



Investigating Postgraduate Students' Perceptions Toward Learning ESP Via Google Classrooms Platform

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Abstract

Postgraduate students in Iraqi universities study English language as English for specific purpose (ESP) and also English for general purpose (EGP). English is taught as foreign language in Iraqi schools and universities. Using technology in teaching has witnessed wide spread all over the world in recent years. Technology has provided opportunity to learn outside classroom which becomes an instrument of teaching and learning. The most available and authentic way of teaching via technology is using the free Google Classroom Platform (GCP). Teaching via GCP provides real connection between teacher and learners, authentic materials from live sources, multimedia aids, peer cooperation and feedback, grading systems, and assignments. To this end, the aim of the present study is to reveal postgraduate students' perceptions toward learning ESP via Google Classroom Platform (GCP). To achieve the aim of the study, the following question was set: "What are postgraduate students' perceptions toward learning ESP via Google Classroom Platform (GCP)?" The participants were 24 postgraduate students who study English language course as ESP from Department of Arabic, College of Arts, University of Anbar during the first academic year 2019-2020. To collect the data of the study, an attitudinal questionnaire was built. Its validity and reliability were calculated. The findings reveal that there are positive attitudes toward learning via GCP. It is a method that develops learners' language ability in a joyful and interesting way.

Keywords: Postgraduate Students; Perceptions; Learning ESP; Google Classrooms Platform.

التحقيق في تصورات طلاب الدراسات العليا نحو تعلم اللغة الانجليزية كلغة أجنبية عبر منصة جوجل للفصول الدراسية

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المستخلص

يدرسون طلبة الدراسات العليا في الجامعات العراقية اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة إنجليزية لأغراض خاصة والإنجليزية للأغراض العامة. يتم تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في المدارس والجامعات العراقية. شهد استخدام التكنولوجيا في التدريس انتشارًا واسعًا في جميع أنحاء العالم في السنوات الأخيرة. وفرت التكنولوجيا فرصة للتعليم خارج الفصل الدراسي الذي أصبح أداة للتعليم والتعلم. أكثر طرق التعليم المتوفرة والواقعية عبر التكنولوجيا هو استخدام منصة جوجل للفصول الدراسية المجانية. يوفر التدريس عبر منصة الفصول الدراسية اتصالًا حقيقيًا بين المعلم والمتعلمين، والمواد الأصلية من المصادر الحية، ووسائل مساعدة الوسائط المتعددة، والتعاون بين الأقران، والتغذية الراجعة، وأنظمة الدرجات المتنوعة، ومنح الواجبات. تحقيقًا لهذه الغاية، تهدف الدراسة الى الكشف عن تصورات طلاب الدراسات العليا تجاه تعلم اللغة الانجليزية لاغراض خاصة عبر منصة جوجل للفصول الدراسية. ولتحقيق هدف الدراسة، تم صياغة السؤال التالي "ما هي تصورات طلبة الدراسات العليا تجاه تعلم اللغة الانجليزية لاغراض خاصى عبر منصة جوجل للفصول الدراسية؟" كان المشاركون ٢٤ طالبًا للدراسات العليا يدرسون مساق اللغة الإنجليزية لاغراض خاصة من قسم اللغة العربية، كلية الآداب، جامعة الأنبار خلال العام الدراسي الأول ٢٠١٩-٢٠٢٠. لجمع بيانات الدراسة، تم بناء استبيان الاتجاهات. تم حساب الصدق والثبات بالوسائل الاحصائية. كشفت النتائج أن هناك مواقف إيجابية تجاه التعلم عبر منصة جوجل للفصول الدراسية. لقد طورت الطريقة قابلية الطلبة في اللغة الانجليزية بطريقة ممتعة ومرحة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التصورات، طلبة الدراسات العليا، تعلم اللغة الانجليزية كلغة أجنبي، منصة جوجل للفصول الدراسية.

Statement of Problem

Recently, many teachers and instructors use Google Classroom platform (GCP) as a free and available tool in teaching. Harjanto and Sumarni (2019); Al-Marroof and Al-Emran (2018); Muslimah (2018); Rabbi, et al. (2018); Basher (2017); and DiCicco (2016) use GCP as a tool of teaching inside and outside classroom. Postgraduate students learn English language as ESP and English for General Purpose (EGP) for two hours per-week in one semester during the Master programme. To learn ESP materials and EGP textbook within two hours a week is not enough, thus the English language instructors need to use technology to save time and to fulfill the aim of the course. After reviewing the literature, the researcher realizes that the most available, authentic, and useable tool to be utilized is the GCP.

Question of the Study

The study seeks to answer the following question: What are postgraduate students' perceptions toward learning ESP via Google Classroom Platform (GCP)?

Aim of the Study

The study aims to reveal postgraduate students' perceptions, who learn ESP via GCP for 8 weeks, toward learning ESP via GCP.

Limits of the Study

The study is limited to the following:

- 1- Participants: the participants were all the postgraduate students (N=24) who study English language course as ESP from Department of Arabic, College of Arts, University of Anbar.
- 2- Duration: the study conducted in the first semester of the academic year 2019-2020.
- 3- Instrument: to achieve the aim of the study, a questionnaire was used to collect the data of the study.
- 4- Place: the place of conducting the study was at University of Anabr, College of Arts.

Literature Review

Learning via mobile device becomes one of our potential part of our life, it is our life's partner (Al-Khayyat, 2019: 213). Technology was quickly introduced in the teaching and learning phase, and the concept technology became synonymous with education sector. Due to the combination of technology and digital instructing, technology has provided the learners with inexperienced strategies of learning and new pedagogical ideas have arisen. Conventional methods are tools to support the new wave in learning and education (Al-Khayyat, 2019: 1374).

The new communication systems in classroom technology provides a promising tool to help educators build a more engaging, student centered classroom, particularly while teaching large courses (Basher, 2017: 46).

Technology can help learners build a bridge that links their reading text to the realistic real-world situation which computer programs visually pose. Technology helps learners with different levels to achieve the aim of learning. Thus, integrating technology with learning English language can be a motivation factor that develops learners' performances (DiCicco, 2016: 3).

In the present study, when the researcher uses Google Classroom (GC), he finds that GC is a platform for instructors to establish a digital classroom for their students to teach them the target material and to create peer interaction in virtual classroom atmosphere. GC is a free hand platform that enable the instructor and learners to send and receive emails, documents (word, Pdf, excel, PowerPoint), assignments, videos, voice print, and multimedia. Also, the instructors and the learner can edit their tasks at any time even after sending them. Learners can submit their tasks and activities to instructor's personal board or/and on GC platform. When learners exchange information via oral or written chatting, the instructor can enhance their debates by providing feedback.

Concerning instructors' perspectives toward using GC in education, DiCicco (2016) states that:

Teachers were satisfied with using Google Classroom in class because of its easy learning and adaptation to meet student needs. They also liked to assign students writing such as Do Nows and CNN Students News. Technology

can serve as a useful tool in instruction, but teachers need to know how to integrate technology into their teaching, and how to meet their student needs. Google Classroom may be considered as a program for resources in the classroom for teachers and students (p44).

GC is a modern education blended platform which facilitates teaching and learning process and grading exams and assignments. GC saves teacher's time by providing enough time to communicate and interact with students, than spending time in doing paperwork, and also allows time for preparing class before starting teaching (Rabbi and Zakaria, 2018).

There are advantages that GCP provides for the users. Rabbi, et al. (2018: 3) mention some of GC advantages as follows:

- 1- GCP is easy to use and deal with.
- 2- GCP offers digit authentic teaching and learning materials.
- 3- GCP is free of charge. There is no fee to use it.
- 4- GCP can be used from any smart mobile device and its applications are designed to be quick to respond.
- 5- GCP save both instructors and learners time.

Google as pedagogy norm, it's the only program that Google has designed exclusively for teachers and students as a part of the Google App. Google classroom can either be used as an app by downloading it on smart phones, or as a desktop edition in the home Google's curriculum can be used as a tool in a very innovative way for practicing English language four skills (Islam, 2019:59).

In the present study, the participants practice the English four skills. Following is a brief presentation of participants' practicing GCP during conducting the experiment. Concerning writing skill, the researcher asked the participants to write an essay based on their own experience (free topic), and they are asked to upload each one in the Google classroom assignment

section where only the researcher is allowed to see and read each written topic. Concerning reading skill, the researcher uploads reading texts and supports them with reading strategies such as scanning, skimming, and intensive reading. These strategies are examined by uploading exercises that required from participants to solve them by using the mentioned strategies. Concerning speaking skill, the researcher uploads films, voice print record, and videos, and then asked participants to make their own video, voice print record, and/ or film where each of them would be assigned to address some common yet different themes. Concerning listening skill, the researcher uploads a short time movie (3 minutes), songs and dialogues. These activities are accompanied with files (word form) that contain questions related to the listening activities. When the participants resend their answers to the researcher platform, a feedback is given to each sheet of answer. During listening activity, listening strategies were applied, such as pre-listening strategy, during listening strategy, and after listening strategy.

Related Studies

Studies that investigate students' perceptions and attitudes toward learning or using Google Classroom platform in learning English language are very limited.

Islam (2019) investigated learners attitudes (specifically the advantages and challenges) of the technology-based application of Google Classroom for English language.. The participants of the study were 60 students (30 male and 30 female students) of Daffodil International University, Bangladesh. An online survey using Google Forms was used to gather and compare participants' responses. The findings reveal that the most important challenge facing the learners is their lack of appropriate Google Classroom technological knowledge. Learners also listed some of the technical obstacles they encountered when using Google classrooms, for example, lack of private messaging options, barriers to the use of Google classrooms with different domain e-mail addresses. Finally, Google Classroom facilitates English learning; learners can communicate with each other, as well as with the teachers. Teachers all along play a facilitator's role in a classroom.

Al-Marouf and Al-Emran (2018) investigated the factors affecting the acceptance of Google classroom by the students at Al Buraimi University College (BUC) in Oman. The participants were 305 students at the end of the academic year 2016. An online questionnaire was used to collect the data of the study. The results of the study revealed that both the perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness positively affect the behavioral intention, which in turn influence the actual usage of Google classrooms.

Sepyanda (2018) investigated students' Attitude towards using Google Classroom as a framework used to obtain their assignment on the subject of Translation. Third year students from English Department FKIP UMMY Solok participated in the academic year 2017/2018 consisting of nine students. A questionnaire was used to collect the data of the study. The result of this study revealed that the attitude of the students towards using Google Classroom in collecting their assignment on the topic of Translation was positive. Also, the Google Classroom can be used as an effective tool for gathering homework from pupils, in particular in the field of Translation.

To sum up, the findings of the previous studies reveal that Google Classroom has positive effect on developing learners' achievement, and also there is positive attitude toward using Google Classroom in learning English language. The present study investigates Iraqi postgraduate students' attitudes toward learning English language as ESP.

Methodology

Participants of the Study

The participants of the study were 24 postgraduate students who study English language course as ESP from Department of Arabic, College of Arts, University of Anbar, during the first semester of the academic year 2019-2020.

Instrument of the Study

After exposing to the experiment of learning ESP via Google Classroom platform, the researcher distributed open questions to the participants to elicit their attitudes toward learning ESP via GCP. After gathering participants' answers, the researcher built a questionnaire consisted of 16 items. The Questionnaire's validity and reliability were extracted. The questionnaire

consisted 10 items in its final form. The researcher uploads an online questionnaire on GCP to be responded.

Results of the Study

The participants' responses on the items of the online questionnaire were analyzed by using percentage ratio. To answer the question of the study "What are postgraduate students' perceptions toward learning ESP via Google Classroom Platform (GCP)?" a percentage ration was used to analyze each item of the questionnaire. Table 1 shows the percentage of participants' responses.

Table 1: the percentage ratio of the participants' responses on the items of the questionnaire.

1= Agree. / 2= Neutral. / 3= Disagree.

No	Items	1	2	3
1.	It is easy to access to Google Classroom Platform (GCP) from any place, time, and device regardless of platform.	86.00	14.00	0.00
2.	It is easy to access to all files uploaded by instructor and learners which are stored in a GCP folders.	84.00	14.00	2.00
3.	The absences student can access to miss lecture and also get feedback.	77.00	16.00	7.00
4.	Instructor and students have more free time to complete tasks.	92.00	8.00	0.00
5.	Instructor has full control over learners' comments and posts.	91.00	9.00	0.00
6.	GCP offers learners many ways to collaborate, and offers different methods to make learning interactive and collaborative.	93.00	7.00	0.00
7.	Instructor can provide different instructions to learners. Also, can assign lessons to the whole class, to individual learners, or/ and to groups of learners.	96.00	3.00	1.00
8.	Instructor can send feedback to each learner on assignments, and can send general feedback to all learners.	98.00	2.00	0.00
9.	GCP needs long time technical practice from the learners	1.00	8.00	91.00
10.	I feel uncomfortable that I cannot share my work with peers, but only distribute the works on the platform.	88.00	7.00	5.00

Table 1 shows that the highest percentage ratio was for the scale “Agree” for the positive item, and for the negative item the highest percentage ratio was for the scale “Disagree”. These results indicate that there is positive perception toward learning ESP via Google Classroom Platform toward learning. The highest percentage is for the item entitled “Instructor can provide different instructions to learners. Also, can assign lessons to the whole class, to individual learners, or/ and to groups of learners” with ration 98%. Then came the item entitled “GCP offers learners many ways to collaborate, and offers different methods to make learning interactive and collaborative” with ration 93%. Concerning the negative items, the highest percentage was for the item entitled “GCP needs long time technical practice from the learners” with ration 91%, that means 91% of participants disagree that they need long time training course to use Google Classroom.

Discussion of the Result

The result of the study reveals that there is positive perception toward learning ESP via Google Classroom Platform toward learning. This positive perception is derived from participants’ real use of GCP for 8 weeks. The participants found GC a good method that helped them to learn ESP subject. At the beginning of the course, the participants were worried of the difficulty of the course due to their poor background in English language. When they learn ESP via GCP they found themselves engaging with an interesting method of learning that facilitate the process of learning. When the participants set for exam via GCP, they show positive motivation to do the exam as a mean of evaluating their progress. They were very happy when they got their exam result online.

The finding of the study is in line with the findings of the study of Islam (2019), Al-Marouf and Al-Emran (2018), and Sepyanda (2018), the finding of the present study add to the Iraqi literature that the postgraduate students have positive perspectives toward using GCP in learning English language in general and ESP in specific.



Recommendations

Based on the finding of the study, the researcher recommends using GCP in teaching English language in Iraqi universities for both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Also, to hold training courses for the instructors who have difficulties in using GCP and trains both learners and instructors for using GCP to facilitate learning process and develop learners technical and language competences.

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