

# **Enhancing English Reading Comprehension Through Kahoot: A Qualitative Study in Colombian Secondary Education**

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## **Abstract**

The teaching of English as a foreign language has become a central pillar of the Colombian educational system, particularly due to the demands of standardized assessments such as the ICFES Saber 11 examination. Reading comprehension represents one of the most challenging skills for secondary students, especially when assessed under time-pressured and standardized conditions. This qualitative study, framed within an experimental–descriptive approach, explores the incidence of implementing digital workshops mediated by the Student Response System Kahoot on the development of English reading comprehension skills among eleventh-grade students at a private secondary school in Tunja, Colombia. Data were collected through participant observation, diagnostic tests, simulated standardized assessments, semi-structured interviews, and field journals. The intervention consisted of a series of structured Kahoot-based workshops aligned with the reading components evaluated in the Saber 11 English test. Findings reveal a positive incidence of Kahoot on students' reading comprehension performance, increased motivation, familiarity with standardized test formats, and strategic reading behaviors. Additionally, students reported improved confidence and engagement during reading tasks. The study concludes that Kahoot, when pedagogically integrated, functions not merely as a motivational tool but as an effective didactic resource for strengthening reading comprehension skills in English. Implications for teaching practice and future research on technology-mediated language learning are discussed.

**Keywords:** English as a foreign language, reading comprehension, Kahoot, ICT in education, standardized testing

## **Introduction**

In an increasingly globalized world, English proficiency has become an essential competence for academic, professional, and social participation. In Colombia, national educational policies emphasize English language instruction as a core component of secondary education, with the expectation that students reach a B1 proficiency level by the end of upper secondary schooling, as established by the Ministry of National Education and assessed through the ICFES Saber 11 examination

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Despite sustained institutional efforts, reading comprehension in English remains a persistent challenge for many students. Difficulties are often linked to limited vocabulary, lack of strategic reading skills, low motivation, and unfamiliarity with standardized test structures. Recent pedagogical research suggests that Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) can play a crucial role in addressing these challenges by promoting active learning, engagement, and formative assessment practices.

Among digital educational tools, Student Response Systems such as Kahoot have gained prominence due to their interactive and gamified nature. However, while motivation-related benefits are widely reported, fewer studies have examined their direct incidence on specific language skills, particularly reading comprehension aligned with standardized assessment criteria. This study addresses this gap by analyzing the pedagogical implementation of Kahoot-mediated workshops aimed at strengthening English reading comprehension skills evaluated in the Saber 11 exam.

## **Literature Review**

### **Reading Comprehension in EFL Contexts**

Reading comprehension in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) is widely recognized as a multifaceted cognitive process that involves more than the mechanical decoding of written symbols. It encompasses a dynamic interaction between linguistic knowledge, cognitive strategies, and the reader's prior experiences. Scholars describe reading comprehension as a constructive process in which readers actively generate meaning by integrating textual information with their existing knowledge structures (Montes Sosa, 2013). This process includes several interrelated components such as decoding, lexical access, syntactic processing, inferencing, and metacognitive regulation.

In EFL contexts, these processes are often affected by limited vocabulary, insufficient exposure to authentic texts, and reduced opportunities for meaningful interaction with the language. Learners frequently struggle to move beyond literal comprehension toward inferential and critical levels of understanding. Montes Sosa (2013) emphasizes that genuine comprehension requires the ability to interpret implicit meanings, recognize authorial intent, and critically evaluate information, skills that are particularly challenging for learners who are still developing linguistic proficiency.

Furthermore, traditional instructional practices in foreign language classrooms often prioritize grammatical accuracy and rote memorization over strategic reading and meaning construction. This approach may lead to fragmented language knowledge and hinder the development of higher-order comprehension skills. Lerner de Zunino (2016) argues that

comprehension is not a direct consequence of teaching but rather the result of carefully designed learning experiences that promote active engagement with texts. When instruction fails to incorporate strategies such as predicting, questioning, summarizing, and monitoring comprehension, students tend to approach reading as a passive activity, limiting their ability to extract meaning effectively.

In standardized assessment contexts, such as the ICFES Saber 11 examination in Colombia, reading comprehension is evaluated through tasks that demand both linguistic knowledge and strategic reasoning. Students are required to identify main ideas, interpret implicit information, understand communicative intentions, and analyze short texts within limited time frames. These demands highlight the necessity of instructional approaches that prepare learners not only linguistically but also strategically, fostering autonomy and confidence in reading tasks.

## **ICT and Reading Comprehension**

The integration of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) into educational contexts has significantly transformed teaching and learning processes, particularly in language education. ICT-mediated environments provide opportunities for multimodal input, interactive learning, and immediate feedback, all of which contribute to enhanced reading comprehension development. Digital tools allow learners to engage with texts through visual, auditory, and interactive elements, facilitating deeper processing and sustained attention (Marqués Graells, 2012).

Research consistently indicates that technology-mediated reading instruction promotes higher levels of motivation and engagement compared to traditional methods. Digital platforms support learner-centered approaches by enabling students to progress at their own pace, receive instant feedback, and participate actively in learning activities. Calderón Baticón (2018) notes that ICT tools create meaningful contexts in which learners can practice reading strategies, apply prior knowledge, and reflect on their comprehension processes.

In Latin American educational contexts, multiple studies have demonstrated the positive impact of ICT on reading comprehension outcomes. Investigations conducted in Colombia, Peru, and Ecuador report significant improvements in students' reading performance when digital tools are integrated into instructional design (Narváez Paguay & Santillán, 2021; Pariona Pariona & Calderón Huaroto, 2021). These studies highlight that ICT facilitates not only cognitive development but also affective factors such as motivation, confidence, and reduced anxiety toward reading tasks.

Moreover, ICT supports formative assessment practices by allowing teachers to monitor student progress in real time and adjust instruction accordingly. Immediate feedback helps learners identify misconceptions, reinforce correct interpretations, and refine reading strategies. According to Moreno Olivos (2016), formative assessment mediated by

technology enhances learning by transforming evaluation into a continuous, reflective process rather than a summative event.

Despite these advantages, the effectiveness of ICT in reading comprehension development depends largely on pedagogical intentionality. Simply introducing technology into the classroom does not guarantee improved learning outcomes. Effective integration requires alignment between digital tools, curricular objectives, and assessment criteria. When ICT is used strategically to support reading comprehension processes, it becomes a powerful resource for fostering meaningful learning experiences.

## **Kahoot as a Pedagogical Tool in EFL Instruction**

Kahoot is a game-based Student Response System designed to promote active learning through interactive quizzes, discussions, and challenges. Its widespread adoption in educational contexts is largely attributed to its capacity to transform traditional classroom activities into engaging, competitive, and collaborative learning experiences. In EFL classrooms, Kahoot has been extensively used to reinforce vocabulary, grammar, and comprehension skills while increasing student motivation and participation.

Previous research indicates that Kahoot significantly enhances student engagement by incorporating elements of gamification such as points, rankings, time constraints, and immediate feedback. Narváez Paguay and Santillán (2021) found that the use of Kahoot in EFL reading instruction positively influenced students' attitudes toward reading activities, fostering greater willingness to participate and persist in challenging tasks. Students reported feeling more motivated and less anxious when responding to reading comprehension questions in a gamified environment.

Beyond motivational benefits, Kahoot has demonstrated pedagogical value in supporting cognitive development when activities are carefully designed and aligned with learning objectives. Studies show a positive correlation between Kahoot use and improved reading comprehension outcomes, particularly when quizzes are structured to target specific skills such as inferencing, identifying main ideas, and recognizing communicative intent (Pariona Pariona & Calderón Huaroto, 2021). This alignment allows Kahoot to function as more than a review tool, positioning it as an instructional strategy that actively contributes to skill development.

Additionally, Kahoot supports formative assessment by providing immediate feedback to both students and teachers. Learners can instantly recognize correct and incorrect responses, while teachers can identify patterns of misunderstanding and adjust instruction accordingly. This feedback loop enhances metacognitive awareness, enabling students to reflect on their reading strategies and comprehension processes.

In the context of standardized assessments such as the ICFES Saber 11 exam, Kahoot offers an effective means of familiarizing students with test formats and question types. By

simulating exam-like reading tasks in an interactive environment, students can develop strategic approaches to reading under time constraints, reducing test-related anxiety and improving performance. When integrated into a coherent pedagogical framework, Kahoot serves as a valuable didactic resource for strengthening English reading comprehension in secondary education.

## **Methodology**

### **Research Design**

This study employed a qualitative research approach framed within an experimental–descriptive design. The qualitative paradigm was selected due to its suitability for exploring educational phenomena in natural classroom settings and for understanding participants’ experiences, perceptions, and learning processes in depth. Rather than seeking statistical generalization, the primary objective of this study was to analyze the incidence of a pedagogical intervention mediated by the digital platform Kahoot on the development of English reading comprehension skills among secondary school students.

The experimental–descriptive design allowed for the implementation of a structured instructional intervention followed by a systematic description and analysis of its effects on students’ reading comprehension performance and attitudes. This design is particularly appropriate in educational research where controlled experimentation may be constrained by institutional and ethical considerations. By combining intervention-based instruction with qualitative data collection, the study sought to capture both observable learning outcomes and the subjective experiences of participants.

The research was conducted in a natural classroom context, ensuring ecological validity and preserving the authenticity of the teaching–learning process. Data triangulation was employed through the use of multiple instruments, enhancing the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

### **Participants**

The participants in this study were 21 eleventh-grade students enrolled in a private secondary school located in the city of Tunja, Colombia. All participants were preparing to take the ICFES Saber 11 examination, a standardized national assessment required for completion of secondary education. The students’ English proficiency levels corresponded approximately to A2–B1 levels according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), as established by institutional guidelines and diagnostic assessment results.

A convenience sampling technique was employed due to the accessibility of the group and the alignment of the intervention with the academic needs of the students. This sampling method is commonly used in qualitative educational research when the focus is on in-depth exploration rather than population-level inference. Participation in the study was voluntary, and all students were informed of the purpose, procedures, and educational nature of the intervention.

The group exhibited heterogeneous reading abilities, which allowed for the observation of the intervention's effects across varying levels of reading comprehension. This diversity contributed to a richer qualitative analysis of learning processes and student perceptions regarding the use of Kahoot as an instructional tool.

## **Instruments**

Multiple data collection instruments were employed to ensure methodological rigor and to facilitate data triangulation. All instruments were reviewed and validated through expert judgment to ensure content validity, clarity, and alignment with the study objectives.

### *Participant Observation*

Participant observation was used to systematically document students' behaviors, engagement levels, and interactions during the Kahoot-based workshops. The researcher assumed an observer-as-participant role, allowing for direct involvement in the instructional process while maintaining analytical distance. Observations focused on indicators such as student participation, response accuracy, collaborative behaviors, and emotional reactions during reading activities.

### *Field Journal*

A field journal was maintained throughout the intervention to record reflective notes, contextual details, and emergent observations. This instrument served as a complementary data source, capturing nuances of classroom dynamics, instructional adjustments, and spontaneous student responses that were not always evident in formal assessments. The field journal also supported reflexivity, enabling the researcher to examine potential biases and interpretive assumptions.

### *Diagnostic Reading Test*

A diagnostic reading comprehension test was administered prior to the intervention to establish students' baseline reading performance. The test was designed in accordance with the reading components evaluated in the ICFES Saber 11 English exam, including literal comprehension, inferential reasoning, vocabulary in context, and communicative intent. Results from the diagnostic test informed the design and sequencing of the Kahoot-based workshops.

### *Simulated Saber 11 English Test*

A simulated Saber 11 English test was administered following the intervention to assess changes in students' reading comprehension performance. This instrument mirrored the structure, item types, and difficulty levels of the official examination, allowing for a meaningful comparison between pre- and post-intervention results. The simulation also served to familiarize students with standardized test conditions.

### *Semi-Structured Group Interviews*

Semi-structured group interviews were conducted at the conclusion of the intervention to explore students' perceptions, attitudes, and experiences regarding the use of Kahoot in reading comprehension activities. An interview guide was used to ensure consistency while allowing flexibility for participants to elaborate on their responses. Topics included motivation, engagement, perceived learning gains, and test preparation strategies.

## **Intervention Procedure**

The pedagogical intervention consisted of seven Kahoot-based workshops specifically designed to strengthen English reading comprehension skills aligned with the ICFES Saber 11 examination framework. Each workshop targeted one or more reading components assessed in the exam, including identifying main ideas, making inferences, interpreting vocabulary in context, and recognizing communicative functions within short texts.

The workshops were implemented over a structured instructional period and followed a consistent pedagogical sequence. Each session began with a brief introduction of the targeted reading skill, followed by guided practice through Kahoot quizzes. Questions were designed to progressively increase in complexity, encouraging students to apply reading strategies rather than rely on surface-level understanding. Immediate feedback provided by the platform allowed students to reflect on their responses and adjust their strategies in real time.

Following each Kahoot session, brief reflective discussions were conducted to reinforce learning objectives and address common misconceptions. This combination of gamified practice and reflective dialogue aimed to promote deeper comprehension and metacognitive awareness. The intervention concluded with the administration of the simulated Saber 11 test and group interviews to evaluate learning outcomes and student perceptions.

## **Data Analysis**

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis, following the procedures outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). Quantitative results from diagnostic and simulated tests were triangulated with qualitative data from observations and interviews to ensure credibility and methodological rigor.

## **Results**

The findings of this study indicate a clear and positive incidence of the Kahoot-mediated pedagogical intervention on students' English reading comprehension development. Data analysis, based on the triangulation of diagnostic assessments, simulated Saber 11 test results, participant observation, field journals, and semi-structured group interviews, revealed improvements across cognitive, behavioral, and affective dimensions of learning.

### **Reading Comprehension Performance**

Quantitative results derived from the diagnostic reading test and the post-intervention simulated Saber 11 English test showed a noticeable increase in students' accuracy rates when responding to reading comprehension items. Improvements were particularly evident in inferential comprehension tasks, where students demonstrated greater ability to interpret implicit meanings, identify relationships between ideas, and draw conclusions based on contextual clues. Gains were also observed in items assessing communicative comprehension, specifically those requiring recognition of speakers' intentions, purposes, and appropriate responses in short texts.

Students exhibited enhanced control over time management during the post-intervention simulation, suggesting increased familiarity with the test structure and question formats. This familiarity reduced hesitation and allowed students to allocate reading time more strategically, resulting in more complete and confident responses.

### **Student Engagement and Participation**

Observational data revealed a significant increase in active participation during reading activities mediated by Kahoot. Students who previously demonstrated limited engagement in traditional reading exercises became more involved in classroom interactions, responding more frequently to questions and engaging in peer discussions. The competitive and interactive features of Kahoot appeared to foster sustained attention and willingness to participate, even among students with lower initial reading proficiency.

The field journal documented a progressive shift in classroom dynamics, characterized by heightened enthusiasm, collaborative behaviors, and reduced reluctance toward reading tasks in English. These behavioral changes suggest that the intervention positively influenced students' disposition toward reading comprehension activities.

### **Student Perceptions and Affective Factors**

Qualitative data obtained from semi-structured group interviews highlighted students' positive perceptions of Kahoot as a learning tool. Participants consistently reported increased motivation, enjoyment, and confidence when engaging with reading tasks through the platform. Many students described Kahoot as transforming reading comprehension from a stressful evaluative activity into an engaging and manageable challenge.

Students also emphasized that the immediate feedback provided by Kahoot helped them recognize their errors, understand correct answers, and adjust their reading strategies accordingly. This feedback loop contributed to reduced anxiety and increased self-efficacy, particularly in relation to standardized test preparation.

## **Discussion**

The results of this study align with previous research confirming the positive incidence of Kahoot on reading comprehension development in EFL contexts. Consistent with the findings of Narváez Paguay and Santillán (2021), the present study demonstrates that Kahoot enhances student motivation, engagement, and reading performance when used as part of a structured instructional design rather than as an isolated activity.

The findings suggest that Kahoot's effectiveness extends beyond its gamified elements. While competition, scoring, and time constraints contributed to increased engagement, the primary pedagogical value of the platform resided in its alignment with curricular objectives and standardized assessment frameworks. By designing Kahoot-based workshops that mirrored the structure and cognitive demands of the Saber 11 English test, students were able to develop not only linguistic skills but also strategic competencies essential for test performance.

Furthermore, the study reinforces the role of ICT as a catalyst for meaningful learning when integrated intentionally into pedagogical practice. The use of Kahoot facilitated formative assessment processes by providing immediate feedback and enabling teachers to identify patterns of misunderstanding. This aligns with Moreno Olivos' (2016) assertion that formative assessment mediated by technology enhances learning by promoting reflection and self-regulation.

An additional contribution of this study lies in its examination of affective factors. Reduced anxiety, increased confidence, and positive attitudes toward reading tasks emerged as key outcomes of the intervention. These findings underscore the importance of addressing emotional dimensions of learning, particularly in high-stakes assessment contexts.

## **Conclusions**

The implementation of Kahoot-mediated workshops had a positive incidence on English reading comprehension among eleventh-grade students preparing for the ICFES Saber 11 examination. The intervention contributed to measurable improvements in reading comprehension performance, particularly in inferential and communicative comprehension skills. Additionally, students demonstrated increased familiarity with standardized test formats, improved time management, and reduced test-related anxiety.

Beyond cognitive gains, the study revealed significant affective and behavioral benefits. Students reported heightened motivation, active participation, and increased confidence when engaging in reading tasks through Kahoot. These findings support the integration of ICT-based pedagogical strategies in secondary EFL instruction, emphasizing that digital tools are most effective when aligned with curricular goals and assessment requirements.

Overall, this study provides empirical evidence that Kahoot, when used as a pedagogically grounded instructional tool, can enhance English reading comprehension and support students' preparation for standardized assessments in secondary education contexts.

## **Limitations and Future Research**

Despite its contributions, this study presents certain limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, the sample size was relatively small and limited to a single private educational institution, which restricts the generalizability of the results. Second, the qualitative scope of the study, while appropriate for in-depth analysis, does not allow for statistical inference regarding the magnitude of learning gains.

Future research should incorporate mixed-methods designs that combine qualitative insights with quantitative measures to strengthen empirical validity. Studies involving larger and more diverse samples, including public and rural educational contexts, would provide a broader understanding of Kahoot's impact on reading comprehension. Additionally, longitudinal research designs could examine the sustainability of learning gains over time and their transfer to other language skills.

Further investigations might also explore the differential effects of Kahoot on students with varying proficiency levels and learning styles, as well as its integration with other digital tools to support comprehensive language development.

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