ELTJ
ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING JOURNAL

Volume 6, Number 2, 2026
Page 92-103
Online ISSN: 2807-2685

The Effect of Kahoot! on Junior High School Students' Achievement in the Simple Present Tense

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Abstract

This study investigated whether Kahoot! is capable of greatly improving the mastery of students in the simple present tense. Accordingly, quasi-experimental design was employed. 64 students of SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Taman were chosen separated into experimental group and control group. A pre-test and post-test of 20 multiple-choice questions, which were delivered during the first and last meetings, were used to gauge the ability of the students to use the simple present tense in both groups. The pre-test mean score in the experimental group increased from 44.69 to 80.78 in the post-test; nevertheless, the control group's mean score increased from 35.63 to 56.09 in the post-test, according to the analysis results using IBM SPSS Statistics 25. Furthermore, the results of an independent sample *t-test* on the post-test scores demonstrated that the difference appeared statistically significant, and revealed that the effect size *(Cohen's d = 2.14)* indicated a strong effect. Therefore, it can be said that Kahoot! greatly improves students' grasp of English tenses, particularly the simple present tense, and the teachers can use it as an efficient method of teaching grammar to junior high school students.

Keywords: *English grammar, junior high school students, Kahoot!, quasi-experimental design, simple present tense*

Article History
Received: January 30, 2026
Revised: July 4, 2026
Accepted: August 3, 2026
Published: September 1, 2026

DOI
10.35897/eltj.v6i2.2441

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Citation in APA style: Hasanatina, B. F., & Fahri, F. (2026). The Effect of Kahoot! on Junior High School Students' Achievement in the Simple Present Tense. *English Language Teaching Journal*, *6*(2), 92-103 https://doi.org/10.35897/eltj.v6i2.2441

INTRODUCTION

Grammar is one of the essential components of English language learning that students need to master (Brown, 2000). According to Fitria (2023), students who are proficient in grammar communicate their ideas clearly and accurately. In other words, grammar aids students to construct coherent and well-formed English sentences. However, because a lot of teachers believe that grammar can be learnt spontaneously, grammar instruction has often been neglected and is considered an unimportant skill, while many prioritize abilities to communicate, despite its significance (Kumayas & Lengkoan, 2023). As a result, grammar is seen by students as less fascinating, monotonous, and more difficult than other language skills. Therefore, tenses are one of the many elements of grammar that are essential to maintaining communication clarity, as stated by Hasibuan et al. (2024). In accordance with Handayani (2023), tenses indicate whether an activity or situation takes place in the present moment, yesterday, or in the future. This indicates that in order to minimize

misunderstandings and mistakes, tense is able to effectively convey at the exact time of what is being done.

Nevertheless, a previous study reported that Indonesian students experience difficulties in mastering the simple present tense (Sri Handayani & Salija, 2022). This arise from the structural difference between the two languages since the Indonesian absence of a tense, which is distinct from English in other ways, particularly the frequent usage of adverbs of time with no modification to the verb form, students in Indonesia have difficulty understanding English grammar (Al Hafiz et al., 2025; Windy & Pakpahan, 2025). They may become confused as a consequence of this difference, which often ends up in grammatical mistakes and not being familiar with tense modification. Other than that, numerous junior high school students struggle to understand tenses, specifically the simple present tense, which is the most fundamental tense for students in eighth grade. As explained by Nurmalasari (2021), the simple present tense is preferred when detailing regular activities, expressing thoughts, or making common assertions of fact. The examples of common errors include the improper integration of the verb to be, the addition of the suffix s/-es in positive sentences, and the use of *do/does* in negative and interrogative sentences.

Furthermore, eighth-grade students have a lack of cognitive willingness to examine forms of grammar, which leads to their struggle to understand the simple present tense. A majority of students are able to construct sentences, but they frequently do this without having fully understood the rules, which ultimately results in improper patterns of the sentences, inappropriate verb forms, and wrongfully placed auxiliaries. This situation demonstrated that instead of identifying structures, students are still depending on memorization of examples. In addition, the teaching method of the teachers continues to be traditional and lacks technological innovation, which hinders the educational experience for students. Teachers primarily use PowerPoint, whiteboards, videos, and textbooks when delivering material in the classroom, but these methods do not hold the interest of students. As a result, in order to successfully achieve the learning purpose, an English teacher needs to come up with an engaging approach to teaching grammar, particularly tenses.

To solve these kinds of challenges, a game-based learning tool must be used in the classroom since gamification techniques, which incorporate interactive aspects, are capable of improving participation among students and their academic results (Katual et al., 2023; Qureshi, 2023). It is evident that using engaging media, such as games, keeps students engaged when they are learning as well as motivated to study, especially when it comes to understanding the simple present tense. One online tool that helps with grammar learning is Kahoot!, which is free, easy to use, encourages competition, and assesses the comprehension of students (Amalia et al., 2022; Manurung & Sari, 2023). Moreover, the features of Kahoot! such as a variety of quizzes, time limits, interactive live games, and the ability to play with many players, allow teachers to create fun and enjoyable activities in the classroom. Subsequently, these features encourage students to think quickly, recognize grammatical forms clearly, and evaluate their learning through several attempts during the game activities. So, it can be considered an interactive tool that meets the needs of students to improve their overall cognitive comprehension.

Many studies have looked into Kahoot! as a tool for learning the simple present tense. Kusumawati (2023) discovered that the results of student learning and engagement can be improved by implementing Kahoot! into the English tense learning process. Similarly, Trang & Giang (2024) show that performing Kahoot! has a substantial impact on the beneficial perspectives and grammar ability of university students. Therefore, Pratiwi & Susilawati (2020) found that Kahoot! strengthen the comprehension of students with the simple present

tense. Likewise, Khawas et al. (2025) demonstrated that Kahoot! was effective in helping senior high school students further develop their grammar proficiency, while research by Jihad (2021) claimed that game-based learning tools, such as an auction grammar game, can increase their understanding of the tense.

However, despite all of the previous studies mentioned above, a number of gaps are still not adequately addressed. With little concentration on eighth-grade students, the majority of them were carried out at the senior high school or university level. As a result, many studies employed CAR, qualitative, or pre-experimental designs, whereas the current study used a quantitative design with two groups at the junior high school level. Moreover, other studies concentrate on grammar in general rather than a specific tense, such as the simple present, and integrate Kahoot! as the primary teaching tool. Then, the majority of all of these studies examined text-based tasks, such as descriptive or narrative texts, while only a small number of these studies focused on cognitive grammar skills, specifically the capacity to recognize forms, figure out structures, and apply the simple present tense rules, without dealing with these skills in any text genre.

Building on the previously identified research gap, this study employs a quasi-experimental design with two groups in order to investigate whether implementing Kahoot! as the primary educational games platform would enhance the mastery of eighth-grade students with the simple present tense by promoting their cognitive abilities. Therefore, this study contributes not only by extending the conceptual framework of game-based learning regarding how interactive games can improve long-term grammar comprehension, but also by offering empirical evidence of Kahoot!'s efficacy in teaching the simple present tense as a particular grammar component at the junior high school level.

METHODS

This study relied on a quantitative methodology and gained data by experimental techniques in order to determine if Kahoot! affects junior high school students' comprehension of English tenses. Therefore, this study carried out a design known as quasi-experimental with two groups that were not assigned at random selection (Ary et al., 2010). Due to the fact that the classes had already been set up, this design was chosen. This study involved two variables such as the use of Kahoot! as the independent variable and mastery of English tenses among junior high students as the dependent variable.

Participants

Eighth-graders from SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Taman participated in the study. The overall number of eighth graders totals 202 students, divided into seven classes in the 2025/2026 academic year. A purposive sampling was the technique employed in this study for deciding on two classes, depending on the recommendations by the teacher. Accordingly, class 8E, consisting of 32 eighth-grade students, served as the control group and received conventional instruction. Class 8F, also consisting of 32 eighth-grade students, served as the experimental group and received Kahoot!-based instruction. Both classes were regular classes following the same curriculum and did not belong to the ICO or Tahfidz program. Students in both groups had comparable initial proficiency in English grammar and were between the ages of 13 and 14. Therefore, these classes were selected based on the students' behavior in the classroom, the suitability of the schedule, and the recommendation by the teacher regarding technological readiness, since the treatment needed students to use smartphones alongside having stable internet access.

Instruments

This study gathered 20 multiple-choice test questions for both the pre-test and post-test, each with four answer options as the research instrument. Subject-verb agreement, positive sentences, negative sentences, interrogative sentences, and adverbs of frequency and adverbs of time had all been covered in the simple present tense test. The detailed distribution of the development of the instrument ensured that the test items would recognize the specific rules of grammar that students found to be most challenging. More importantly, a validity test must be carried out in order to confirm the instrument used in this study. Then, content validity was employed through expert judgment to ensure the appropriateness and relevance of the test items. The researcher used a validation sheet completed by an expert who specializes in English education, a lecturer at Surabaya State University. The validation sheet employed a four-point Likert scale to evaluate three aspects of the instrument, namely content, construction, and language. After that, the validation score was calculated by averaging the scores from all evaluated aspects on a scale of 1 to 4. Therefore, the test items received a score of 3.4, which had been categorized as "*Very Valid*". This shows that the test items were appropriate for evaluation in the classroom and accurately represented the intended structure of grammar. Therefore, in order to ensure its reliability, the researcher administered a pilot test to fifty-three students from two different groups in the same eighth grade, which are 8C and 8D. Moreover, the pilot test results were analyzed using Cronbach's Alpha formula in IBM SPSS Statistics 25 in order to make sure the instrument items are consistent. Based on the reliability coefficient criterion, a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient greater than 0.60 indicates high reliability. Therefore, the obtained score of Cronbach's Alpha was 0.793, which is above the 0.60 criterion, indicating that the instrument is highly reliable and appropriate for use in both initial and end-of-treatment assessments.

Data Collection

The three procedures have been established especially for the process of gathering the necessary data in order to support this investigation. Before beginning the treatment, a pre-test was distributed to both groups in order to determine how well they knew the use and structure of the simple present tense. The difficulty that students are experiencing with comprehending the simple present tense are capable of being assessed by computing their pre-test results. Therefore, the researcher used Kahoot! in the experimental group over a total of four sessions, each of which was intended to focus on a single grammatical form of the simple present tense. Furthermore, students were practicing recognizing verbs along with the proper addition of *-s/-es* throughout the first meeting, which introduced positive structures. Then, negative sentences, specifically, the difference between *do not* and *does not* depending on the subject, were the focus of the second meeting. During the third meeting, students received the responsibility to identify the correct arrangement of auxiliaries in interrogative forms. In addition, during the last meeting, students enhanced their cognitive comprehension of the simple present tense patterns by reviewing all the aspects through a variety of questions in Kahoot!. While in these sessions, students accessed Kahoot! using the game PIN or QR code, then answered the questions using their smartphones and got immediate feedback from the platform. Except that, the control group gained knowledge through conventional teaching techniques, including PowerPoint and printed student worksheets. In the end, the post-tests were assigned by the researcher to both groups in order to assess their improvement following the treatment. By comparing the understanding level of students participating in the group treated using Kahoot! to that of the group that did not receive treatment, the post-test evaluated how far the treatment influenced their comprehension of that English tense.

Data Analysis

The set of data obtained for this study has been processed through applying IBM SPSS Statistics 25 and reporting the findings from the test, since the goal of the study was to figure out whether students who learn English tenses using Kahoot! have significantly different scores in their ability to comprehend and apply the simple present tense. The impact of using Kahoot! on students' proficiency in the simple present tense was then assessed by computing the outcomes of both groups' pre-tests and post-tests. Moreover, Excellent (85 – 100), Good (70 – 84), Fair (60 – 69), Poor (50 – 59), and Very Poor (0 – 49) are the five classifications into which the scores achieved by students from the two groups involved in this study were first categorized. Therefore, the quantitative analysis included descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation), the Shapiro-Wilk test for testing the normality, and the Levene statistic for homogeneity in order to verify whether the data satisfied the criteria for parametric analysis. Moreover, the main presumptions of the t-test were then satisfied as long as the test results confirmed that the data had equal variances and a normal distribution. This made it possible to perform the independent-samples t-test in order to assess if the two groups differed significantly and the paired-samples t-test in order to look at the differences between before and after learning outcomes within each group. In addition, Cohen's d, which represents the overall efficacy of Kahoot! as a medium, was also computed to show effect magnitude.

RESULTS

The findings of this study clearly present the results of the pre-test and post-test given to the experimental and control groups in order to assess how well Kahoot! improved eighth-grade students' mastery of the simple present tense. Prior to beginning treatment, the pre-test results of both groups showed comparable initial abilities, with mean scores falling between the poor and very poor levels. Moreover, after receiving the treatment using Kahoot!, the performance of the experimental group greatly improved when compared to the results of the group that received the conventional learning method, and it was rated as *good* to *excellent*. Conversely, the control group also made progress, but most students remained in the *fair* and *poor* levels, which implies that traditional approaches were less successful in encouraging students to reach high proficiency levels in the simple present tense. The experimental group's mean scores increased from 44.69 in the pre-test to 80.78 in the post-test, as shown in Table 1, whereas the control group's mean scores improved from 35.63 in the pre-test to 56.09 in the post-test.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pretest Experiment	32	15	95	44.69	15.757
Posttest Experiment	32	55	100	80.78	10.859
Pretest Control	32	10	65	35.63	12.231
Posttest Control	32	35	75	56.09	12.097
Valid N (listwise)	32				

To determine whether the experimental and control groups had equivalent initial proficiency before the treatment, an independent sample t-test was conducted on the pre-test scores. As shown in Table 2, the t-test revealed no statistically significant difference between the pre-test scores of the experimental and control groups (Sig. (2-tailed) = .051 > 0.05). These

findings can be concluded that both groups had comparable initial proficiency before the implementation of the treatment.

Table 2. Output of Pre-Test Independent Sample T-Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Pretest Score	Equal variances assumed	.003	.959	2.000	62	.051	9.062	3.525	-1.983	20.107
	Equal variances not assumed			2.000	60.936	.051	9.062	3.525	-1.987	20.111

In addition, normality and homogeneity were evaluated before the parametric statistical analysis. Because there were fewer than fifty students in each group, the Shapiro-Wilk test was employed in this study. All Sig. values of the experimental and control groups' pre-test and post-test scores were more than 0.05, which is shown in Table 3, leading to the fact that the data are normally distributed, which means they meet the normality assumption.

Table 3. Test of Normality

	Class	Shapiro-Wilk		
		Statistic	df	Sig.
Pretest and Posttest Score	Pretest Experiment	.940	32	.076
	Posttest Experiment	.949	32	.131
	Pretest Control	.970	32	.507
	Posttest Control	.950	32	.147

Furthermore, Levene's Test was used in order to assess the homogeneity of variances to figure out that the variances of the post-test scores in both groups were equal. Therefore, as presented in Table 4, there are equal variances for the two groups involved in the study, with a Sig. value of .259, which is greater than 0.05. This means that one of the basic requirements of the t-test for independent samples has been satisfied.

Table 4. Test of Homogeneity of Variance

		Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Posttest Score	Based on Mean	1.300	1	62	.259
	Based on Median	1.266	1	62	.265
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	1.266	1	61.654	.265
	Based on trimmed mean	1.243	1	62	.269

Following the fulfilment of the assumptions, the progress of students before and after

treatment with a simple present tense was compared using a paired sample t-test within each group, such as the experimental group, which experienced classroom instruction through Kahoot!, and the control group, which received instruction using a conventional technique. As a result, the outcomes are shown in Table 5, where Sig. (2-tailed) was .000 for both groups, indicating a greatly enhanced performance. Nonetheless, the mean difference of the experimental group is higher, suggesting that students who learned through Kahoot! experienced greater improvement.

Table 5. Output of Paired Samples Test

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Pretest Experiment Posttest Experiment	-36.094	14.851	2.625	-41.448	-30.740	-13.749	31	.000
Pair 2	Pretest Control Posttest Control	-20.469	11.455	2.025	-24.599	-16.339	-10.108	31	.000

Besides that, to determine whether students who used Kahoot! and those who used the traditional approach had different levels of the simple present tense. The post-test outcomes acquired from the two study groups were then analyzed through an independent sample t-test. Therefore, the data in Table 6 reveal a mean difference of 24.688 and a Sig. (2-tailed) value of .000, which is below the level of 0.05, highlighting a statistically significant difference between the experimental and control groups after the treatment.

Table 6. Output of Post-test Independent Sample T-Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Posttest Score	Equal variances assumed	1.300	.259	8.591	62	.000	24.688	2.874	18.943	30.432
	Equal variances not assumed			8.591	61.291	.000	24.688	2.874	18.942	30.433

Following that, the effect size was calculated using Cohen's d, which was obtained by dividing the difference between the post-test mean scores of the experimental and control groups by the pooled standard deviation of both groups. The formula used by Cohen et al. (2007) for this calculation is as follows:

$$SD_{pooled} = \sqrt{\frac{((n_E - 1)SD_E^2 + (n_C - 1)SD_C^2)}{n_E + n_C - 2}}$$

After obtaining the pooled standard deviation, the value of Cohen's d is determined:

$$d = \frac{MeanE - MeanC}{SDpooled}$$

In addition, Kahoot! had a substantial positive effect on students' mastery of the simple present tense, as evidenced by the calculation formula, which yielded a Cohen's d value of 2.14. Since this value falls into the range greater than 1.00, it shows a strong effect based on the effect size interpretation criteria.

DISCUSSION

The results of this investigation demonstrate that using Kahoot! for grammar instruction is capable of helping students become more proficient with English tenses. Before receiving the treatment, the majority of students in both groups had low initial proficiency, resulting in the implication that they lacked a basic understanding of tenses. These results strengthen the assertion proposed by Al Hafiz et al. (2025) that, considering that English and Indonesian grammar rules are different, junior high school students in Indonesia frequently experience difficulty understanding English tenses. In English, verbs need to be modified to express time, while in Indonesian, verb forms are never changed. This is in line with Prasetyo (2020), who claims that Indonesian students frequently struggle to create and use tenses due to differences in patterns of language. As a result, it is often difficult to employ the correct verb form, especially when it applies to incorporating *-s* or *-es* in the third person singular and selecting the appropriate auxiliary *do* or *does* in negative or interrogative forms.

As a result of that, the greater improvement demonstrated by the experimental group can be explained by the principles of gamified learning, which encourage students to participate actively, maintain their attention, and become more engaged throughout the learning process. The results are closely in line with Qureshi (2023), who asserts that gamification techniques are increasingly being utilized in educational settings in order to enhance learning outcomes and students' engagement. Accordingly, Kahoot! provides an enjoyable and interesting atmosphere for learning that helps students maintain interest in grammar lessons. One of the most important game elements observed during the implementation was the leaderboard feature, which motivated students to take action quickly and accurately in order to see their names in the rankings. According to Katual et al. (2023), the leaderboard acts as an external motivator in the gamification context, activating students' psychological need for achievement and attention. By giving instant visual rewards through point accumulation, this feature converts a normal grammar quiz into a goal-oriented challenge that consistently sustains their interest and enthusiasm to do better. Additionally, this promoted healthy competition and contributed to students' better understanding of the lessons on the simple present tense. This finding is consistent with the results of Alawiyah et al. (2024), who assert that learning grammar is made more interesting and pleasurable by

Kahoot!'s collaborative and competitive unique features. A less stressful atmosphere was also produced by the eye-catching and colourful avatars in their name and the attractive background of Kahoot!. This is also in line with Tatas et al. (2022), Kahoot! supports more dynamic and interesting learning, which motivates students to participate and better understand the learning material. To put it another way, games foster a fully engaged environment for learning and establish a deep comprehension (Katual et al., 2023). Unlike the conventional approach used in the control group, the gamified approach in the experimental group offers instant feedback and active participation. Kahoot! enables students to recognize how to utilize the simple present tense.

Apart from that, students who used Kahoot! in the experimental group achieved noticeably higher learning outcomes because the platform provided immediate feedback, active participation, and repeated practice of grammatical structures during classroom activities. The real-time feedback enables students to identify and correct grammatical errors immediately, allowing them to refine their understanding of grammatical patterns and apply the rules of the simple present tense more accurately. Consequently, students demonstrated significantly better proficiency in the simple present tense through the use of Kahoot!'s features than those in the control group. This evidence is consistent with Fitria (2023), who asserts that effective grammar instruction aims to improve both accuracy and clarity, as demonstrated by the outstanding achievement of the experimental group when dealing with subject-verb agreement, correctly utilizing -s/-es, and constructing negative and interrogative sentences. The results also confirmed that the experimental group improved the most, specifically in the aspects of negative sentences and subject-verb agreement. Therefore, students were able to avoid the common mistakes of missing out the suffix *s/-es* in positive sentences or incorrectly adding it, and the usage of *do/does* in negative sentences, with the help of real-time feedback features from Kahoot!. The control group, on the other hand, continued to make these common mistakes in the post-test, which indicates that the immediate feedback and trial-and-error learning process facilitated by gamification, such as Kahoot!, is more successful than the conventional memorization technique. Likewise, Pranoto & Levinli (2023) found that when students thoroughly comprehend English tenses, their confidence and clarity increase as well. This finding is reflected in the present study, where students in the experimental group answered grammar questions more accurately and confidently during the post-test, which demonstrates a better comprehension of the simple present tense. Furthermore, the result of 2.14, which is classified as "Strong effect" in Cohen's d effect size, further highlights the fact that, particularly in comparison to the conventional method, Kahoot! has a considerably stronger impact on students' mastery of the English tenses, especially the simple present tense. This aligns with Jihad (2021), who found that students' mastery of grammar has a powerful advantage by game-based approaches, and is supported by Kusumawati (2023), who noted that Kahoot! is a suitable medium and a useful tool that can assist students in improving their grammar as well as enhancing their learning outcomes, especially because of its creative and attractive features.

Ultimately, grammar instruction, which is frequently thought by students to be monotonous and uninteresting material, can be made fun and enjoyable using methods that involve gamification, for example, Kahoot!. The results support the idea that Kahoot! enhances students' cognitive skills and encourages accuracy in the application of grammar through competitive interaction and instant feedback. Furthermore, these findings further support the claim that Kahoot! promotes students' interest and strengthens their understanding of the rules of grammar. In addition, students were able to identify mistakes and correct them while enjoying the learning process simply through its gamified features, which are not

available in the conventional approach. In order to improve students' comprehension of English tenses, teachers are urged to incorporate Kahoot! as a game-based learning tool and should consider integrating game-based learning alongside conventional grammar instruction. Additionally, the improvement shown by the experimental group demonstrates the efficacy of both the classroom situation and the four treatment sessions that concentrated on cognitive comprehension of the simple present tense. Therefore, students constantly practiced recognizing verb forms, selecting suitable auxiliaries, and differentiating sentence structures during the meetings. This supports Kahoot!'s suitability for focused forms in grammar instruction and is consistent with the goal of this study, which is to emphasize cognitive skills over productive skills.

CONCLUSION

This study looked at how Kahoot! affected the abilities of students in the simple present tense. Moreover, it can be concluded that Kahoot! helps students improve their mastery of the simple present tense more effectively than conventional approaches. These results confirm that Kahoot! provides better reinforcement, engagement, and assistance for learning English tenses. Additionally, through competition and instant feedback, the game-based learning tool enhances students' comprehension, increases cognitive engagement, and improves grammatical accuracy. Because it allows for real-time assessment, provided that a stable internet connection is available, and aligns with lesson objectives, Kahoot! is a useful tool for English teachers to decrease student boredom and provide a more supportive learning environment. Even so, the primary focus on a single grammatical structure, such as the simple present tense, the small sample size from just two classes, and the application of cognitive grammar tests without evaluating productive skills, may limit the implications of the results. Therefore, it can be applied to different student populations or broader contexts. Furthermore, future studies should look into how Kahoot! can be used with larger sample sizes, across different grade levels, tenses, and grammatical areas, and with varying English proficiency levels. In addition, future researchers are urged to employ Kahoot! more extensively in order to evaluate productive abilities, such as speaking or writing, while the current study solely examined cognitive grasp of the simple present tense. Students could be allowed to utilize their cognitive skills to proceed to more complicated language tasks by integrating the tense into text-based content during Kahoot! exercises. Afterwards, future researchers can gather comprehensive data and insights regarding the use of Kahoot! in educational settings by utilizing qualitative approaches.

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