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'Gamification' in the L2 English Classroom

Learners' interactional management of plenum Kahoot sessions for vocabulary learning

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‘Gamification’ in the L2 English classroom: Learners’ interactional management of plenum Kahoot sessions for vocabulary learning

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Abstract

Today’s digitally rich classrooms allow for mediation and remediation of core components of language teaching. Digital literacy is part of policy documents for Swedish schools (Swedish Government, 2017), which aligns with international policies (UNESCO, 2011). Since such policies are implemented in classrooms, and learners relate to them in different ways, studies of the use of digital tools in language classroom interaction are timely.

The aim of the present study is to show how L2 English learners orient to and participate in an online Kahoot game designed for vocabulary repetition. We are particularly interested in describing and understanding how the game becomes socially organized, focusing on learner *engagement* (cf. Sandlund & Greer, 2020) displayed in learners’ vocal, verbal, and embodied actions when participating in the games using their own mobile phones. The study adopts a conversation analytic approach (Pallotti & Wagner, 2011) to classroom video data collected during a four-year research project in six multilingual English classrooms in Sweden (year 9) (SRC, 2016-03469). A three-week intervention was carried out with a focus on the learning of advanced vocabulary across three teaching conditions: monolingual, bilingual, and multilingual approaches. In the experimental design, the quiz tool Kahoot (www.kahoot.com), which builds on elements of gamification for learning (Reinhardt, 2019; see also Kapsalis et al., 2020; Mahbub, 2020), was used for repetition of target words. Thirty-six lessons were video-recorded, and 18 of these encompass Kahoot activities.

In examining sequences of interaction focusing learners’ orientations to the game, and to vocabulary items, the study demonstrates how students use, e.g., response cries (Goffman, 1978), complaints, and assessments to participate in the Kahoot activity. Additionally, the study shows how multimodal aspects of participants’ orientations to different semiotic and multilingual resources are used.

Finally, we show how the competitive aspect, displayed in students' verbal and embodied conduct, reveals orientations to L2 learning. We conclude by discussing implications for the design of tasks for the English classroom, and the role of gamification in classroom interaction, participation, and learner engagement.

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