

Students' Perceptions towards Using Google Classroom Application in EFL Classroom during the COVID-19 Pandemic at Thai – Nichi Institute of Technology

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Abstract

The purposes of this research were 1) to investigate the students' perceptions towards using the Google Classroom Application in the EFL classroom at Thai – Nichi Institute of Technology (TNI) and 2) to find out the benefits of using the Google Classroom Application in the EFL classroom at TNI. The sample of one hundred was taken from first-year students taking the English Foundation Course at TNI during the first semester of the 2021 academic year. The method of sample selection was purposive sampling based on the classes assigned by the registrar office of TNI to the researcher. The research instrument used to collect the data was a questionnaire with the overall value index of item objective congruence (IOC) at the rate of 1.00. The methodology of data collection was conducted through a survey questionnaire and an interview. Frequency, percentage, and content analysis were used for data analysis. The result of this research showed a positive perception of learners towards the Google Classroom Application when learning English. Most of the interviewed participants reported that the Google Classroom Application was easy to use and that it also provided real-time feedback from the teacher because Google Classroom allowed the teacher to send

announcements and start class discussions right away. Therefore, the participants had positive attitudes toward using the Google Classroom Application during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Keywords: Google Classroom; Students' perceptions; Online learning; EFL classroom; Covid-19 pandemic

Introduction

In the modern technological age, development is rapid. During the current COVID-19 pandemic, technology can make a significant contribution to the learning process. The current Covid-19 pandemic is unique both in its effects and severity in modern times. The current pandemic's severity is heightened due to its virulent and highly contagious nature. The far-reaching adverse effects of the pandemic have gone way beyond medical spheres and have greatly impacted numerous other areas, including education. The seriousness of the pandemic has forced national governments to introduce brand new policies, previously unseen, namely the practice of widespread home learning. Online learning, or learning from home, serves a dual purpose of preventing the spread of the Covid-19 virus while enabling the continuation of educational practices, albeit from the environs of home. However, online learning is only able to operate through the facilitation of alternative media, for example, websites and applications. There is no doubt that media applications connected to learning can be of significant benefit and offer an improvement in previous learning outcomes. The contribution that can be made with the application of technology-based learning during modern times is stated by Koc (2016). Additionally, the idea that teachers and teaching staff should embrace and use social data to connect better with their students is proposed by Sakkir and Dollah (2019). However, social media is also home to a high degree of student communications that are not related to education as well as other socially inappropriate actions. The role of teachers and parents in this context should be to guide students towards social media that is

both useful and practical in the learning environment with the prerequisite that students find it enjoyable.

One of the tools that facilitate online learning is called Google Classroom. The provider of this particular educational platform is Google Apps for Education (GAFE). The world witnessed the emergence of Google Classroom on 12th August 2014. As the name suggests, Google Classrooms allows those with a google account to create a classroom within cyberspace. This service is provided free of charge for schools of a non-profit nature. The application works as a bidirectional process as it aids the teacher in developing strategies and styles but additionally also helps with the understanding of the perception of strategies and thus can develop participation that is effective for a variety of classroom skills. The Google classroom Application has been embraced and subsequently used as a promotional platform for e-learning by those involved in education. The ease with which Google Classroom can be connected to and accessed both inside or outside the home helps its popularity with students and teachers.

Additionally, this particular application is able to be used by both students and academic staff after it has been downloaded and they have logged in. The requirement of the lecturer is to create a group class and then give access to the class code to students so that they can join the class online. The functionality of the google classroom application is as a media learning tool to be used by both students and lecturers to form an online or virtual classroom. Here, lecturers are able to communicate with students and allocate tasks to them, in real-time, with the students automatically accepting the task using a notification. Therefore, the focus of this research is concentrated on the feelings of students with regard to the application in terms of its effects and efficiency. Observation of the data will be made through the use of a questionnaire and interview. The primary objective of the researcher is to understand the perceptions of the students in terms of the role of social media in the

classroom. It can be said that perception is the result of a person's perspective, trust, understanding, and reaction to a new idea and is an external factor (Alnujaidi, 2017). The role of Google Classroom in the language learning process is the focus of this research, with the students' views reflecting the success of this theory. There are some studies of EFL studies using Google Classroom. Like some previous studies, Rozak and Albantani (2018) found that Google Classroom application provides an opportunity for lecturers or teachers to explore the methodical concepts they have for students. Furthermore, Google Classroom lets them send out materials, assignments, and be able to get students' corresponding points in the same platform. Subsequently, the conclusion reached in one study (Okmawati, 2020) in Jordan was that Google Classroom was proved to be effective by EFL students and was thus perceived to be a positive influence in the learning environment. The research of Thongsonkleeb (2020) revealed that most of the subjects (students) of his research were satisfied with their experience of Google Classrooms in its usage as an online learning method. Consequently, during the situation of the Covid -19 pandemic in Thailand which resulted in the government's order to lock down the country, universities, and schools in Thailand were forced to be closed and adjust themselves to online teaching. So, this research was concerned with the optimization of online learning techniques from the use of Google Classroom. As Google Classroom has been utilized widely, many lecturers from the College of General Education and Languages and students at Thai-Nichi Institute of Technology have experienced the benefits of Google Classroom. As a result, the researcher, an English teacher at TNI, conducted research on the perceptions of Google Classroom by EFL students who used it during the current pandemic.

Purposes of the Study

The purposes of the study were as follows:

1. To investigate the students' perceptions towards using the Google Classroom Application in the EFL classroom at Thai – Nichi Institute of Technology.
2. To find out the benefits of using Google Classroom Application in the EFL classroom at Thai-Nichi Institute of Technology.

Research Questions

1. What are the perceptions of Thai students' use of the Google Classroom Application?
2. What are the benefits of Thai students' use of the Google Classroom Application?

Methodology

Research Design

The present study aimed at investigating the students' perceptions of Thai undergraduates towards using Google Classroom in the EFL classroom at Thai – Nichi Institute of Technology (TNI). Another aim of this study was to find out the benefits of using Google Classroom. This research study used descriptive qualitative method and the data were collected through questionnaires and interviews.

Participants

The sample of the study was undergraduate students at Thai – Nichi Institute of Technology. The sample were 100 first-year students who studied an English Foundation Course and came from different faculties at TNI in the first semester of the 2021 academic year. It was the course for those who got less than 40 marks for the TNI English Proficiency Standard Test. Tables 1 and 2 show the frequency and percentage of the subjects' gender and faculties as follows:

Table 1

Frequency and percentage of the subjects' gender

| Gender | Frequency | Percentage |
|---------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Male | 67 | 67.00 |
| Female | 33 | 33.00 |
| Total | 100 | 100 |

Table 2

Frequency and percentage of the subjects' faculties

| Faculties | Frequency | Percentage |
|-------------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Business Administration | 44 | 44.00 |
| Engineering | 32 | 32.00 |
| IT | 24 | 24.00 |
| Total | 100 | 100 |

Based on Table 1 and 2, half of the respondents were male (67) and female (33), studying in 3 faculties including Business Administration (44%), Engineering (32%), and IT (24%).

Research Instrument

Questionnaires and interviews were used to collect the data. A set of questionnaires was the instrument used in the study, which comprised of three sections. The questionnaire was adapted from Azhar and Iqbal (2018). It was evaluated by three experts and revised before collecting the data. The research instrument used to collect the data was the questionnaire with the overall value Index of item objective congruence (IOC) at the rate of

1.00. The first section included the subjects' background information such as gender and faculties. The second section was related to students' perception towards using Google Classroom, and the third section was concerned with students' perception of the benefits of using the Google Classroom Application. Moreover, a semi-structured interview was conducted to clarify some information from the questionnaire.

Procedures

100 copies of the questionnaire in Thai were distributed to first-year students who were studying the English Foundation Course. The researcher used a questionnaire in Google form to collect the data. The questionnaire was adapted from Azhar and Iqbal (2018). The researcher taught this class on his own through Google Classroom Application for 12 weeks. The students responded to their questionnaires through Google form after completing their courses. Then, the data in the questionnaires were translated, in preparation for analysis. For the interview stage, twenty students were selected through the Simple Random Sampling and were informed that they were asked to do the semi- interview in writing chat through Google Classroom Application as well. The date and time for the interview were set up in accordance with the students' convenience. Then, they were interviewed in a group of five.

Data Analysis and Statistical Procedures

Data analysis from the semi-interview was content analysis. The data collected through the questionnaire was to be analyzed using descriptive statistics of frequency and percentage.

Results and Discussion

Phase 1: The Results of Students' Perceptions Questionnaires

There were two objectives in this study:

1. To investigate the students' perceptions of Thai undergraduates towards using the Google Classroom Application at Thai – Nichi Institute of Technology. The results obtained from this study revealed the students' perceptions towards using the Google Classroom Application in their English lessons. The table below demonstrates the frequency, and percentage of the variable of students' attitudes towards using Google Classroom application in EFL classroom (see table 3)

Table 3

The results of students' perceptions towards using Google Classroom Application in EFL classroom.

| Item | Variables | Frequency | Percentage |
|------|--|-----------|------------|
| 1 | Assignments are going to be completed ahead of schedule by using Google Classroom. | 86 | 86.00 |
| 2 | The performance level of the students rises because of the Google Classroom Application. | 90 | 90.00 |
| 3 | Productivity in the learning process goes up through using the Google Classroom Application. | 93 | 93.00 |
| 4 | The learning process has benefitted from the Google Classroom Application. | 83 | 83.00 |

| | | | |
|---|--|----|-------|
| 5 | The perception of the Google Classroom Application is that it is easy to use. | 96 | 96.00 |
| 6 | The Google Classroom Application is of interest to students during the learning process. | 80 | 80.00 |
| 7 | The Google Classroom Application facilitates two-way feedback between both students and lecturers. | 83 | 83.00 |
| 8 | The Google Classroom Application ensures that the students feel comfortable throughout the learning process. | 80 | 80.00 |

From the table above, the results revealed that according to the variables in the table: item 5 indicated the highest percentage of 96%. It showed that the students agreed to the statement “The perception of the Google Classroom Application is that it is easy to use.” This is followed by item number 3, which indicated the second-highest percentage of 93%. They showed that the students felt that the use of the Google Classroom Application increases the productivity of learning. Item number 2 indicated the third-highest percentage of 90%. 90 of 100 participants chose the statement “The performance level of the students rises because of the Google Classroom Application.” Finally, item number 1 indicated the fourth-highest percentage of 86%. It showed that the students had a good willingness to do every class assignment through Google Classroom.

2. To find out the benefits of Google Classroom Application in EFL classroom at Thai-Nichi Institute of Technology. The results obtained from this study revealed the students’ attitude towards the benefits of using the Google Classroom Application in their English lessons. The table below demonstrates the frequency, and percentage of the variable

of students' attitudes towards the benefits of the Google Classroom Application in the EFL classroom.

Table 4

The results of students' perceptions towards the benefits of Google Classroom Application in EFL classroom.

| Item | Variables | Frequency | Percentage |
|------|--|-----------|------------|
| 1. | The Google Classroom Application facilitates real-time feedback from the lecturer. | 96 | 96.00 |
| 2. | Class assignments and material can be accessed with ease if, for any reason, the lecturer is unable to be with the class in person. | 90 | 90.00 |
| 3. | The Google classroom Application is able to give students a running commentary on things like deadlines and a description of what is required for assignments. | 93 | 93.00 |
| 4. | Unnecessary time and effort are saved using the Google Classroom Application as it allows students to submit their assignments electronically. | 86 | 86.00 |
| 5. | Unlimited accessibility is provided by the Google Classroom Application as the material is available quickly and 24 hours a day, every day. | 86 | 86.00 |

Based on the results of the questionnaire, the majority of participants agreed that 96% of Google Classroom got immediate feedback. Indeed, it is a great platform as an effective tool for learning because of its features and benefits such as active participation in online class activities, easy to use features in submitting online tasks, easy to access reference materials and it increases student motivation because of online activities and discussions. This is followed by item number 3, which indicated the second-highest percentage of 93%. It showed that the students perceived that Google Classroom service gives them running records of assignment due dates and descriptions of what is expected. Moreover, item number 2 indicated the third-highest percentage of 90%. 90 of the 100 students felt that they can easily access class material and assignments through google classroom. Finally, item number 4 and number 5 have the same percentage of 86%. They showed that the students felt that the use of Google Classroom could save time and provide quick and easy access to the assignment.

Phase 2: The Results of the Semi-Structured Interview

In the interview portion, students expressed positive feelings about Google Classroom's impact on undergraduate students' English learning activities. The participants agreed on a number of positive outcomes, including the fact that Google Classroom kept track of assignments. They claimed that using Google Classroom for assignments eliminated the need to come to campus and allowed them to view the assignment at any time and from any location. Google Classroom helped them save time and effort. As many students stated, "Google Classroom made it simple to use because it only utilizes a quota". When viewed from the perspective of providing a record of assignments, most students agreed that the Google Classroom Application provided a record of assignments since there was a record of file assignments and lecture materials posted by the lecturer or students when they performed online learning in Google Classroom. As one of the following students said, "I can always

recheck my works as much as I can which helps me a lot for reminding my memory.” As a result of the students’ responses, students were able to readily view the assignment file in the Google Classroom Application as well. Then, participants also agreed that the Google Classroom Application could enable better communication between the teacher and students because Google Classroom allowed the teacher to send announcements and start class discussions right away. Moreover, students could share resources with each other or answer questions in the stream. It means that students were able to study in a separate location by utilizing the Google Classroom Application, but they were still able to connect with one another when doing online learning via mobile access. Furthermore, they noted that Google Classroom allowed students to receive feedback from the lecturer, that Google Classroom allowed them to share their writing with the lecturer and peers, and that Google Classroom could help them enhance their independent learning skills. As one student stated “I am satisfied with the lecture using Google Classroom. It can make me not have to go to college and able to, while home, read materials or do assignments.” Students, on the other hand, had the chance to provide feedback to their peers by posting directly to the Google Classroom discussion stream. Therefore, most students considered that the interaction between the lecturer and students with Google Classroom could be said to be active. One of the students said “My lecturer and I are highly active on Google Classroom when it comes to interacting with homework.”

Discussion

The findings of this research have shown that students can improve their learning skills by actively participating in tasks and communicating online. Therefore, we are able to assume that the Google Classroom Application is an effective aid for students. The research revealed that most TNI students who participated in the study reacted in a positive way and

were receptive to the Google Classroom Application as a meaningful learning platform that gives them the opportunity to learn in a time and place that suits them, without the need for face-to-face interaction with class colleagues or lecturers. Moreover, most students responded that the Google Classroom Application was easy to use in terms of attending class online, submitting homework, taking assignments and doing tasks. This result was supported by Beaumont (2018), who suggested that Google Classroom was effective and easy to use for educational purposes and collaborative learning. In these environments, students are able to take assignments; submit assignments, quizzes, and do tasks online. Consequently, the Google Classroom Application enables students to receive and submit assignments, do quizzes and other online tasks with ease (Heggart & Yoo, 2018). Simplicity is the key to why students like to use the application to support their learning techniques. In terms of benefits, the Google Classroom Application is quite useful for allowing access to lectures and for facilitating discussions with other students about the course. Additionally, most students agreed that the Google Classroom Application helps complement classroom learning and is an important platform for student-teacher collaboration. The general consensus from the sample participants was that the Google Classroom Application was able to support their learning strategies through its ease of use, its constant accessibility, and the fact that it was free to use. This result was supported by Iftakhar's (2016) suggestion that the Google Classroom be used to provide student-centered, collaborative, and purposeful active learning. Therefore, using the perceptions of the students as the basis of an assessment, we are able to say that the Google Classroom Application has a positive impact on students' main aim of improving their English language skills in the EFL classroom. This means that the Google Classroom Application is an effective tool in helping students achieve this goal and ultimately be successful in learning English in the EFL environment.

Suggestion

With a reference to the results of this research, I recommend that students who use Google Classroom in online learning use Google Classroom as one of the learning tools to the fullest. Students should use Google Classroom creatively and expressively, not in an actual classroom. In this age, technology has become an indispensable part of our lives, including in the field of education. Hopefully, teachers are expected to improve their ICT skills to facilitate the learning process. In addition, teachers must find another tool for online learning to support students in cooperative group learning. The current study recommends further study. This study only covered a part of the basis of assessment. I hope that the next study can continue to conduct this study on another batch to obtain more types of data, which may be a better suggestion for the e-learning world.

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