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Exploring Students' Perceptions of Google Classroom in English Reading Instruction: Benefits and Challenges in EFL Learning

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Abstract

This study examines students' perceptions of Google Classroom as a tool for English reading instruction, utilizing Davis' (1989) Technology Acceptance Model to explore the interplay of perceived usefulness and ease of use in shaping their experiences. Employing a qualitative research design, data were collected through semi-structured interviews with five second-semester English education students selected through purposive sampling. Thematic analysis revealed both positive and negative perceptions of the platform. Positive perceptions centered on its accessibility, usefulness, efficiency, flexibility, and user-friendly features, which supported students in organizing tasks, managing time, and accessing learning materials seamlessly. However, challenges included dependence on stable internet connections and limited interactivity, which hindered collaborative learning and engagement. These findings underscore the dual nature of Google Classroom as both a facilitator and a constraint in digital learning environments. The study highlights the need for improved infrastructure, professional development for educators, and integration of supplementary tools to address identified limitations. The results contribute to the growing body of literature on technology-enhanced learning and offer practical implications for optimizing the use of digital tools in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education. Future research should explore blended learning models and the integration of interactive tools to enhance the effectiveness of LMS platforms in fostering active and equitable learning experiences.

Keywords: *Google Classroom, Reading, Perception, Student Perception.*

INTRODUCTION

Technology has become an integral part of education, significantly transforming teaching and learning practices to create more meaningful learning experiences (Sumardi & Muamaroh, 2020). The rapid advancements in technology and the internet have redefined educational environments, contributing to improved quality of education. E-learning systems, as noted by Kostolanyova and Nedbalova (2017), have emerged as essential tools, particularly for English language learners seeking to enhance their communicative skills. Digital classrooms, facilitated by technology, allow students to interact effectively with teachers,

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peers, and educational content both within and beyond the traditional classroom setting (Sumardi & Muamaroh, 2020). Notably, digital learning requires higher levels of student engagement and interaction compared to conventional face-to-face learning.

One of the platforms that has gained widespread adoption in education is the Learning Management System (LMS). Research has shown that LMS platforms, such as Google Classroom, play a pivotal role in enhancing teaching and learning processes due to their accessibility, flexibility, and cost-effectiveness (Chaubey & Bhattacharya, 2015; Alvares in Basal, 2016). These systems have revolutionized how English as a Foreign Language (EFL) is taught, providing students with diverse opportunities to improve their language skills in interactive and engaging ways (Wahyudin, 2018).

Among the various LMS tools, Google Classroom stands out as a widely used platform, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. It offers educators and students a flexible, user-friendly, and resource-rich environment for managing learning activities (Northey, Bucic, Chylinski, & Govind, 2015). The platform supports task distribution, assessment, and communication, making it a vital tool for continuing education amidst challenges posed by physical distance (Al Bashtawi & Al Bataineh, 2020). Furthermore, Google Classroom enhances learning by offering students the autonomy to learn at their own pace, promoting collaboration, and providing a dynamic space for academic interaction (Rozak & Albantani, 2018; Shaharanee et al., 2016).

Understanding students' perceptions of Google Classroom is critical for assessing its effectiveness as a tool for EFL teaching. Positive student perceptions can validate the platform's continued use, while negative feedback may indicate the need for alternative tools or strategies. Perceptions provide valuable insights into usability, ease of access, and overall satisfaction, which are essential for designing effective learning experiences (Qudratullah et al., 2020). This study explores EFL students' perceptions of Google Classroom, focusing on its usability, simplicity, and accessibility, to evaluate its suitability for English language teaching.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative research design, utilizing semi-structured in-depth interviews as the primary data collection method to explore participants' perceptions and experiences in-depth. The participants consisted of five female second-semester students majoring in English education, selected through a purposive sampling technique to ensure they met specific inclusion criteria relevant to the research objectives. Initial data collection was conducted using a Google Form survey, which garnered 33 responses. However, after careful analysis, one duplicate response was removed, and 26 responses were excluded as they did not meet the inclusion criteria, primarily because they were from final-semester students outside the target group. The final sample comprised five valid and eligible participants. Data were collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews, a technique highlighted by Boyce and Neale (2006) as effective for exploring complex issues and obtaining nuanced insights. Open-ended questions were used to allow participants to articulate their experiences with Google Classroom in their English education courses, ensuring the data was both comprehensive and contextually relevant.

Data analysis was conducted using the framework proposed by Miles and Huberman (2014), which involves three systematic stages: data reduction, data display, and drawing and verifying conclusions. In the data reduction stage, the raw data obtained from interviews were

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organized, simplified, and focused on identifying key themes, patterns, and recurring ideas related to participants' experiences. In the data display stage, relevant data were presented in an organized format, such as matrices, tables, or narrative summaries, to facilitate interpretation and highlight relationships between themes and categories. Finally, conclusions were drawn and verified by cross-checking and validating the findings to ensure accuracy and credibility. Ethical considerations were strictly adhered to throughout the research process. Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection, and they were assured of confidentiality and anonymity. The data were securely stored and used solely for research purposes to uphold ethical standards.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of the interview transcripts revealed that participants held both positive and negative perceptions of Google Classroom as a tool for learning English reading skills. These perceptions were framed using Davis' (1989) Technology Acceptance Model, which emphasizes perceived usefulness and ease of use in shaping user attitudes toward technology. The findings are categorized into positive and negative perceptions, with sub-themes detailing the participants' experiences and viewpoints.

Positive Perceptions

Positive perceptions of Google Classroom were grouped into several themes: accessibility, usefulness, efficiency, helpful features, and flexibility.

1. Accessibility

Participants highlighted the ease of accessing Google Classroom as a significant advantage. ES stated, "Easy accessibility makes it available anytime and anywhere, as long as there is an adequate network." NTD echoed this sentiment, noting, "The service can be accessed through various devices, such as computers, tablets, and mobile phones, even with less stable internet connections." Another participant (ES) mentioned that "the platform is designed to be user-friendly and not overly complicated, making it practical for students." The simplicity of accessing materials and assignments through shared links was also emphasized, as ES observed, "Assignments are collected in one place, reducing the need to switch between platforms."

2. Usefulness

Google Classroom was praised for its effectiveness in managing and facilitating the reading learning process. NTD commented, "Google Classroom is very useful in my Reading class because it allows for structured management of materials, assignments, and interactions." WNP shared a similar perspective, stating, "The platform eliminates the need to attend physical classes, enabling students to access everything remotely." NDS further elaborated, "Google Classroom is particularly helpful when students or lecturers cannot attend class due to busy schedules, allowing learning to continue seamlessly from home."

3. Efficiency

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Efficiency was another key strength identified by participants. ES observed, "The app serves as a reminder, with notifications helping to ensure tasks are not forgotten." NTD added, "Google Classroom organizes materials and assignments clearly, making it easy for students to collaborate and interact with lecturers." WNP highlighted the convenience of using Google Classroom as a centralized platform for submitting assignments, stating, "There is no need to use multiple applications; everything can be uploaded to Google Classroom."

4. Helpful Features

Participants appreciated the features offered by Google Classroom, which enhanced their learning experience. SN noted, "The features are user-friendly and designed to simplify the learning process." ES remarked, "Assignments, quizzes, and exams are neatly organized, making it easier for students to meet deadlines." Additionally, NTD highlighted that the platform provides "easy access to learning materials and clear explanations from lecturers."

5. Flexibility

The flexibility of Google Classroom was frequently mentioned as a benefit. SN explained, "The platform provides reminders about assignment deadlines, helping students manage their time effectively." WNP emphasized, "Notifications ensure students stay updated on important announcements, enhancing the overall learning process." NDS added, "The notification feature is particularly helpful for students who might forget deadlines or schedules, ensuring that important information is always remembered."

Negative Perceptions

Despite its many advantages, participants identified some challenges and limitations of Google Classroom, including dependence on stable internet connections and limited interactivity.

1. Dependence on Stable Internet

Participants pointed out that the platform's reliance on a stable internet connection posed significant challenges. SN stated, "Uploading assignments becomes difficult when the network is poor." NDS further explained, "Students in remote areas face issues with limited network access and data packages, making it challenging to use Google Classroom effectively." Technical difficulties, such as inaccessible assignment links or files, were also reported.

2. Limited Interactivity

Some participants felt that Google Classroom lacked interactive features to support effective learning. SN observed, "Learning to read cannot fully improve our understanding because it is difficult to ask the teacher directly about unfamiliar vocabulary." Participants also noted a reliance on external tools like Google Translate, which sometimes provided inaccurate translations and caused confusion.

Discussion

The findings of this study illustrate both positive and negative perceptions of Google Classroom as a tool for English reading instruction. These perceptions align with Davis' (1989)

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Technology Acceptance Model, emphasizing how perceived usefulness and ease of use influence the adoption of educational technologies. This discussion interprets the findings within the context of prior research and theoretical frameworks, focusing on their implications for EFL learning environments.

Students expressed positive perceptions of Google Classroom regarding its accessibility, usefulness, efficiency, and features. These findings are consistent with Shaharanee, Jamil, and Rodzi (2016), who noted that Learning Management Systems (LMS) like Google Classroom enable access to learning materials anytime and anywhere, fostering equitable educational opportunities. Such accessibility is particularly beneficial for students in geographically diverse or underserved areas. Additionally, the compatibility of Google Classroom with various devices ensures inclusivity, supporting learners with differing technological resources. Zimmerman (2002) argued that such features promote self-regulated learning by enabling students to manage their study schedules and engage with materials independently.

The platform's usefulness in organizing educational materials and facilitating task management aligns with research by Al-Maroof and Al-Emran (2018), who found that Google Classroom enhances students' learning experiences by streamlining communication and assignment submissions. The participants in this study appreciated the platform's notification features, which encouraged timely submissions and helped develop better time management skills. This aligns with findings by Jaber and Hussein (2021), who highlighted the importance of task tracking tools in supporting academic discipline among students.

Google Classroom's features, such as centralized task management and clear communication channels, were seen as integral to improving the learning process. As noted by Pradana and Harimurti (2017), these functionalities enhance the effectiveness of online classrooms by providing a structured and interactive environment. However, the findings also revealed that some features were underutilized due to limited training for educators. This aligns with Vadivel et al., (2021) and Al-Matroushi & Alkiyum, (2022)., who stressed the need for professional development programs to ensure educators can leverage LMS platforms effectively. Such training could maximize the benefits of Google Classroom, particularly in fostering student engagement and collaboration.

Despite its advantages, the study also identified challenges, particularly regarding internet dependency and limited interactivity. Participants highlighted that reliance on stable internet connections poses significant barriers, particularly for students in remote areas. This echoes findings by Abidin and Saputro (2020), who noted that digital platforms often exacerbate existing inequalities in educational access. To address these challenges, policymakers and educational institutions must prioritize improving internet infrastructure and providing affordable data packages for students. Such initiatives are critical for ensuring equal access to digital learning tools.

The lack of interactivity in Google Classroom emerged as another limitation, particularly in supporting collaborative learning and active engagement. Participants emphasized the difficulty of asking real-time questions and receiving immediate feedback, which are essential for effective learning. These findings align with Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivist theory, which emphasizes the importance of interaction in cognitive development. Integrating supplementary tools such as Zoom or Google Meet could address this limitation by enabling real-time discussions and collaborative activities. Additionally, students' reliance on external tools like Google Translate for vocabulary learning highlights the need for enhanced instructional support to develop reading comprehension strategies.

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The theoretical and practical implications of this study are significant. The findings contribute to the literature on technology-enhanced learning by validating the strengths of Google Classroom while emphasizing areas for improvement. Practically, the study underscores the need for comprehensive training programs to help educators utilize LMS platforms effectively. Institutions should also consider adopting blended learning models to mitigate the limitations of online-only approaches. By combining online and face-to-face instruction, educators can leverage the strengths of digital tools while addressing their shortcomings.

CONCLUSION

This study explored students' perceptions of Google Classroom as a tool for learning English reading skills, providing insights into its strengths and limitations. The findings indicate that Google Classroom is perceived positively in terms of accessibility, usefulness, efficiency, and flexibility. Students appreciated the platform's ability to facilitate task organization, provide timely notifications, and enable seamless access to learning materials across various devices. These features contribute to fostering independent learning, time management, and academic discipline among learners.

However, the study also revealed challenges associated with the use of Google Classroom, including its reliance on stable internet connections and limited interactivity. The dependence on internet access presents significant barriers for students in remote or underserved areas, highlighting the need for improved technological infrastructure. The platform's lack of real-time interaction capabilities further underscores the necessity for integrating complementary tools to enhance engagement and collaborative learning.

The implications of these findings extend to both theory and practice. From a theoretical perspective, this study reinforces the applicability of the Technology Acceptance Model in understanding how perceived usefulness and ease of use influence the adoption of educational technology. Practically, the results suggest that institutions should prioritize investments in internet infrastructure and provide professional development opportunities to equip educators with the skills to maximize the potential of digital tools. Additionally, adopting blended learning approaches can address some of the platform's limitations by combining the strengths of online and face-to-face instruction.

Overall, while Google Classroom offers significant benefits for EFL learning, addressing its limitations is essential to maximize its effectiveness. By implementing targeted interventions, educators and institutions can create more inclusive, interactive, and effective digital learning environments, ultimately enhancing students' educational experiences and outcomes. Future research should consider exploring the integration of supplementary tools and the impact of blended learning models on mitigating the identified challenges.

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