

Utilizing Google Classroom: Pros and Cons for a High School English Teacher in Jambi

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ABSTRACT

The paper aims at uncovering the lived-experience of a senior high school English teacher after utilizing Google Classroom as a digital teaching tool during the pandemic era, in the last semester academic year 2019-2020. This was a descriptive qualitative inquiry where the researchers did an in-depth interview and participatory-observation to gather the data. The participants of this study were an English teacher and several students from a State Senior High School 4 Tebo in Jambi Province Indonesia. The findings reveal benefits and lacks of Google Classroom for both students and teachers. Indeed, Google Classroom proposed a brand-new way of transferring English material to students from which they felt joy and facilitated to learn English. However, the quality of internet connections and time allotment of each meeting brought about weaknesses since the teacher was lacking of time to accommodate all topics during the semester.

Keywords: Google Classroom; Distance Learning; ELT-Online Tools.

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INTRODUCTION

The use of digital technology for educational purposes, including second and foreign language learning is expanding fast. Especially in Indonesia, the pandemic of corona virus obligates the educators to teach at home by online learning or distance learning as stated by the Indonesian ministry of Education in decree Number 4 year 2020. This decree contains the instruction for students to study from home until the condition for traditional face-to-face classroom is possible. Inevitably, online teaching and learning platforms becomes the tool not to say a weapon for teachers to make this distance learning possible.

Distance learning or distance education is an education system that teaching and learning actions have been performed via communication technologies and mailing services

by the teachers and the students being in different environments, Isman (2005). This condition forces the teachers to teach the students through an online system. It is also supported by Stem (2019) that online learning is the education that takes place over the internet. Actually, it is not a problem for the schools in urban areas because they are accustomed to using it. However, the problem appears for the schools who are far away from internet connection. It also happens to the teachers and the students. The problem of the poor quality of the internet connection becomes disturbances in the process of the teaching and learning.

Furthermore, to apply an online program especially if there is no good preparation, it will have some strengths and weaknesses. According to Jacobs (2013), online learning is as effective as traditional classroom learning. How much or how well a student learns is determined by the quality of the online instruction. If a course is well designed and well implemented, students will learn more than in a poorly designed course.

For this reason, each school should decide an appropriate way to conduct distance education/ distance learning. One of online teaching-learning platforms which is accessible freely for distance learning is Google Classroom. Beall (2017) defined Google Classroom as a tool which facilitates both students and teacher collaboration, also the teacher can create and distribute assignments for students in an online classroom for free. Google Classroom is considered as one of the best platforms out there for enhancing teachers' workflow. Google Classroom provides a set of powerful features that make it an ideal tool to use with students. It helps teachers save time, keep classes organized, and improve communication with students, Iftakhar (2016). To access Google Classroom, users can use a multiplatform such as a computer or a device (mobile phone). Then, the teachers and the students can visit the site <https://classroom.google.com> or they can do the application via Playstore. The use of Google Classroom is free of charge, both for the teacher and students can utilize the facilities of Google Classroom as needed, Sukmawati and Nensia (2019).

Some studies have investigated the distance or online learning through Google Classroom for general and students' perspective. First, Dewi, Zahrowi and Sulistiyowati (2020) found that using Google Classroom in teaching students could improve students' reading comprehension since it is more interesting and easier to access whenever they are. On the contrary, the obstacles encountered in the learning processes were unstable internet connection in the school and unskilled teachers to operate the application. Then, in Albashtawi (2020) revealed that Google Classroom can improve the reading and writing performance of Syrian students. Most of the students showed positive attitudes toward using Google Classroom in terms of its ease of use, usefulness, and accessibility.

In this study, we investigated the lived-experience of a senior high school English teacher after utilizing Google Classroom as a digital teaching tool during the pandemic era,

in the last semester academic year 2019-2020. We attempt to answer the following research question:

How do the English teacher of a senior high school in Jambi experience the use of Google Classroom during pandemic era last even semester, academic year 2019-2020?

METHOD

This study was a descriptive qualitative inquiry, Creswell (2009). The aim is cultivating the lived-experience of a senior high school English teacher. The qualitative research is a study in which events and phenomena are revealed in a natural environment by using data collection methods such as qualitative research, interview, observation and document analysis (Mason, 2002). Then, the result presented to readers in the form of a narrative data. The data was obtained in the last semester academic year 2019-2020 at SMAN 4 Tebo, Jambi Province Indonesia.

Participants of the Study

The participants of this study were an English teacher and several students from a State Senior High School 4 Tebo in Jambi. In-depth interview and participatory-observation were done to gather the data.

Analyzing Data

After gathering all the data, the researchers did five steps to analyze all data. The stages were transcribing the interview, identifying and classifying the data based on categories of questions, interpreting the data by investigating in detail selected-statements, and drawing conclusions.

FINDINGS

There are two major findings of the research which truly showcase the live-experienced of what the English teacher did when utilizing Google Classroom for teaching English in Pandemic era at the rural area of Tebo district in Jambi province.

A. The pros of using Google Classroom

1. Easy to use

In the distance learning started from March in the last academic year 2019/2020, the English teacher was forced to decide the right teaching tool which appropriate with the environment of the students. By using google classroom, it was simplified the instructional interface and options used for delivering and tracking assignments in every meeting. Then, it is easy to acces on any mobile device. Below some statements articulated by the teacher which supported the first finding;

.... because using google classroom you can only use cell phones. (ET07)

all the students here don't have laptops at all. (ET08)

"... Easy to access, just download the application in the Play-store, easy to install, the steps are just searching on Google. (ET09)

The English teacher occasionally stated that at the first time when she used the Google Classroom is easy. She did not need to ask another teacher to understand every single steps in installation process. It is in line with Janzen (2017), he stated that Google Classroom's design purposefully simplifies the instructional interface and options used for delivering and tracking assignments; communication with the entire course or individuals is also simplified through announcements, email, and push notifications.

2. Flexibility

Google classroom was easy to administer and easy to assess.

"... assignments can be given from anywhere, students can do their work from home, and I can immediately give grades, without waiting for all the students to answer the assignment, sometimes students don't answer right away. (ET11)

The English teacher mentioned that Google classroom is easily accessible and useable to instructors and learners especially for the first time they use it. It is supported by Mary (2014), Google Classroom enables the teacher to explore and influence flipped instructional methods more easily as well as automate and organize the distribution and collection of assignments and communications in multiple instructional milieus.

3. Time Management

For the teacher, using Google Classroom is easy to design a teaching material, administering, grading and giving students a feedback.

"... the teacher can provide material then adding assignments and then provide arrangements for the assessment, the score is right and wrong right away. (ET12) In the process I was also easy because I could provide materials and others through my cellphone. "(ET13)

For the application of the google classroom, it saves time and also papers. The application makes the teachers easy to operate a classroom, such as distributing assignments, communicating and regulating materials. Subandoro (2017)

4. Free

Google classroom can be accessed for free by the teachers and also the students around the world.

"... just download the application in the Play-store, easy to install, the steps are just searching on Google. (ET09)

Then, easy to follow the instructions when I was adding the materials, tasks and others. (ET10)"

The teacher and students no need to access to an educational institution. Everyone can access other apps as well, such: Drive, Docs, Spreadsheets, slides, etc. Using google classroom does not require any cost. Both of the teacher and the students with or without an institutional Google account can create and join a classroom. (Rabbi, Zakaria and Tonmoy (2018).

5. Students' attitude

The results have been good, especially for students who are disciplined to follow. (ET22)

They were feeling joy, because they can learn, do assignment via mobile phone. ET23)

The students are feel enthusiastic in the learning process. (ET24)

B. The Cons of Using Google Classroom

In this era, using technology in teaching and learning is the common process. However, the pandemic era without good preparation, both teachers and students encountered some obstacles during the distance learning process. In using Google classroom, the equipment or tools to support it should be available and operate well. Especially in rural are, the connection of the internet was not stable all the time and sometimes the devices to operate this process were broken or did not work well, and it needed time to fix it which influenced the distance learning process.

Another issue is that not all of the teachers have the ability to adapt easily to technology. Because this is the new one, it is necessary to train and equip them with this skill so that they could teach confidently and comfortably and make the learning objective can be achieved. Based on teachers' opinion, they think that using technology in teaching is important now. And from the interview it seems that they actually use Google classroom just for testing and uploading tasks not for the teaching process now. They considered that the students are still enthusiastic with the paper-based test rather than using Google classroom. Because it is still a new application and they did not get used to using it. But it could change over time, if the students are often using it; they will adapt and get used to with this one.

The other problem is time allotment. The English teacher stated that;

"... because distance learning takes more time in the beginning because it has never been conducted distance learning and uses technology." (ET05)

"Then it takes time for preparation and checks whether students have it or not." (ET06)

For the English teacher to manage the classroom was not the easy task. The teacher should manage the time and decide the material. As the result, she could only teach of materials among several targets. Besides, the students take more time to connect of find the stable internet connection, the teacher should set and strict the deadline for students to

upload their tasks. In fact, sometimes some students forget if there are some tasks to complete in Google classroom at certain schedule.

The strengths and weaknesses of using technology in the distance learning are also explained by Mulyono (2016). Interactions among students and teachers also promoted linguistic production. Besides the benefits, the Google classroom also appeared the weaknesses, such as lack of immediate feedback that can recognize words and spoken because the limitation of the interaction between the teacher and the students. The teacher only responded to the students who ask in the comment chat box.

"... it was difficult to give feedback to children who do not understand the scores are low but don't want to ask questions in the comment box." (ET16)

"It was also difficult to interact with the students, not face to face directly, sometimes there were students who are easy to understand, sometimes they didn't, as long as they are filling in, copy and paste their friends' assignments, or googling on the internet. (ET17)

The researcher found the weakness of the tool device such as Lack of communication and interaction that can recognize words and spoken expressions as an interaction between the teacher and students in the google classroom.

By using google classroom is also not effective to cover the speaking skill activity. The English teacher said;

All skills can be done, but it is difficult for teaching speaking skills, for example on procedure text. Most of the time, students just send the script, then give me the questions. (ET18)

Because if you are given an example using a video or later the assignment via video often fails to send it to Google Classroom, yes the signal is weak, especially here the lights often go out. (ET19)

Therefore, sometimes I find it very difficult to reach all the material in the syllabus. (ET20) I only teach material if it is important that I prioritize. (ET21)

Using Google Classroom, to upload video is difficult due to poor internet connection. The teacher should work hard when she tried to send or add the video in Google classroom menu. It was same with the students' problem. The students' sometime skip the speaking task that was given by the English teacher as they found difficulty to download the task. The last problem is students' bad fairness of their assignments. Some of the students just copied of their friends' work or searched oh google machine.

DISCUSSION

The use of Google Classroom is widely used by the educational community, but very few studies have studied teacher's lived-experience of using google classroom, especially without any good preparation such as in technology-use skill and sufficient experience. Also, most of the previous studies were restricted to examining the attitudes of students and teachers toward Google Classroom. The examples of the study are conducted by

Apriyanti, Syarif, Ramadhan, Zaim, and Agustina (2019); Heggart and Yoo (2018); Ventayen, Estira, De Guzman, Cabaluna, and Espinosa (2018); Al-Emran and Malik (2016); Al-Marooof and Al-Emran (2018); Wijaya (2016) Shaharanee, Jamil, and Rodzi (2016b), and Iftakhar (2016), Dewi, Zahrowi, and Setyawati (2020)

The first Study found in Albashtawi (2020) who examined the effect of Google Classroom on reading and writing performance of EFL students in Jordan. It also attempted to investigate the attitudes of the students toward using Google Classroom in terms of its ease of use, usefulness, and accessibility. The results of the first and the second research questions showed that Google Classroom positively affected the reading and writing performance of EFL students. The reading and writing test revealed that the difference between the mean pretest and posttest scores of the reading and writing test was significant, with a posttest effect size of about 53.60% and 56.77% for reading and writing, respectively.

Apriyanti et al. (2019) revealed similar results and they affirmed that use of Google Classroom is effective in facilitating the process of teaching the English Business Writing class in a paper-less program. This finding was supported by Iftakhar (2016) and Janzen (2014). Finally, there was a positive attitude among students in using Google Classroom in terms of its ease of use, usefulness, and accessibility.

The similar study about the effectiveness of Google Classroom was reported by Heggart and Yoo (2018). Their results revealed that Google Classroom increased students questioning and improved students' engagement in the classroom. The results of the third research question showed that students' attitudes toward Google Classroom in terms of its usefulness, ease of use, and accessibility were positive. According to the results, the usefulness of Google Classroom was ranked first, ease of use was ranked second, and accessibility was ranked as third by the students. These results came in tandem with Al-Emran and Malik (2016), Al-Marooof and AlEmran (2018), Heggart and Yoo (2018), Hemrungrote, Jakkaew, and Assawaboonmee (2017), Iftakhar (2016), Shaharanee et al. (2016a), Ventayen et al. (2018), and Wijaya, (2016), who affirmed the overall positive attitudes of students toward Google Classroom. Thus, the features of Google Classroom have encouraged students to accept it.

Ventayen et al. (2018) investigated the practicality of Google Classroom in adopting and employing it among students in the Philippines. Based on their results, the respondents asserted that Google Classroom was useful. Accordingly, the study posited that the e-learning platform for Pangasinan State University, Lingayen Campus was fruitful. Al-Emran and Malik (2016) conducted a similar survey in the Omani EFL context and collected data regarding the usage of Google Classroom. According to their results, Google Applications were positively perceived by both administrative and academic personnel. In

addition, Google Applications were significantly welcomed by the institutions of higher education. Al-Marooof and Al-Emran (2018) studied the acceptance of Google Classroom by students of Al Buraimi University College, Oman. Their results demonstrated a positive effect of both perceived ease of use and usefulness among the students.

Furthermore, Shaharane, Jamil, and Rodzi (2016) studied the effectiveness of active learning activities for data mining subjects by applying Google Classroom application. Their results affirmed that most of the students were satisfied with the tools of Google Classroom. In summary, the features of Google Classroom, the clear and good implementation of the program, and the positive attitudes of students and instructors toward Google Classroom assisted in the improvement of the students' reading and writing performance. Thus, it is essential to understand the objectives of employing technology in the classroom. Furthermore, understanding the method of using technology in an appropriate way would help in improving the teaching and learning process.

On the contrary study is from Dewi, Zahrowi, and Setyawati (2020), the result of the using google classroom in ELT had some obstacles. It encountered in the learning processes were unstable internet connection in the school and unskilled teachers to operate the application. Therefore, using technology has to consider the devices and sophisticated equipment to support a better system in the learning process.

CONCLUSION

Google is a learning tool system that can be applied to help the teaching and learning process during distance learning. Indeed, Google Classroom proposed a brand-new way of transferring English material to students from which they felt joy and facilitated to learn English. However, the quality of internet connection, time allotment, lack of immediate feedback, lack of communication and interaction, Not effective for some materials especially speaking skill, Students' bad fairness of their assignment in the process. The applicability of Google Classroom in Pandemic era is helping to facilitate between the teacher and the students to continue the learning process. Lastly, the stakeholders of distance learning that is really needed by the existence of the application during distance learning.

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