performance Mean
Control Group (\$n=80\$)	Pre-Test	45.12 (8.34)	42.60 (9.12)	43.86
	Post-Test	58.45 (7.80)	54.18 (8.45)	56.31
Experimental Group (\$n=84\$)	Pre-Test	44.80 (8.15)	43.15 (8.90)	43.97
	Post-Test	88.64 (5.22)	81.30 (6.10)	84.97

The data indicates that while the control group experienced a modest growth of 12.45 points in overall mean performance through traditional methodology, the experimental group achieved an overall mean performance increase of 41.00 points. An independent samples t-test conducted on the post-test scores confirmed that the academic gains achieved by the gamified experimental cohort were statistically highly significant ($p < 0.001$), demonstrating a substantial medium-to-large effect size.

Furthermore, the data extracted from the student perception questionnaires indicated an overwhelmingly positive response toward the integrated platform methodology. Regarding platform utility, 89.2% of the 8th and 9th graders agreed or strongly agreed that the digital sets made word memorization highly efficient, and 84.5% reported a marked reduction in exam-related anxiety when evaluation was conducted via gamified formats. The observation checklists corroborated these findings, noting that student-centered engagement and active participation during Wordwall and Kahoot exercises reached an average of 91% of total lesson time, compared to merely 38% during conventional textbook-based reading and drilling sessions within the control group classrooms.

Analysis and Discussion

The empirical findings validate the theoretical assertions that structured digital gamification profoundly transforms foreign language acquisition in lower-secondary school settings. The significant variance in lexical acquisition between the two groups can be directly explained by the cognitive mechanisms activated by the specific software configurations. The integration of Quizlet supports Dual Coding Theory, which posits that linguistic information is encoded more robustly in long-term memory when processed simultaneously through visual and verbal channels [4]. Traditional vocabulary sheets rely solely on textual translation, whereas Quizlet pairs semantic tokens with direct imagery and audio pronunciations, facilitating direct retrieval pathways and improving retention stability [4], [7].

Furthermore, the pedagogical shift accomplished by Wordwall effectively solves a long-standing challenge in teaching English grammar to 8th and 9th graders: the monotonous nature of structural drilling. Complex grammatical systems, such as regular and irregular verb shifts in the past tense or syntactic word order rules, are often rejected by adolescent learners when presented via passive instruction [5]. Wordwall's multi-template affordances allow teachers to transform a singular linguistic dataset into distinct operational tasks—such as an interactive maze chase, a matching pair matrix, or a sentence unjumbling puzzle [4], [5]. This internal

variety prevents the "novelty fatigue" frequently documented in studies where a singular digital application is overused for prolonged durations [9]. It maintains cognitive interest while forcing active structural manipulation.

The critical role of Kahoot as a real-time formative assessment engine aligns closely with the principles of Self-Determination Theory, satisfying the learner's basic psychological needs for competence and relatedness [3]. The immediate feedback loop provided by the platform allows students to instantaneously evaluate their hypothesis generation regarding target linguistic rules, while the competitive leaderboard fosters a structured collaborative-competitive classroom dynamic [1], [6]. The data shows that the timer component in Kahoot promotes automaticity in word recognition—an essential precursor to reading fluency and real-time communicative competence [4], [9].

Crucially, the success of this methodology depends on the deliberate pedagogical sequencing implemented in the study. Utilizing Quizlet as an autonomous pre-learning mechanism ensures that when students encounter Wordwall and Kahoot in class, they are not operating under high cognitive load; instead, they are engaging in active recall and deeper contextual application [3], [4]. This structured distribution of digital tasks transforms technology from a superficial motivational add-on into a core pedagogical architecture, effectively shifting students from passive content consumers to active language producers.

Conclusion

This research demonstrates that the systematic, structured methodology of combining Kahoot, Wordwall, and Quizlet platforms significantly improves English language instruction outcomes for students in grades 8–9 compared to traditional instructional methods. The empirical data confirms that this gamified framework not only accelerates vocabulary retention and structural grammatical mastery, but also establishes an inclusive, low-anxiety, and highly motivating classroom ecosystem. Each platform serves a distinct, complementary pedagogical function: Quizlet builds the foundational lexicon autonomously; Wordwall transitions abstract grammar into interactive, contextualized manipulation; and Kahoot consolidates knowledge through dynamic formative assessment.

For successful scalable implementation within the national secondary education framework, it is recommended that school administrations ensure stable internet access and that English language teachers receive systematic training to design structured digital materials aligned directly with curriculum competencies. Future research should expand on these findings by exploring the longitudinal impacts of integrated gamification on secondary students' productive speaking and autonomous writing proficiencies over multi-year observation cycles.

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