

PRACTICAL USAGE OF GOOGLE CLASSROOM IN THE PROCESS OF LANGUAGE LEARNING: A SURVEY CONDUCTED AMONG THE FIRST-GENERATION USERS

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in schools being shut down across the world. Globally, over 1.2 billion children were out of the classroom. As a result, the educational landscape has undergone a significant transformation, with the distinctive emergence of e-Learning, whereby teaching was undertaken remotely on digital platforms. Every industry has been impacted by technology, and education is no exception. The days of applying for admission and going to classes to earn a degree are long gone. Nowadays, anyone can learn anything online provided one has a hunger for knowledge and a functional internet connection. Web-based instruction has made it possible to offer classes worldwide through a single Internet connection. The domain of the online language learning environment has been enriched with educational tools and Learning Management Systems which are accessible to both students and teachers. Google has launched an e-learning tool named Google Classroom. Google Classroom is a blended learning platform with interesting features. But some learners find certain features unfamiliar as they belong to the first generation of users. In this regard, a survey has been conducted using Google Forms through WhatsApp and Gmail.

Keywords: online learning, internet, learning management systems, Google Classroom, students, teachers, language learning

1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic led to the closure of schools worldwide, affecting over 1.2 billion students. This resulted in a significant shift towards e-Learning, where education was delivered remotely through digital platforms.

E-Learning, also known as Electronic Learning or Virtual Learning, refers to web-based learning that is facilitated through a Learning Management System. This type of education uses computers or smartphones and the internet, allowing for the transfer of skills and knowledge to many individuals at different times. It has replaced the traditional in-person teaching method using chalkboards, and with the integration of technology, has made learning and teaching simpler, easier, and more efficient.

The process of imparting knowledge via online courses, webinars, CDs, and other media is known as e-learning. The traditional approach of teaching using chalk and a board has transformed. Google Classroom is an add-on facility that enables Blended Learning. Teachers use a new teaching strategy that only has cutting-edge technology. As a result, learning and teaching are both made simpler, easier, and more efficient.

Google Classroom is an example of blended learning that integrates technology with traditional teaching methods. One of its plugins, BookWidgets, is a helpful tool for language learning. With advancements in technology, the possibilities for e-Learning in language education are constantly expanding.

1.1 Problem Statement

As a blended learning tool, Google Classroom can increase classroom productivity. Further research on Google Classroom's efficacy is required considering the paucity of studies, particularly in the setting of developing nations. Utilizing technology responsibly is one of the requisites of the present scenario. A mixed learning environment presents the highest management issues for teachers. The usefulness of Google Classroom in higher education in terms of Language Learning Classes is the subject of study.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The aim of the study is to examine the characteristics and features of Google Classroom and evaluate how students perceive its effectiveness in higher education classrooms.

1.3 Research Question

What are the learners' perceptions of the effectiveness of Google Classroom in terms of language learning?

1.4 Significance of the Study

The current generation is highly dependent on technology, leading academics and researchers to explore how teachers can leverage their technological skills to enhance student learning. Google Classroom is a widely used tool that has seen limited examination in research, but the results of this study could demonstrate its effectiveness for language learning to education administrators, teachers, and specialists.

2.Literature Review

The process of learning is intricate and complex, and not all students are engaged in the classroom. Many students tend to be passive during lectures, which can lead to disinterest and disengagement. E-Learning offers students the opportunity to pursue new subjects, but it is believed that proper training in the use of educational materials is crucial for both teachers and students to achieve effective results.

2.1 An overview of theoretical considerations

For instance, traditional face-to-face (F2F) learning is often considered "conventional" while blended learning is seen as a modern or innovative approach (Chigeza and Halbert, 2014). The necessity to utilize and apply electronic educational resources for teachers is a current requirement (Condie & Livingstone, 2007). Moreover, blended learning is constantly evolving and expanding, making it an intriguing and dynamic field (Whisenand & Dunphy, 2010).

2.2 Google Classroom

Studies on the effectiveness of Google Classroom are limited as it was only launched in 2014. Shaharane, Jamil, and Rodzi (2016) studied the active learning activities on Google Classroom using the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and found that the platform performed well in terms of communication, interaction, perceived usefulness, ease of use, and overall student satisfaction based on a survey of 100 students. Espinosa, Estira, and Ventayen (2017) also evaluated Google Classroom as a Learning Management System (LMS) and found that cost was the primary factor in its adoption. Collaborative learning through assignments was seen as a highly effective tool for increasing student engagement (Pellas and Kazanidis, 2015). Google Classroom, being free of charge, has become popular in a short span of time (Azhar Kaukab and Iqbal Nayab, 2018).

2.3 Online Language Learning

The abundance of free information available on the internet has led to a transformation in language teaching. Students now have the option to learn English at their own pace and without leaving their homes. The only requirement is an internet connection, and they can access the course material at any time. An online English class typically includes a combination of video, audio, images, and interactive exercises to make learning enjoyable and interactive. As a result, students can have a more enjoyable and engaging learning experience (Shah et al., 2010; Barbarick, 2010).

3. Online Learning Facilities

The advent of technology has revolutionized education, allowing for access to knowledge and learning opportunities beyond the traditional classroom setting. With the availability of the internet, students can now pursue education from anywhere, anytime, simply by having an eagerness to learn and an active internet connection. Web-based education has made it possible for classes to be delivered globally, breaking down geographical barriers.

An online learning resource refers to any material or tool that can be used in an educational setting, available through the internet. This could include course or chapter objectives, lecture notes, assignments, question and answer sheets in the form of HTML documents. Additionally, it can include interactive tests and exercises, audio or video tutorials, and documents that have links to other websites.

Due to technological advancements, students now have the expectation of being able to access high-quality educational programs from anywhere and at any time. This has made online education an attractive option for people like corporate executives and stay-at-home parents who desire flexibility and accessibility in addition to other benefits such as a wider range of program options and time-saving efficiency.

Potential students primarily desire the ability to receive a high-quality education while still maintaining their job, family commitments, and travel plans. Online learning provides the opportunity for students to engage with instructors, peers, and course materials from any location with internet access. This can lead to an increase in study time, which in turn may result in a deeper understanding of course material, improved written work, and enhanced collaboration on group projects, potentially leading to better performance in the class. Although there is limited research on the correlation between study time and academic performance, it is speculated that the added time made available through online learning could be used to enhance grades.

Moreover, online education opens up opportunities for students who are looking to specialize in niche areas or industries, as it offers a wider range of courses and programs that may not be available locally. This can lead to better job prospects and career advancement. Additionally, online education allows students to study at their own pace, which can be especially beneficial for those who have a busy schedule or need more time to grasp the material. Overall, the availability of more program options and the flexibility to learn at their own pace make online education an attractive option for many students.

Additionally, online education offers more opportunities for students to engage with course materials, as well as interact with their teachers and classmates, leading to a more effective and efficient learning experience. Online learning environments can provide immediate feedback, individualized instruction, and a range of multimedia resources that enhance the learning experience for all students. This can lead to increased motivation and engagement, which can ultimately result in better outcomes.

4. Learning Management System (LMS)

Google Classroom is a widely used learning management system (LMS) that is designed to support the delivery of educational courses and training programs. As an LMS, it provides features such as course administration, content delivery, assignment management, and communication tools that enable teachers and students to interact and collaborate effectively. Additionally, Google Classroom also supports mobile access, making it easy for students to access their course materials from anywhere, at any time. As a language learning tool, Google Classroom provides an interactive and engaging environment for students to learn and practice new language skills. It offers features such as video tutorials, audio recordings, interactive exercises, and collaborative projects, all of which are designed to help students improve their language proficiency and achieve their learning goals.

4.1 Google Classroom

Google Classroom is designed to simplify the process of virtual learning and make it more accessible for teachers and students. The integration of Google Meet in Google Classroom makes it easier for teachers to conduct live online classes without the need for additional steps to set up a meeting or share it with students. It's important for teachers to create a class in Google Classroom and for students to enroll in the class before the teacher generates a Google Meet link for that class. This way, students have access to the meeting link and can easily participate in online classes.

4.1.1 Assignments

In addition to this, teachers can add instructions, attach files, and specify the due date and time for the assignment. They can also monitor the progress of each student and provide feedback and grades within the platform. The assignment feature in Google Classroom makes it easy for teachers to manage and organize assignments, while also making it simple for students to access, complete, and submit their work.

Google Classroom also allows for easy and efficient grading by the teacher. The teacher can grade and give feedback directly on the submitted assignments, and the students can view their grades and feedback in one centralized location. The originality report feature in Google Classroom also helps to detect instances of plagiarism and ensure that students are turning in original work. This feature makes the grading process more streamlined and efficient for the teacher, while also promoting academic integrity among students.

The submission history of an assignment in Google Classroom records the date and time of when a student submitted it. To view a student's submitted work and comments, simply click on their name on the left side of the assignment grading page. There is a small link on the right-side panel under the student's name that says "See submission history", which when clicked shows the timestamps of each time the student submitted or unsubmitted the assignment.

4.1.2 Attendance

Some classes, however, require participation and attendance as part of the grade. Google Classroom is an excellent tool for facilitating communication between teachers and students.

Taking attendance as a teacher logged into Google Classroom is something that every teacher will want to be able to do. This feature has not yet been added to Google Classroom, but there is a simple workaround for the time being.

It is not intended to be difficult to take attendance in Google Classroom. It is simple to do by following these steps:

- Select Your Class
- Click Class work Tab

- Taking a Register
- Create a Question
- Ask the Class.

4.1.2 *Announcements*

Educators can provide learners with updates via announcements. Announcements are posts that contain no learning activities (assignments); they are simply notices to learners about upcoming deadlines, tests, or class work. Educators have the ability to schedule announcements and control the replies and comments made on each announcement post.

4.1.3 *Material Sharing*

Material is a post that includes general information about the class or topic of study. This might include a course syllabus, reference sheet, or welcome message. The students read or view the file, web page, or video. Points cannot be assigned, nor can student activity be tracked.

As a classroom teacher, you can post resource materials, such as a syllabus, classroom rules, or topic-related reading, to the Classwork page. Like other types of posts on the Classwork page, materials can be organized by topic, reordered, and scheduled to post later.

4.2 *Book Widgets*

Book Widgets is one of Google Classroom's Best Practices to teach English creatively and effectively. Book Widgets is a Google Chrome Plugin which can be incorporated into the Google Classroom after obtaining the Google Workspace Licence. Some of the interesting features available for Language Teaching in the Plugin are as follows:

4.2.1. Visual Language Quizzes: A language teacher gives a lot of Google classroom assignments. These can be tests or worksheets. In comparison to traditional paper worksheets, Book Widgets offers a lot of questions that are instantly evaluated and have a much more enticing visual appeal to pupils.

4.2.2 Split Whiteboards: This widget is just perfect for listening and reading exercises. On one side, provide a paragraph that the students must read, and let them draw on the opposite side. Additionally, videos, graphics, and audio clips (for a listening exercise) can be incorporated into the text, as well as a background image on the whiteboard.

4.2.3 Crosswords Puzzle: Crossword puzzles are designed specifically for language teachers. They have numerous options because languages have so many words to learn. A Crossword puzzle is commonly used as a traditional translation exercise, but there are numerous other options. There are idioms, synonyms, antonyms, proverbs, vocabulary descriptions, and meanings in every foreign language.

4.2.4 Hotspot Images: It is always simpler to teach foreign languages when students have visual cues for recognition. The meaning or object may not change, even while the words do. To put foreign words as pop-ups on photos, the hotspot images feature can be used. Besides the text pop-ups, images, video, audio, and web pop-ups can also be added. The markers can be made visible, so students know something is hiding behind that particular spot in the image.

4.2.5 Random Wheels: The randomness widget can serve a variety of functions. The example given emphasises speaking or writing, but it can also be used to practise vocabulary and grammatical structures.

4.2.6 Flashcards: There are numerous uses for Flash Cards. They are mostly employed for vocabulary and definition study and practice. But it can also be used for a few other things. Since Book Widgets allows users to add audio to their flashcards, the users can use them to practise pronunciation like in the activity below:

4.2.7 Exit Slips: In Google Classroom, using exit slips provides us with the opportunity to receive immediate feedback. It answers the questions of whether the students comprehend the lesson, whether they are able to reproduce the content etc. Things could be asked in the Exit Slip:

Vocabulary: “Translate this sentence/ these words...”, “write 5 sentences, including these words...”, “Describe this image”

Grammar: “Conjugate these verbs correctly”, “Describe this image”

Writing: “Write down a story of 10 sentences about...”, “What did you learn today? Write down in 5 sentences”

Reading: “What was the lesson in this story?”, “Name three things you learned out of this story.”

4.3 People’s Tab

Google Classroom's People tab is an open list of teacher and student profile information. The People tab displays the teacher and a list of students who enrolled on this class. The students have their profile photo, full name and email address displayed.

This procedure differs slightly from the desktop procedure. Begin by selecting the Invite Student icon. You can separate the students' names and email addresses with commas. You can also share or copy the Class invite link. You can control how students are invited and who is allowed to join the class by using the features found in the People Tab. Privacy is an issue in this instance and if we could toggle the "People" tab on/off for students from the teacher’s end, it would be very helpful in this instance.

5. Discussion on Questionnaire and Responses

To identify the features of Google Classroom, to study the problems faced by the users while learning through Google Classroom, to identify the unfamiliar areas of Google Classroom, to suggest suitable solutions to make those areas familiar and to suggest how to use Google

Classroom effectively, a structured questionnaire was framed, and a survey was conducted through WhatsApp among tertiary-level students using Google Forms. The responses obtained were processed, statistically analysed, discussed and accounted for.

5.1. Frequency Distribution of Research Items

S.NO	QUESTION	NO. OF RESPONSES	AGREE	NOT SURE	DISAGREE
1.	User of Google Classroom before pandemic	50	20%	8%	72%
2.	Google Classroom is user friendly	50	80%	16%	4%
3.	Google Classroom safe to share links through WhatsApp	50	70%	24%	6%
4.	Google Classroom provide effective language learning environment at home	50	70%	20%	10%
5.	The language learning objectives are attained and fulfilled through Google Classroom compared to physical classroom	50	16%	38%	46%
6.	The overall quality of language learning in Google Classroom	50	Good	Fair	Poor
			72%	18%	2%
7.	Sharing of resources by teacher through Google Classroom is hassle free	50	62%	32%	6%

8.	Files and supporting apps related to Google Classroom occupy most space in device storage	50	34%	46%	20%
9.	Google Classroom provide a comfortable language learning environment	50	52%	36%	12%
10.	Google Classroom could replace the physical classroom	50	14%	22%	64%
11.	Google Classroom provides automated updates without refreshing	50	30%	38%	32%
12.	The teacher assist you in knowing the features of the Google Classroom and in participating in productive activities	50	56%	30%	14%
13.	The teachers enthusiastic in teaching and explaining via Google Classroom	50	50%	40%	10%
14.	Google Classroom as your first choice in blended/flipped learning compared to other apps	50	50%	40%	10%
15.	Google Classroom should have live chat feature	50	46%	42%	12%

16.	Good to include to take attendance option specifically in Google Classroom	50	70%	16%	14%
17.	Take longer to upload assignments	50	42%	24%	34%
18.	Best version to attend classes via Google Classroom	50	Mobile version	16%	Desktop version
			56%		28%
19.	Desktop version has more features than mobile version	50	44%	52%	4%

6. Summation

The purpose of this research is to identify the students' responses to the use of Google Classroom. A total of 50 students responded to the questionnaire on Google Classroom. The conclusion of this research is based on the findings of the questionnaire and discussion on the students' responses about the use of Google Classroom. Major observations of the survey are discussed here.

While examining Question 1, almost 70% of people disagreed that they never used Google Classroom before the pandemic. Worldwide school closures were a result of COVID-19. Following the pandemic, the educational landscape underwent a significant metamorphosis as e-Learning, which involves teaching remotely and using digital platforms, rose to prominence. First-time users of LMS like Google Classroom are significant in number.

About Question 1, almost 70% of the respondents agreed that Google Classroom provides an effective language learning environment at home. Compared to other software that has been popular over the past decade, Google Classroom is amazingly simple. Looking into Question 2, almost 46% of people disagreed that Google Classroom is not fulfilling the language learning objectives compared to the physical classroom.

Considering Question 3, about 72% of people chose Google Classroom as Good in quality of learning. And 18% of people found Google Classroom is Fair. Thus, this shows that Google Classroom is useful and helpful for the students, and they felt satisfied with Google Classroom.

In connection with Question 4, 52% of respondents agreed that Google Classroom provides a comfortable learning environment. As far as Question 5 is considered, 50% of respondents chose Google Classroom as their first choice for blended/flipped learning compared to other apps. Though the mobile version is considered best, the respondents agree that the desktop version has much more to offer.

6.1. Recommendations

The utilization of Google Classroom in the language learning process can have a significant impact on its efficacy. Adequate training for both teachers and students in utilizing the platform effectively and imaginatively can enhance the engagement and student-centered approach to learning. Proper utilization of the tool is crucial in facilitating optimal language learning outcomes.

It is also recommended that teachers assume a facilitative role and focus on guiding students through the various components of Google Classroom. The lack of automatic updates in the activity feed may result in students missing important announcements, thus it is important for them to regularly refresh the feed. Additionally, the process of submitting assignments may prove to be time-consuming, thus it is important to plan accordingly.

In conclusion, the study showed that while some respondents felt that Google Classroom lacked the physical classroom atmosphere, the benefits outweighed the shortcomings. Participants found the platform to be user-friendly and it provides a formal and appropriate learning environment compared to using chat apps for sharing resources. Additionally, it is simple to set up and can be done in just a few steps.

The use of e-Learning has become a necessity in today's world. The widespread availability of smartphones has enabled a large number of individuals to have access to e-Learning tools like Google Classroom for the first time. Although the desktop version of Google Classroom offers more features, a majority of these first-time users prefer to use the smartphone version due to its convenience.

However, despite its limitations, Google Classroom remains a popular and valuable tool for language learning and classroom management. While there may still be room for improvement, the platform offers a range of features and benefits that make it a worthwhile investment for educators and students alike.

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Data Availability Statement :

Data collected and analysed for the study will be made available on request.