A Comparative Review of Kahoot and Socrative

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Title	Kahoot!	Socrative
Website	Kahoot.com	Socrative.com
Product Type	Free game-based online student response system	
Operating Systems	iOS, Android, PC/MAC, and Windows	
Registration	Required only for quiz creation	
Hardware Requirements	An internet-accessible device, a second device with a screen	An internet-accessible device
Price	Free basic account (Kahoot Pro version (€36/teacher/year), Premium version (€72/teacher/year)	Free basic account Socrative PRO for K-12 teachers ($59.99 USD/year), Socrative PRO for Higher Ed and Corporate $99.99 USD/year)

Making Language Learning Fun

The potential for using games in language learning has been recognized for decades. In 1985, Alessi and Trollip defined games as learning tools that boost learners' motivation and focus. They noted that games' effectiveness resided not in the game's design but in the challenge they posed. Following Alessi and Trollip (1985), multiple studies have pointed out that game-based learning could have positive effects on students' motivation and engagement, encourage social skills and creativity, and help create a positive classroom atmosphere. Additionally, gamification was found to promote autonomous learning and collaboration (Caponetto et al., 2014) and foster classroom dynamics in favorable ways (Sharples, 2000).

Game-based learning has been defined in multiple ways. For example, Rodgers (1981) found key elements in games that are also present in digital games. He characterized games as competitive, rule-governed, goal defined, engaging, and to have closures. Baltra (1990) also asserted that defined game-based learning as goal-oriented activities requiring meaningful language use. These key points reflect the optimal conditions for learning a second language (L2): these include many opportunities to use the L2 formally as well as informally (Dixon et

al., 2012), and learners with strong motivation seek out more opportunities to practice and tend to be more successful than their less motivated peers (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015).

Considering the key characteristics of using games for learning purposes, I use games with my students as intrinsically engaging and playful activities with a clear focus on making language learning fun on devices with an internet connection. In this review, I compare two classroom apps, Kahoot and Socrative. First, I give an overview of different versions of the applications, and then I show how teachers and students can create content.

General Description

Overview

Both Kahoot and Socrative are free game-based online response systems aiming to help and engage both language learners and their teachers. They provide numerous ready-made quizzes so that teachers do not need to design new ones to start using the application. The usefulness of these applications is manifold. Teachers can promote active learning by creating a positive atmosphere, and they can monitor students' progress and receive diagnostic information on what students need to practice more. Learners can play in teams or as individuals and receive immediate feedback on their answers.

Kahoot was first launched in 2013, and since then 4.4 billion users from 200 countries have played it, according to their website. There are over 100 million Kahoot games, and thanks to the user-friendly interface and the built-in features this number is growing rapidly. The filter is a useful function helping choose from games. Kahoots are categorized by subject, level, language, and creator. The content of quiz games covers a wide range of topics from films and music to all school subjects. Kahoot's mission is to make learning fun by incorporating gamification elements in their application.

Socrative was founded in 2010 and aimed to help teachers to provide fun in their classrooms. As a formative assessment tool, it enables teachers to create, use, reuse, and merge quizzes in 14 languages. It combines game-based aspects including badges, scores, and competition, all necessary elements for creating engaging classroom atmosphere. Currently, Socrative has 3 million users around the world.

Both platforms offer users games to play, but they have a special pedagogical feature: they offer a template in .xls format, giving teachers an opportunity to invite students into the process of creating games. The format enables them to design the quiz items in class or at home and the real fun starts when games created by students are played with classmates or if the option is enabled for all players around the world.

Account set up

Kahoot and Socrative applications allow separate student and teacher log-in. Both can be accessed either via their websites or for smoother workflow applications they can be

downloaded to smartphones, tablets as an app from the Apple store (in iOS platform) or from Google play sites (Android platform). Only teachers register with their email; students can log in by entering the game pin (Kahoot) or the Room name (Socrative) following their nickname (with emoticons). Alternatively, teachers using Kahoot can invite players by sharing the game pin or the URL to the game for a maximum of 100 players via google classroom, Artboard, Facebook, Twitter, or Remind applications. Thus, playing these games requires an invitation from a teacher. Students cannot initiate playing either Socrative or Kahoot.

Different features for different needs

Both applications offer free and paid versions. In Kahoot there are three versions: Free, Pro and Premium, each provides additional features for an additional cost.
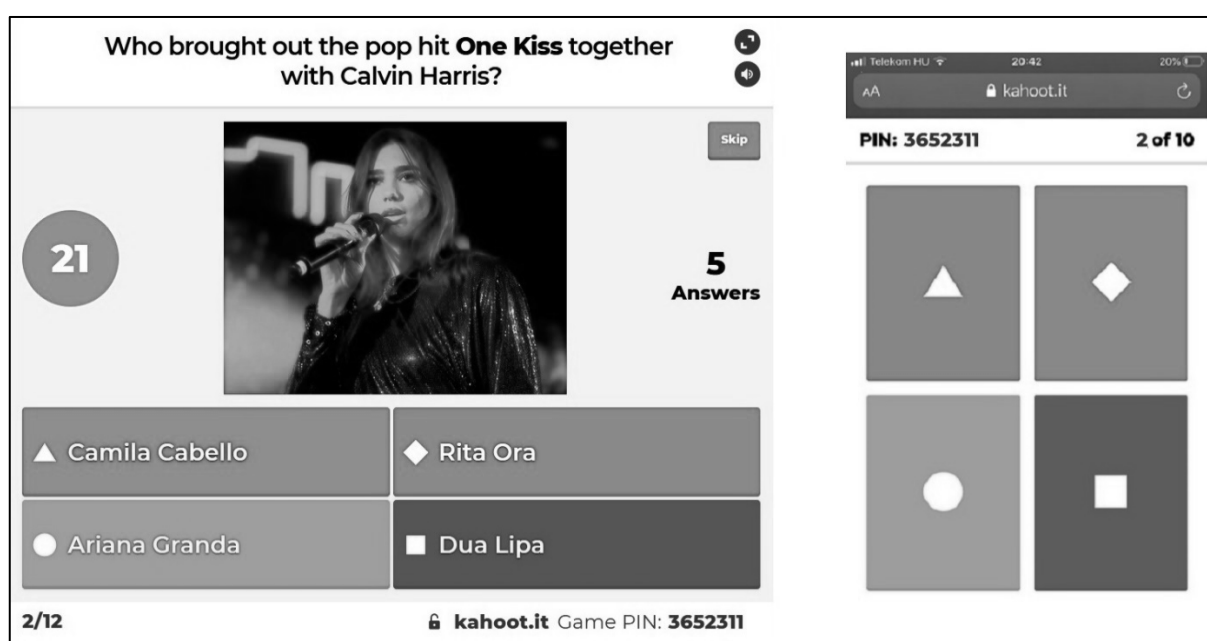

Figure 1. Screenshot of a Kahoot. Teacher's screen on the left. Student's device screen on the right.

The free version of Kahoot offers class sized games which can be used either as live games (teach mode) or as self-paced (assign mode). Teachers can choose how to play Kahoot: if they want to play with students in class or via videoconferencing, the teach mode is appropriate. In teach mode teachers control the game's pace. Also, they may stop the game for more instruction or pre-evaluation. In teach mode, there are two options: in Classis mode players compete with one another on individual devices, whereas in Team mode, teams use shared devices.

Kahoot's new feature allows self-paced learning. The Assign mode provides an opportunity for students to play games without competing with one another. This feature supports self-paced challenges, which means students can work at their own pace. This mode is more suitable for distance learning, as teachers can assign games as homework, thus, students can open the link whenever they are ready to do so. The free version gives access to millions of games categorized by subjects and level of difficulty. Teachers can create basic games consisting of

multiple choice and true/false quizzes. There is a question bank consisting of 500 million ready-made questions to allow fast creation of games. The maximum number of groups is one comprising a total of eight group members. The free version has an online support service.

The Pro version (€36/teacher/year) unlocks more question types and adds a third element of a quiz: a puzzle. Instead of choosing the current answer or deciding if a statement is true/false, students place answers in the correct order. This version supports feedback and mixed question types within a game. Teachers can organize Kahoots in folders, they have access to more advanced reports, and they receive priority support when needed. The Premium version's (€72/teacher/year) most notable additional feature is that teachers can create open-ended questions in quiz games.
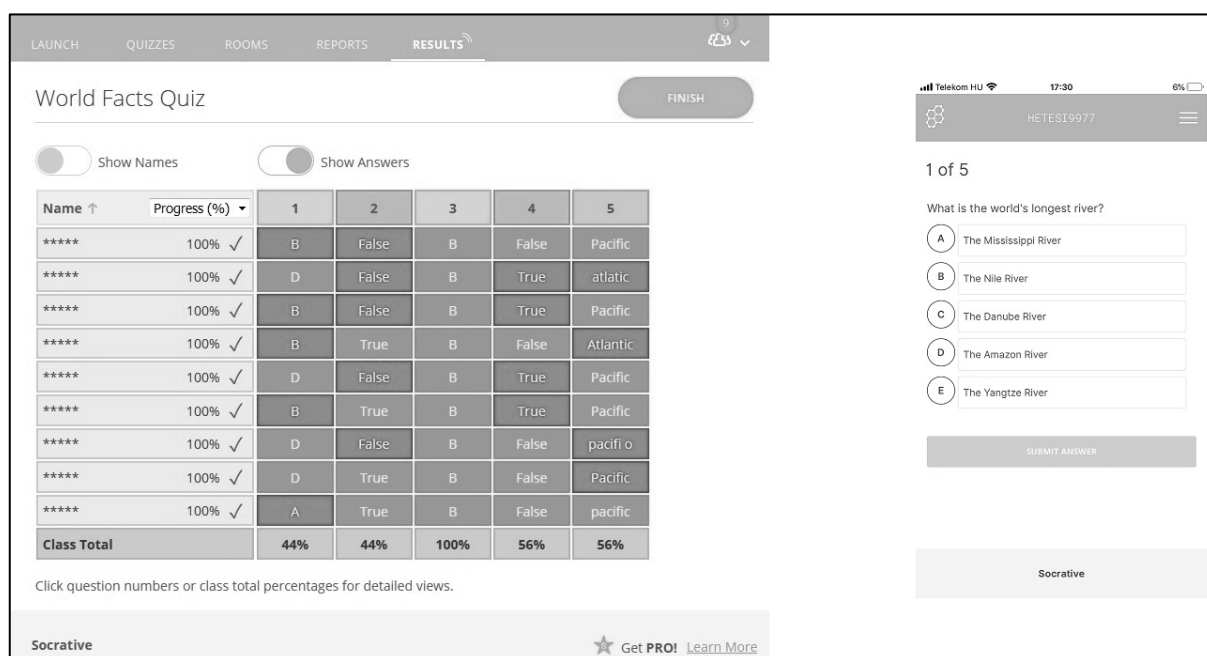

Figure 2. Screenshot of a Socrative. Students' progression chart on the teacher's screen on the left. Student's device screen on the right.

Socrative has three versions. The free edition of Socrative is characterized by the following features: 50 students per room, one public room per class, one activity can be launched at a time, the on-the-fly questioning and space race assessment are included. The free version has a Spartan, pure, and straightforward website. Users find features easily.

Socrative PRO provides more private public rooms (up to 20), 150 student capacity per room, and more activities (up to 20) can be launched at once. Teachers can include explanations to the questions, send reports to students' email addresses, merge quizzes, and control quiz attempts. For gamification elements, only the Pro version provides images in answers and the explanation parts, and for fun and excitement, you can set the timer in Space Race mode.

Creating a quiz

Creating a quiz takes similar steps in the two applications. In this review, I compare the options in the free versions. In Kahoot, there are more options to choose from: teachers can create a new quiz or use two templates by simply clicking the Create button, which features on all pages of Kahoot next to the users' icon. In the main creator page, teachers can set the time limit, the points for the question and the answer options, whether students can choose one answer (single select) or multiple answers (multi-select) for the item. The text in the question field can feature bold or italic letters, and teachers can insert symbols in the following categories: special characters, currency, math, Greek, and other. By clicking the add question bar, one can choose either a quiz or a true/false type questions, as puzzle, poll or slide options are included only in the paid versions.
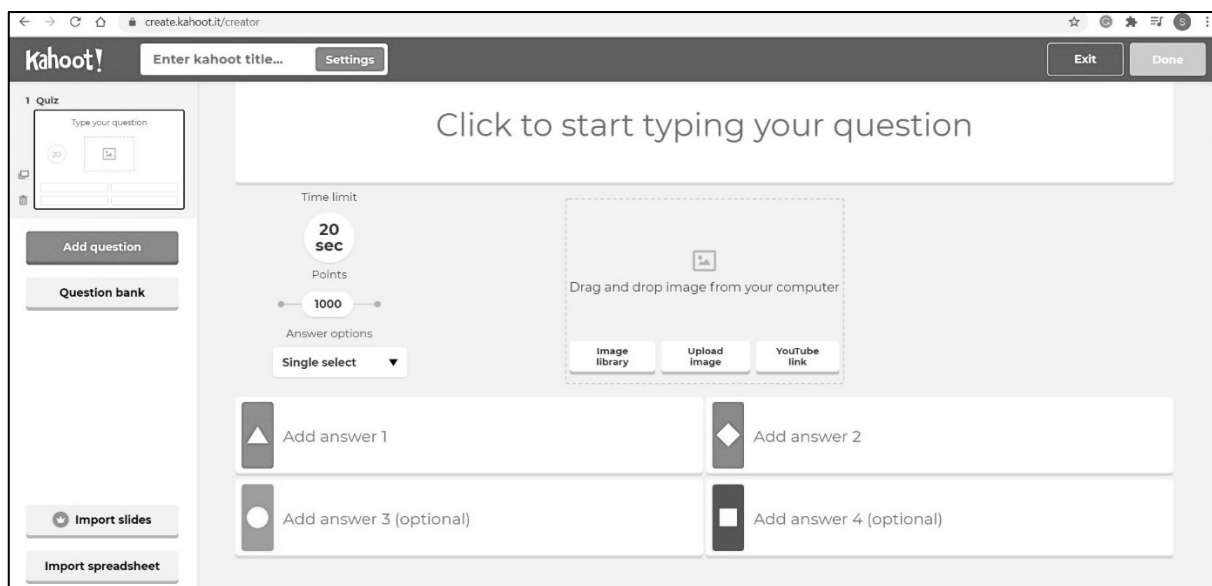

Figure 3. Screenshot of a KAHOOT! Quiz creation page.

Kahoot features a question bank option which appeared in Kahoot in 2019. As the teacher starts typing, the question bank gives autosuggestions from the 60 million public Kahoots. One of the fun parts of Kahoot games is that teachers can integrate images or videos with the questions even in the free version. Images can be uploaded from Kahoot's own image library or from the user's computer. The third option is a Youtube link. With this option, teachers can paste a Youtube link, and set the start and endpoint of the video. Teachers give answers to the question (maximum four), mark the correct one(s) and add more items to the quiz.

To create a quiz in Socrative, the user selects the quizzes tab and adds the quiz button. It offers to import a quiz from either another teacher or from a template using excel .xls format. To get started, the teacher can choose from three types of questions: multiple-choice, true/false or short answer. The teacher can insert an image, but adding videos is not supported.
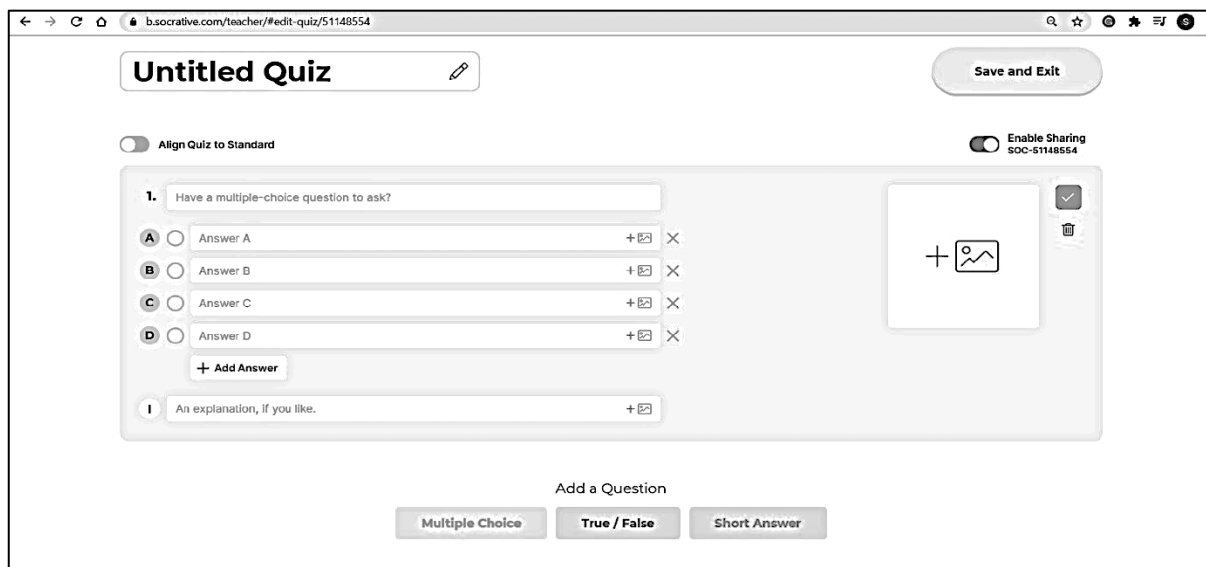
Figure 4. Screenshot of Quiz creation page in Socrative.

The number of possible answers per question is between 1 and 50, which provides more options and fewer chances for guessing. This feature is the same across all versions. The teacher can add an explanation to each item to help students when the quiz is used in distance learning.

In sum, the main difference between the two platforms is that the free version of Kahoot! allows teachers to create only multiple choice and true/false questions, whereas the free version of Socrative offers both of these and short answer items as well. However, by using videos in Kahoot! teachers can create games to practise and test students' listening comprehension.

In both platforms, students can also create content. Hence, they can practise their writing skills by using the template feature of both applications as an authentic in-class activity or as homework. This type of off-line task can create an opportunity for students to revise their knowledge whilst constructing the items of the game and an additional reward is the fact that their quiz could be played and shared by others in their classes as well as other players around the world.

Feedback

At the end of every Kahoot game, there is an instant feedback part for players, and they can rate the Kahoot game by selecting yellow stars, using thumbs up and thumbs down emojis to show if they learnt something and if they recommend the game. The last question is about how they felt about the quiz: they can choose from a green grinning smiley face, a yellow expressionless face or a red frowning face.

In Socrative, Exit Ticket offers an effective way of getting feedback from players. There are two pre-set questions relating to how well learners understood the material and what they learn from the game. The teacher asks the third question and students write their answers into the exit ticket.

Depending on the teachers' purpose, both applications can facilitate students' learning either in interactive, synchronous and fun-packed or self-paced asynchronous ways.

Evaluation

The purpose of these two products is to offer learners additional opportunities to practice their L2 and to make learning an enjoyable experience by relying on their intrinsic motivation, as the reward is inherent in the playful activity (Dixon et al., 2012). Both platforms offer immediate feedback thus helping learners and their teachers to diagnose what they can do and to think in terms of what else they need to practice.

Both applications are based on quiz games exploiting their elements at a different level. Flores (2015) suggested some characteristics a game should have: (1) points , (2) levels, (3) badges, (4) avatars, (5) performance graphs, (6) progression, (7) quests/challenges, (8) social elements/community collaboration, (9) discovery/exploration, (10) rewards, (11) achievements, (12) epic meaning, and (13) leaderboards.

In the field of second language acquisition, different approaches have offered insights into how people learn a new language. Krashen (1986) found that besides objective factors language learning is greatly impacted by affective variables, such as anxiety, fear and motivation. Flores's (2015) gamification elements are present in Kahoot and Socratives and lower anxiety and fear while also motivating learners. Implicit as well as explicit language learning also takes place while students play and create new quiz games. In addition to these features, learner autonomy is also scaffolded by giving learners an epic meaning to create a new Socrative or Kahoot quiz using the games' template.

Kahoot! offers more features of gamification than Socrative. In Kahoot, players select from several digital badges, and avatars, points are collected during the activity based on the number of correct answers and how fast the answers were given. The nicknames of the first three players will be displayed on the leaderboard just like the podium ceremony at the end of a formula one race. Progression is rewarded by animated characters (emotes), which help users express themselves in challenges. Achievements can be shared in social media and created Kahoot games can be played by the millions of players. Participants can work in teams in team mode, teachers can select images, videos for the quiz games, resulting in a new quiz, which gives learners a sense of achievement. The background music, sound effects during the activities also create a dynamic, electric atmosphere, where students lose the importance of time and place by focusing on the activity.
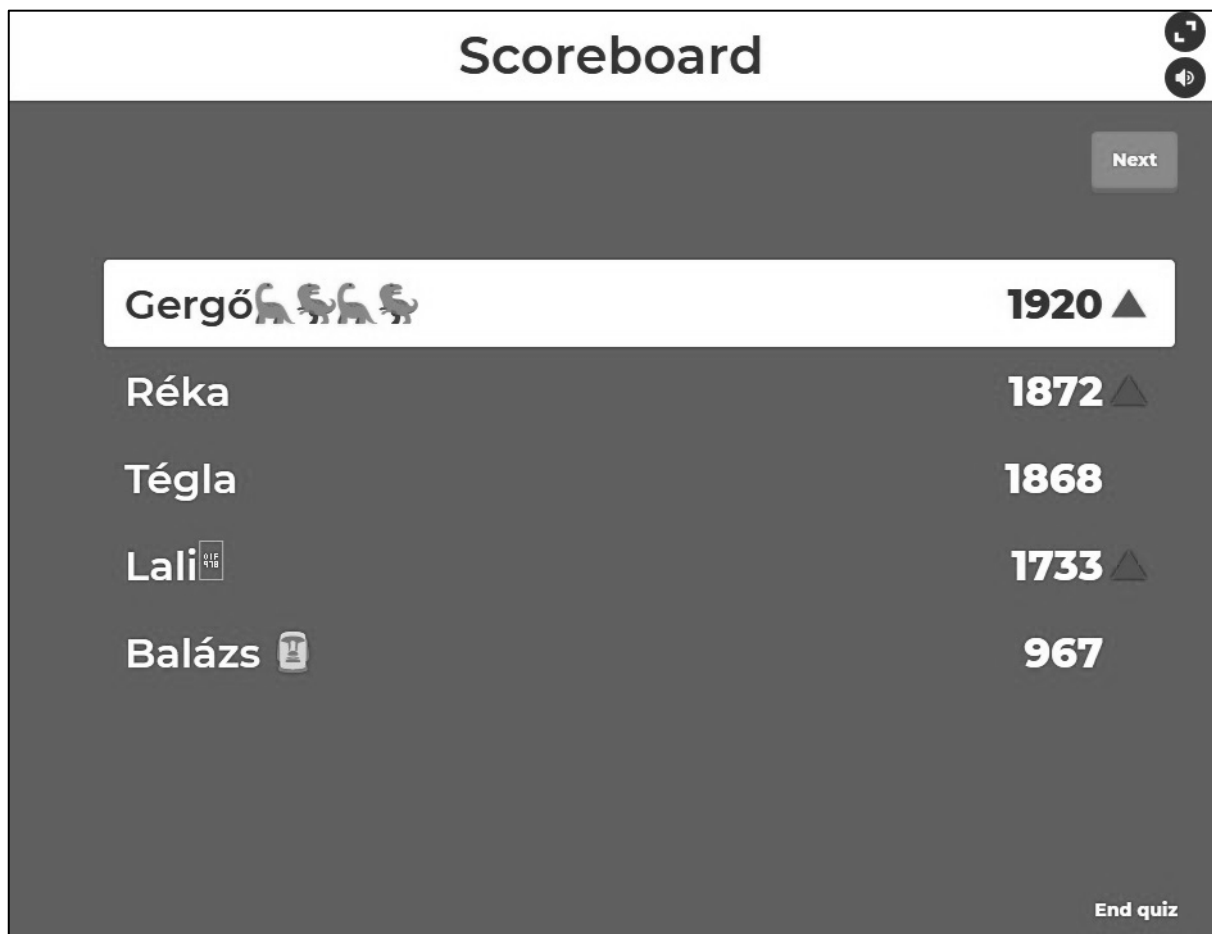
Figure 5. Screenshot of Scoreboard in Kahoot.

Socrative features fewer gamification elements. Participants can give their nickname, but there are no levels, badges, or emotes in the games. Players' achievements are neither ranked, nor rewarded by points, but percentages are given at the end of the game.
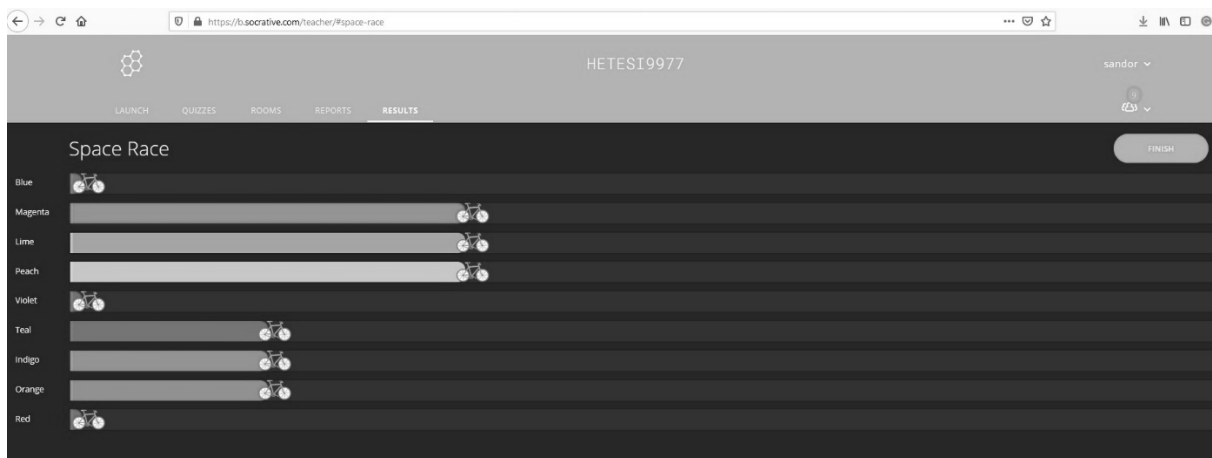

Figure 6. Screenshot Space Race in Socrative.

Competition is present only in the Space Race game, where students play in teams, and their performance graphs are visible if the teacher shares them. It is not possible to use videos, but only images in the games.

As Kahoot's resource is extensive, it might be a better solution for teachers, who have less time to create new games. As for group dynamics, Kahoot is a better and a more engaging option. Additionally, Kahoot offers opportunities not only for improving reading comprehension, but it can also develop listening skills, as it supports YouTube links. This feature opens new possibilities, as understanding learners' favorite film trailers, tutorials or lyrics could further boost their level of engagement and motivation.

In Socrative there are more options for asking questions, as in addition to Kahoot's multiple choice, and true/false options it also offers short answer questions and teachers can give an explanation to answers. The latter feature is not available currently in the free version of Kahoot. By going beyond multiple-choice questions, learners can develop their writing skills.

Game-based learning in relation to CALL

From a technical perspective, these applications require the use of electronic devices. Computer-assisted language learning (CALL) has a long history in language learning as a tool for not only creating a unique atmosphere in classrooms, but also as a platform for creating and maintaining motivation and engaging students. Levy (1997, p.1) defined CALL as "the search for and study of applications of the computer in language teaching and learning", whereas Hubbard added that CALL concerns not "simply the canonical desktop and laptop devices" but also "the networks connecting them, peripheral devices associated with them and a number of other technological innovations" (2009, pp.1–2). Wang, Zhu and Sætre (2016) focused on the motivation element of game-based learning and found Kahoot a positive example. Dellos (2015) examined how Kahoot gave students a sense of empowerment when they mastered their own quizzes. Muhridza, Rosli, Sirri, and Samad (2018) pointed out that Kahoot enhanced students' communication skills, whereas El Shaban (2017) found that Socrative increased students' level of engagement, improved their collaborative skills and critical thinking.

Conclusion

Kahoot and Socrative are quiz-based formative assessment tools providing intrinsically motivating opportunities for L2 development in both in-class or distance-learning settings. In this review, I compared the main characteristic features, the key elements of gamification and options for distance learning in the two applications. A common feature of Kahoot and Socrative is that both applications are based on engaging students in playful learning. They are easy to use, and depending on the teacher's aim, it is possible to monitor the students' progress, to motivate and to engage them in a meaningful way. In my view, the use of quizzes is rewarding, as they motivate both teachers and students, allow for autonomy and self-paced learning. If I were to choose from these platforms, I would consider the purpose why I intend to use them. As both platforms have slightly different merits, they can complement one another well.

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