STUDENT RESPONSE SYSTEMS AS A QUALITY LEVER IN UNIVERSITY ESP CLASSES: A COMPARATIVE REVIEW OF *KAHOOT!* AND *MENTIMETER*

Vojislav Jovanović[1], Jelena Zivlak[2]
[1]*University of Criminal Investigation and Police Studies, Belgrade, Serbia*
[2]*University of Novi Sad, Faculty of Technical Sciences, Novi Sad, Serbia*
[1]vojislav.jovanovic@kpu.edu.rs, [2]zivlakjelena@uns.ac.rs

***Abstract**: In technology-intensive university settings, the quality of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) teaching is often constrained by limited in-class practice time, uneven participation, and the difficulty of checking specialized vocabulary and concepts in large groups. Student response systems (SRS) can act as a practical quality lever in ESP because they enable frequent, low-stakes retrieval of terminology, immediate feedback on misconceptions, and anonymity that encourages participation. This paper presents a rapid narrative review of university-level ESP/EAP research and offers a focused comparison of two widely used SRS platforms—Kahoot! and Mentimeter—through ESP-relevant quality dimensions (terminology consolidation, engagement and anxiety, feedback for language-focused explanation, and instructor control). Evidence from a tertiary ESP study shows that regular in-class SRS use is associated with higher specialized vocabulary test performance (p= 0.017) and strong perceived motivational benefits, while students tend to prefer Kahoot! for its interactivity and Mentimeter for anonymity and discussion support. The paper concludes with fit-for-purpose selection guidelines for university ESP instructors and notes limitations of rapid reviews and context dependence. [4, 11] [4, 13] [6, 198]*

Key Words: English for Specific Purposes (ESP), student response systems (SRS), specialized vocabulary, formative assessment, Kahoot!, Mentimeter

1. INTRODUCTION

Quality in university ESP is enacted in "micro-moments" of language use: when students retrieve a technical term, choose an accurate collocation, interpret a genre-specific sentence, or test their understanding of a concept embedded in English. In large cohorts, these moments are hard to observe. Traditional response practices (volunteering, nomination, show-of-hands) typically produce low participation and weak diagnostic feedback—especially when students are unsure about terminology and fear public error. [6, p.198]

Student response systems (SRS) address this ESP-specific gap by enabling anonymous, rapid retrieval practice and instant visualization of response distributions. In a tertiary ESP course where *Mentimeter*, *Kahoot!* and *Socrative* were used for in-class specialized vocabulary revision, the experimental group outperformed the control group on an end-of-semester vocabulary test (N = 45, t-value = 2.15, p-value = 0.017). [4, p. 11] Beyond achievement, students reported higher engagement and motivation, and *Kahoot!* and *Mentimeter* were the two most preferred tools, for partially different reasons (interactivity vs. anonymity). [4, 13]

Against this backdrop, the present paper asks: How do *Kahoot!* and *Mentimeter* differ as quality levers for university ESP learning, and what practical selection criteria follow for instructors writing and teaching under strict time and space constraints? Rather than collecting new survey data, we synthesize existing university ESP/EAP evidence and translate it into a compact, decision-useful comparative model. [4; 6.] The discussion is additionally contextualized with an existing university ESP case study of *Kahoot!* use and student perceptions. [3]

2. METHODOLOGY (RAPID NARRATIVE REVIEW)

A rapid narrative review was conducted to identify university-level research discussing *Kahoot!* and/or *Mentimeter* in ESP and closely related English for Academic Purposes (EAP) contexts. Search terms included the following words and phrases: *Kahoot*, *Mentimeter*, *student response system*, *audience response system*, *ESP*, *EAP*, *tertiary*, *university*, *vocabulary*, *terminology*, *formative assessment*. Inclusion criteria prioritized (1) university ESP/EAP settings, (2) clear pedagogical purpose related to language learning (e.g., terminology revision, academic/genre features, formative feedback), and (3) reports with extractable outcomes or implications. Studies focused solely on primary/secondary learners were excluded. Due to strict length constraints, the synthesis foregrounds a small set of high-relevance ESP/EAP sources and maps them onto recurring ESP-quality dimensions. Our findings are interpreted as decision support rather than universal effects [4; 6: 7]. To triangulate the literature with practice-based evidence, we also draw on an existing university ESP *Kahoot!* case study. [3]

3. FINDINGS: ESP QUALITY DIMENSIONS (*KAHOOT!* VS. *MENTIMETER*)

ESP learning outcomes, i.e. specialized vocabulary and academic language ESP effectiveness, are most credibly argued when evidence connects SRS use to specialized vocabulary/terminology development and to the kinds of language choices ESP students must make in professional discourse. In a university ESP course, regular in-class SRS use for vocabulary revision produced statistically significantly higher end-of-semester vocabulary test scores for the experimental group (M = 40.33) than for the control group (M = 36.51), t-value = 2.15, with p-value = 0.017. [4, p. 11] In the same study, students also reported strong perceived benefits for engagement and course-material mastery, while being more cautious about direct grade effects in the mid-term exam. [4, p. 13] These results justify treating SRS as a quality lever in ESP primarily through frequent retrieval of terminology plus immediate clarification, rather than as a standalone driver of summative performance.

3.1 Engagement and Attention Regulation

Both analyzed platforms can increase engagement in ESP by turning specialized vocabulary and concept checks into frequent, low-stakes retrieval events. In a university ESP vocabulary study, students most often selected *Kahoot!* as the best of the tested apps (65%), describing it as interesting, interactive and user-friendly, while *Mentimeter* was the second choice (25%). [4, p. 13] In a university EAP course, students also reported that *Kahoot!* helped them capture the gist of academic-communication concepts and reinforced learning of academic language features and writing techniques (high mean ratings across items). [1, p. 22]

Mentimeter tends to support engagement via a calmer interaction style that fits discussion-oriented ESP moments (e.g., eliciting definitions, checking understanding of a process, or collecting examples). Students explicitly value its anonymous answering affordance as a way for shy learners to participate without fear of public exposure, which can be especially relevant when answers involve precise terminology. [4, p. 13] In ESP/EAP practice, *Mentimeter*'s open-ended and poll-style prompts can be used to check students' previous knowledge [6, p. 199] (or potential misconceptions of the subject matter) before the teacher provides the language-focused explanation. [5, p. 49]

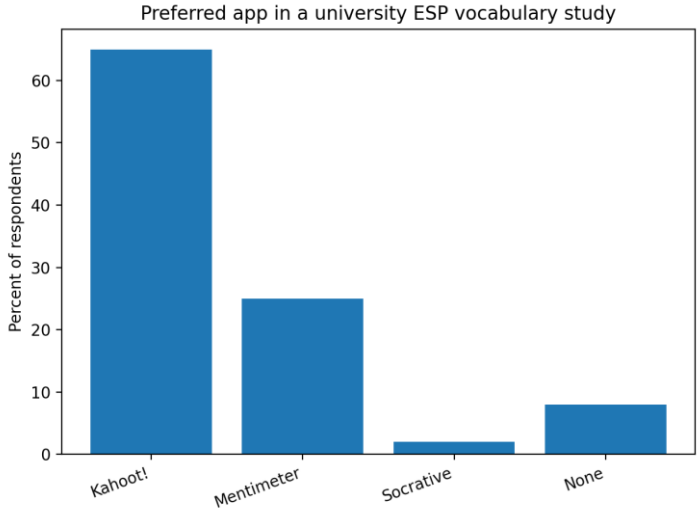

Figure 1. Student-reported preferred app in a university ESP vocabulary study (Kahoot! 65%, Mentimeter 25%). [4, p. 13]

3.2 Inclusivity, Anonymity, and Participation in Large Groups

For university ESP, inclusivity is not only a classroom-management issue; it is a learning-quality issue because terminology development depends on repeated attempts and corrective feedback. In the ESP study, one stated reason for choosing *Mentimeter* was anonymity and the protection it offers to shy students when answers may be incorrect. [4, p. 13] This supports using *Mentimeter* for more complex ESP exercises (e.g. providing definitions, paraphrases, short explanations), where anonymity can increase participation.

Kahoot! can still be inclusive in large ESP groups when used as a revision tool with short, well-scaffolded items, and its strong "event" feel may help sustain attention across long sessions. However, when the instructional goal requires slower processing (e.g., reading a sentence, noticing a genre move), instructors may prefer less time pressure or may use *Kahoot!* in untimed/team modes to keep inclusivity without sacrificing depth. In a university ESP *Kahoot!* case study, students' self-reported ability to respond quickly and accurately suggests that speeded quizzing may not feel equally reliable to all learners, which is relevant when accuracy is central to ESP outcomes. [3, p. 403]

3.3 Formative Assessment and Feedback for Teaching Adjustment

A core quality mechanism in ESP is feedback immediacy: the instructor needs to see where students misuse a term, misread a clause, or confuse a concept, and then immediately provide correction plus explanation. In the ESP

study, the experimental-group advantage is explicitly linked to regular in-class vocabulary revision using SRS, which implies a tight feedback cycle (retrieve → reveal distribution → clarify). [4, p. 11] In a university ESP context, students report that *Kahoot!* helps them stay focused during class and supports revision of course content. [3, p. 406] Meanwhile, *Mentimeter* is well suited to collecting short constructed responses that can trigger micro-discussions and teacher-led reformulation (useful for ESP accuracy work). [6, p. 199]

3.4 Usability and Lesson Flow (Instructor Control)

Usability is not cosmetic in ESP: if an SRS is clunky, teachers reduce question frequency, and vocabulary practice collapses. In the ESP study, students most often justified their preference for *Kahoot!* with interface design and user-friendliness, while *Mentimeter* was also chosen for design and interactivity. [4, p. 13] Practically, this suggests that instructor selection should balance (a) how quickly you can run a terminology-check sequence and (b) whether you need anonymous open-ended input or fast-paced multiple-choice retrieval.

3.5 Learning Outcomes

Across the ESP/EAP evidence base usable for a brief overview, the strongest defensible claim is about terminology/vocabulary consolidation and motivation. A controlled comparison in an ESP course shows higher vocabulary test performance for SRS users ($p = 0.017$), while students overwhelmingly report increased interest and motivation to participate. [4, p.11, p. 13] EAP findings further support perceived reinforcement of academic language features via *Kahoot!*-based review. [1, p. 22] Stronger claims about long-term ESP proficiency gains, transfer to writing quality, or "pure" tool effects remain difficult to defend within the current short-paper evidence base, because reported learning gains are not uniformly significant across contexts and are often entangled with broader instructional designs rather than attributable to *Kahoot!* or *Mentimeter* alone. [4, p. 7, p. 14] In addition, comparative studies may intentionally narrow their scope to specific gamified quiz formats, which further limits generalization. [2, p. 214]

4. *KAHOOT!* VS. *MENTIMETER* IN AN ESP CONTEXT

To translate the ESP-focused synthesis into an instructor-friendly decision aid, Table 1 condenses key contrasts between *Kahoot!* and *Mentimeter* around the kinds of learning moves typical of university ESP (terminology retrieval, accuracy-safe participation, and feedback that supports explanation and reformulation). [4, p. 11, p. 13]

Table 1 – Key contrasts: *Kahoot!* vs. *Mentimeter*

ESP-relevant dimension	*Kahoot!*	*Mentimeter*
Terminology retrieval (review bursts)	Fast-paced retrieval via quiz items; high student preference and perceived usability in an ESP course. [4, p. 13] Also supports EAP concept/feature reinforcement through review. [3, p. 408]	Supports paced checks and discussion-triggering prompts (polls, word cloud, short text), useful for eliciting term meanings. [6, p. 199]
Accuracy-safe participation	Often experienced as highly interactive; can be made low-stakes via nicknames/team mode and short, scaffolded items. [4, p. 13]	Anonymity explicitly valued by students as enabling shy learners to participate without fear of public error. [4, p. 13]
Feedback for ESP explanation	Immediate reveal of correct option supports fast correction and teacher explanation; students report reinforcement of academic-language features. [1, pp. 23-24]	Live response distributions (e.g., histogram feedback). [5, p. 48]
Productive ESP output	Best for recognition (choosing the right term/collocation) and quick diagnostic checks; less suited to longer constructed output in-class.	Open-ended responses (e.g. useful for formative assessment). [5, p. 51]
Student preference signal (ESP evidence)	Chosen as best by 65% of respondents in an ESP vocabulary study. [4, p. 13]	Chosen as best by 25% in the aforementioned ESP study; reasons include anonymity and participation safety. [4, p. 13]

Table 1 supports a practical ESP "fit-for-purpose" rule: *Kahoot!* should be chosen when you need high-energy, frequent terminology retrieval and rapid correction; *Mentimeter* on the other hand should be used when you need anonymity plus short constructed responses that can feed discussion, reformulation, and deeper processing of ESP meanings. In many ESP syllabi, a blended pattern is optimal: *Kahoot!* for quick consolidation, *Mentimeter* for concept-checking and definition work. [4, p. 13] [6, p.202] When teaching an engineering ESP course focused on renewable

energy systems, Kahoot! can be used for quick assessment of recognizing terms like *inverter, power grid,* and *efficiency*. Meanwhile, *Mentimeter* can assist in gaining deeper understanding by asking students to elaborate on system elements or to analyze cause-and-effect connections (for example, "What impact does an inverter have on energy transmission within a solar system?").

5. CONCLUSION

In technology-intensive university ESP, SRS tools can act as an actionable quality lever by strengthening terminology-focused formative assessment, widening participation through anonymity, and enabling rapid teacher adjustment of explanation and feedback. Evidence from university ESP/EAP contexts suggests that regular in-class SRS use can support specialized vocabulary revision and is perceived as motivating. Practically, *Kahoot!* is best positioned for fast retrieval and energetic review, while *Mentimeter* better supports anonymous participation, discussion triggers, and short written output. Limitations include the context dependency of engagement effects and the fact that comparative evaluations often cover only a narrow slice of platform features; therefore, claims are best framed as selection guidelines rather than universal guarantees.

Furthermore, SRS tools enhance the overall quality of university teaching by promoting active learning, keeping students engaged, and providing immediate feedback that allows instructors to adjust lesson pacing and focus. They increase class participation, ensuring that all students, including those who may be hesitant to speak up, contribute to classroom activities. By enabling targeted retrieval of specialized terminology, SRS reinforce retention and deeper understanding of teaching concepts, which is of critical importance. Additionally, SRS improve alignment between learning outcomes and assessment and allow instructors to monitor whether students meet ESP learning goals during the semester. Finally, the integration of SRS into lesson design is an evidence-based teaching practice which raises the overall effectiveness of university ESP teaching.

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