A Review on the Use of Google Classroom in the learning of English

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Abstract- The invention of the internet has changed the teaching and learning processes. Blended learning comes into the light as both teachers and learners become more active. The traditional classroom setting is now injected with an online course to cater their needs. In parallel to that, a lot of applications are created in order to aid the teaching and learning development including Moodle, Edmodo and Google Classroom. With the outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic, one of the most used education applications is Google Classroom (GC). Its flexibility allows learners to provide immediate response and access materials that cannot be achieved via traditional classroom learning before this. GC is deemed to hold several advantages over other forms of applications. Therefore, majority of university and school students adapt quickly to GC. Some researches claimed that GC could provide outputs that are more relevant and needed for the students. However, studies on the effects on the use of GC as a medium of learning English language are still scarce. Hence, this review is conducted to investigate the students' perception and challenges of Google Classroom in English language teaching and learning. These implications display potential use of GC for collaboration in term of the learners' acceptance, motivation and performance. It is hoped that GC can be utilized as one of the teaching media in enhancing the mastery of English language better, if not faster.

Keywords- Google Classroom; GC; Second Language Learning; Internet

1. INTRODUCTION

Learning a language is dynamic. Different individual has their own ways and methods in mastering the languages through diverse ways; both traditional and innovative ways. In an edge-cutting technology where the internet is the order, learners assimilate their methods of mastering language by using digital approaches. Nowadays, learners are more prone to use the internet to learn everything including a new language. The increasing globalization rate has triggered a huge leap in language learning. It is safe to claim that the development of language learning has become more cutting-edge. This does not only interest the teachers and educators but also the learners themselves. Both parties are required to act and work faster. Consequently, the demand grows and both academics and students are expected to become more technologically literate. As universities all over the world are now facing the challenges in

implementing the appropriate strategies to meet their learners' needs, the current trend of teaching and learning is very much influenced by the expansion of information technology, in tandem with the advancement of the internet age (Thambu Raj, Chin, Mogindol & Apolonius, 2016).

English language learning is considered as difficult even when the process is assisted by the English language teachers, let alone independent learning. In English, there are 26 letters and a total of 44 sounds. English spellings and pronunciations do not match occasionally and can only be acquired through self-experience. The plentiful mismatch spelling and pronunciation words in English make the learners feel edgy in some situations. It is one of the common difficulties faced by non-English speakers. The various forms of a single word, regular and irregular verbs, and tenses are confusing for them too. Therefore, in acquiring the language as a whole, a learner has to walk through great hurdles and challenges especially in this era of boundless online learning.

Although online language learning started at the Western countries, it spreads rapidly to other countries such as China, Brazil and other countries (Baker et al., 2018). It is considered as a better platform to master a language and foster independent learning that can be of the learners' convenience. As cited in Sivabalan and Ali (2019), Ling (2016) claimed that gadgets such as smartphones, iPads, tablets and personal computers have increased the possibility and ability of the Internet and instant messaging tools and directly influenced communication, as well as learning.

In 2014, Google Classroom (GC) came into the picture and it was rapidly utilized in classes. Teachers are still the designers of the class syllabus and they will orchestrate the whole presentation themselves. Students, on the other hand, will be able to access to the materials at any time they want. They can sit for the tests, write essays and submit their assignments virtually. GC interesting features have enticed new users and used for many subjects including English classes.

The review of this paper attempts to investigate the students' perceptions in the use of Google Classroom. It also discusses the challenges in employing the platform in the learning of English language.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 What is Google Classroom

Google Classroom is a free educational platform that was released on August 12, 2014. It has been introduced as part of Google Apps for Education (GAFE). According to Martínez-Monés, Reffay and Cristóbal (2017), Google Classroom is an internet-based service provided by Google as an e-learning system. This platform is user-friendly and easy to be operated by both teachers and students. A user must have a Google e-mail in order to log in onto the platform. As an educational platform, it totally depends on the teacher to design GC in any ways that he/she wants. With interesting features, GC is deemed to be one of the best platforms in term of language learning.

2.2 The features of Google Classroom

Edtechtecher (2017) lists down several features of Google Classroom. According to him, GC users can design the platform to suit their needs. Below are the features of GC that help teachers and students to manage their class digitally:

1. Calendar: The dates of assignments will be reminded to both teachers and students because they are pinned to the class calendar.
2. Postings and sharing: Teachers and students can share any useful materials such as giving links to other websites and Youtubes videos as their class materials.
3. Grading: Teachers can submit questions and provide immediate feedbacks to students. Marks can be allocated on each assessment and students could always refer to the teacher's feedbacks that have been set prior to the assessment itself.
4. Announcement: It acts as a means to transmit data to a class easily. Students may respond via the comments function to the announcement made.

2.3 Language learning and Google Classroom

With the fast-pacing in academia, teachers need to adapt quickly to the use of online tools. Since GC is one of the most user-friendly platforms, a lot of teachers incline to use it in their classes; to supplement their teaching in the classroom (Fallon, 2016). As a blank canvas, teachers need to design their personal GC in such a way that will accommodate students' needs. It is connected with Google Drive which permits students to have direct access to sharing documents and spreadsheets online, either individually or in group. Nonetheless, they are still tied to the formal syllabus of their schools or institutions.

2.4 Advantages of Google Classroom

Google Classroom has its own advantages that are beneficial to its users. Izenstark and Leahy (2015) discussed its advantages in length in their paper. Firstly, GC is convenient and easy to set up and operated by teachers. Students can enroll themselves and the teaching and learning process can happen immediately. Its simplicity nature makes it easier to both parties to use it as compared to some learning management system (LMS) which are more complicated. Secondly, it is time saving as students do not have to meet their teachers for classes, assignments and materials. All of these can be uploaded and downloaded from their GC and tailored to their time which can improve their learning experience. Thirdly, the centralized data storage will help the teachers to keep all materials and students' data in the cloud system which can be accessed from any computer at any time. Izenstark and Leahy (2015) also stated that students too have the privilege to refer to materials on their GC simultaneously without having to worried of going out physically to get the materials from their teachers prior LMS.

3. METHOD

This paper focused on studies of Google Classroom effectiveness in the learning of English language. It used the integrative review method which analyzed data that have been discussed in previous studies. While there is no strict standard, the general aim of a data analysis in an integrative review is to critically analyze and examine the literature and the main ideas and relationships of an issue, in this case is the perceptions and challenges on the use of Google Classroom in the learning of English language.

This paper analyzed on the studies of Google Classroom efficacy that were published from 2017 to 2020 on Google Scholar. After screening through 56 papers, 12 papers were selected based on their relevance to the objective of this review. The reviewers of this paper are being transparent on the process of collecting and analyzing all articles used. The data collected centered primarily on the use and outcome of Google Classroom in term of perception, motivation, effectiveness and challenges of using Google Classroom. All data are utilized objectively and described systematically in order to display the real results that are obtained from different research. In presenting the results of the study, appropriate themes are formulated to ease the reading of findings in relation to answering the questions raised in the current study. The themes are students' perception of GC and challenges of GC.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This paper discusses on the use of Google Classroom in term of the students' perceptions and challenges that are integrated with it.

4.1 Students' perceptions of using Google Classroom

Students' perceptions are vital to student engagement and learning in a class (Martin & Bolliger, 2018). They also claimed that positive perception will lead to better engagement and eventually enhances student motivation and performance. Relevant research on the students' perception towards GC are scrutinized and discussed in this section.

Fallon (2016) conducted a study on the use of GC for third grade writing. 18 students with different levels of writing and literacy skills were required to write in on GC. The researcher distributed a questionnaire and asked them of their

perception of the use of GC. All 18 of them stated that they preferred to type their essay on GC and shared the writings with their classmates. They were more confident with their writing content and spelling too. According to them, GC has helped them to express their ideas better to other peers. Their classmates were also professed to become more interactive with themselves by means of always communicating anytime they wanted.

Another study conducted by Albashtawi and Al Bataineh (2020) also shares the same result with Fallon's (2020) study. A total of 26 EFL Syrian diploma students participated in the study. The researchers used a quasi-experimental design and one group pre-test and post-test design based on quantitative data. The students were given a reading and writing test, as well as a questionnaire. The result shows that all students perceived GC positively and it helped them to become more interactive. Students attained better results in both writing and reading tests and their questionnaires revealed that they preferred GC over the traditional class setting.

Apart from that, the factors influencing the acceptance of the Google classroom by students at Al Buraimi University College (BUC) in Oman were investigated by Al Marof and Al Imran (2018). To formulate the hypotheses of the existing research, the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) was adopted. With 337 respondents, the data was collected through an online questionnaire. To test both the measurement and structural models, the Partial Least Square-Structural Equation Model (PLS-SEM) approach was used. The findings of the study indicated that the students' behavioral intention was positively affected by both the perceived ease of use (PEOU) and perceived utility (PU), which in turn influenced the real use of Google classroom. The students in this study believed that GC enhances their confidence in communicating with their teachers and classmates.

4.2 Google Classroom makes students to be more open to receive feedbacks from peers

In a study by Mai Tran (2019), students at Ho Chi Min University of Technology (HCMUT) claimed that they were more open to receive feedbacks from not only teacher, but also their classmates. Sometimes, they became more aware of the common mistakes that were shared on GC and tried not to repeat them. Another student also said that he became more aware of important dates; tests, quizzes and assignments. One of the features of GC is that students will receive notification emails on these dates because they are clipped onto their online calendar. This feature was perceived as efficient as they could always check the dates and new announcements their teachers have. 83% of students admitted that they anticipated to continue using GC even after the class ended.

Similar to HCMUT, a Business English class of Widya Mandala Secretarial Academy Surabaya, Indonesia, stated that the most popular feature was uploading and downloading materials for lecture. More than 65% students considered that the feature helped them tremendously during the class. They also claimed that getting feedbacks from teachers and emailing were important too. With the feedbacks provided by teachers, they could identify their strengths and weaknesses, in which led them to be more enthusiastic to learn. They perceived that GC is a very convenient tool in assisting with their English learning development (Subandoro & Sulindra, 2019).

4.3 Google Classroom is user-friendly

In these studies, students received GC positively and majority agreed that one of the reasons is the user-friendly interface that GC obtains. Both teachers and learners do not have to become rocket scientist in figuring out on how to operate GC. With minimal supervision, students can explore the materials provided at their own pace, anywhere and anytime. Teachers could become more productive as they can maneuver the class according to their drive and time.

Apart from positive perceptions of students towards GC, previous research also indicates that integration of GC allows for more collaboration among students as well as an increase in motivation in the classroom. Students were more motivated during writing lessons and developed a higher set of writing skills (Fallon, 2016; Mai Tran, 2020). Looking deeper into the use of digital writing and how students react to this in their classroom will allow teachers to understand the value of technology and how to appropriately utilize it their own lessons.

4.4 Challenges of using Google Classroom

Even though Google Classroom is relatively easy to use, it still faces several challenges in term of its application in the classroom. After analyzing online learning patterns and potential, we express several challenges that we identify as essential to GC and its proliferation. We identify potential obstacles facing the students and teachers for quality online learning at present.

4.4.1 *Quality and standard of the learning process*

More often than not, when there is a typical class involved, class efficiency is easier to calculate. There is a system that protects the consistency of face-to - face transitional courses. The interactions among students will stimulate their motivation to study better. Students will follow the arranged schedule and become more focus during the stipulated time. Teachers can monitor their students closely and give timely feedbacks.

On the other hand, class activities can happen at any time of the day in online learning. When everything is at your fingertips, coming back to the classroom or for work becomes meaningless. The rethinking of the so-called standards of practice and quality will be necessary and can require a paradigm shift in our thinking (Setiadi, 2020). In order to make the session efficient, both teachers and students must have coherent interaction on GC.

4.4.2 *Heavy dependence on the internet connection*

GC requires high and stable speed of internet connection. It also requires either a computer, smartphone or tablet with minimum specifications to support the running of GC smoothly. If a student does not have one of these, he/she will have some problem to learn properly especially when they have to sit for tests or quizzes which are usually timed and cannot be repeated. In a previous study by Safford and Stinton (2016), students' learning and online activities are troubled by the low internet connectivity and speed. Thus, a stable internet connection and also a suitable gadget are critical in realizing the virtual class through GC (Ula Nisa El Fauziah, Lilis Suryani & Trisnendri Syahrizal, 2019).

4.4.3 *Difficulty in self-regulation*

Due to the generous flexibility of Google Classroom, students depend heavily on their self-regulation; time-management, discipline and readiness. Students exert more autonomy power and more often than not, this leads to procrastination. In the traditional classroom, students' procrastination could be noticed and addressed directly by the teachers. In is different when it comes to GC as students have reduced seat time with their teachers. They also could not capture the teacher's physical presence which contributes negatively to their learning process on GC. However, this could be overcome by the teachers themselves.

4.4.4 *Students' awareness on the use of Google Classroom*

To master skills in English, the students must create the class ambiance to be more active and not monotonous by interacting and giving appropriate response that will trigger the interest in learning. On the other hand, students should explore on how to operate GC because it can help them in their learning process. By mastering the use of GC features, it can help the teacher to explain the material or give the students understanding of teaching material very easily, overcome the problem of limited space and time, and improve students' abilities and interest in learning. Even though it is a teacher's task to make students aware of the way of using the apps, the students themselves must be proactive and take necessary steps on operating GC themselves. In addition, teachers might feel the need to guide their students closely and constantly remind them of the materials, quizzes and assignments due even though these reminders will be sent to students' emails individually (Cuesta, 2018).

5. CONCLUSION

Based on the review conducted, it is believed that Google Classroom can improve students' motivation in learning English. The features of GC are useful in supplementing students with the learning outside the classroom. The interesting background of the platform itself is also one of the features that can attract students to focus on GC throughout the learning process. Although it is an online tool, the interaction between teachers and students are

improving. Students are more open in accepting their mistakes and they also learn from their friends' mistakes too. With the right attitude and motivation, students will become more enthusiastic to learn English language. Hence, this will be reflected through students' performance which is also directly correlated with students' level of understanding. In the traditional setting, students' performance is assessed through tests, quizzes, assignments and presentations, mostly within the four walls. However, with the existence of online tools including Google Classroom, the evaluation becomes more flexible. All in all, it is hoped that this study will help all students to elevate their motivation in learning English by using Google Classroom. This study could also shed some light in constructing a specific and better online platform to learn English language not only for academia, but also for other sectors.

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