

International Journal of English Language & Translation Studies

ISSN: 2308-5460



Effectiveness of Using *Google Classroom* as a Blended Learning with the Libyan EFL Learners at Sebha University

[PP: 31-37]

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ABSTRACT

The implementation of a blended learning strategy requires a learning management system that is stable and accessible by both teachers and students. Google Classroom is a learning management system with significantly increased acceptance because of its stability and ease of use. This study aimed to investigate the effectiveness of using Google classroom in language learning by Libyan university students. The study used a mixed method design (quantitative and qualitative) in which both a questionnaire and interviews were used as instruments to collect the data. The questionnaires were distributed to 90 Libyan EFL undergraduate students from different colleges at Sebha University. Additionally, in-depth-interviews were carried out to offer a deeper understanding of the objectives of the study. The results revealed that using Google classroom in learning was effective to a great extent in which Libyan students had positive attitudes towards Google Classroom. They felt using online technology facilitated them to learn and to communicate with teachers and classmates. Further, the findings showed that the use of Google Classroom was valuable. The findings also demonstrated that Libyan EFL learners have positive perceptions towards using Google classroom in learning English.

Keywords: *Effectiveness, Google Classroom, Learning Media, Libyan Students, EFL*

ARTICLE INFO	The paper received on	Reviewed on	Accepted after revisions on
	02/04/2021	25/05/2021	02/07/2021

Suggested citation:

Abdalla, A., Aljheme, E. & Abdulhadi, F. (2021). Effectiveness of Using *Google Classroom* as a Blended Learning with the Libyan EFL Learners at Sebha University. *International Journal of English Language & Translation Studies*. 9(2). 31-37.

1. Introduction

The world has entered the era of globalization, starting competitions to create and implement new technologies in the developed countries. Nowadays, the development of technology is growing rapidly. One of the most effective ways of mastering this technology is through introducing technology in the world of education. Technology is perhaps the strongest factor shaping the educational process today. Richard and Haya (2009) state that the Internet has become one of the most vital methods to acquire information for both teachers and students. Further, Fry (2001) asserts that technology-based e-learning includes the use of the Internet to produce learning materials.

Indeed, online learning is in constant development. It is widely adopted by educational institutions. It has recently become an integral part of the modern-day

teaching process. In fact, the pandemic situation of COVID-19 has increased the necessity to adopt such alternative methods that force the use of online education for the study programs to continue. Thus, online teaching becomes an obligatory means of teaching/learning. In a regular situation, online teaching does not obtain much attention in Libyan schools and universities.

According to Gallagher and Dobrosielski (2005), blending learning offers a lot of advantages comparing to face-to-face learning. The advantages lie in its accessibility, flexibility, and adaptability for use. In the present time, teaching and learning process is different from the past. The traditional teaching method is held face-to-face while today's classes utilize various technology-aided methods for teaching. Therefore, teachers need to encourage students to equip themselves with the use of technical programs used in universities.



Blending learning leads to change the traditional instructions which provide students with the opportunities in motivating and submitting their work online. *Google classroom* is a type of blended learning used to achieve a specific function such as simplifying student-teacher communication, ease of distributing materials, and grading assignments. Artino and Stephens (2009) state that learners should be motivated and engaged in the learning process. Blending learning enhances learners' performance. Heijink (2017) mentions that teachers and learners can create a virtual Google account for educational purposes. *Google classroom* has obtained a wide acceptance in educational institutions because it is independent and uncomplicated to use.

Google Classroom enables both teachers and students to share the materials, assignments, questions, and even connecting students. The teachers can easily manage the class from their smart phones. No more paper is needed for assignments, notes, or quizzes. Students can do the assignment and submit it in the folder provided by the teacher in the application

1.1 Aims of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effectiveness of the use of Google Classroom as blended learning in teaching courses to students at Sebha University. This study is an attempt to find out students' performance at *Google classroom*. The study is significantly raising the awareness of the academic staff to the effectiveness of using *Google Classroom* application in the teaching process. The present study seeks to examine the role of Google classroom an effective means for learning English among Libyan EFL learners. This study attempts to answer the following research questions by knowing students' performance in English language course through *Google Classroom* at Sebha University.

Q1- To what extent can Google Classroom affects Libyan EFL students' performance?

Q2 -What are students' responses on the use of Google Classroom in teaching the English Language at Sebha University?

Online learning has been developed years ago and it has become an integral part of modern teaching. However, it has not been fully utilized in Libyan institutions and universities. Universities are devising alternative ways of delivering their programs. In deciding which alternative way to choose from, it would require a better

understanding of how using *Google Classroom* can affect students' performance. This study focuses on students' responses to using *Google Classroom* at Sebha University. In the light of the aforementioned situation, the problem which this study aims at addressing is the lack of collaborative approaches in teaching language. Students may lack confidence in their ability, therefore, they could not achieve their task maximally. Students feel shy to ask or comment to the lecturer about the lesson. It is interesting to note that there is surprisingly weak empirical evidence within the students' performance while using blended learning as a teaching method.

Different innovations of language learning have been brought to the higher education programs to be merged with the traditional teaching approaches. The tendency is more towards communicative language teaching than to traditional teaching. Whereas in the past, learning was in a classroom, today it is via the Internet. However, innovations in educational programs have recently been endorsed, new teaching strategies and approaches have been adopted. Language teachers are trying to bring innovations into their teaching activities. The teaching process is not a convenient task and it has to be interesting enough to remove the anxiety of learners. For this reason, language teachers need to adopt different techniques to teach language more effectively and interestingly with the rapid growth and availability of technology. Teachers are incorporating different additional arrangements and mechanisms into the education system.

2. Literature Review

Google Classroom is developed by Google for academic purposes that support -blended learning. This application is uncomplicated to use, and assists teachers and students keep on the lesson's track. Users can create a virtual class that can function as a traditional class. Iftakhar(2016) states that *Google Classroom* enables both lecturer and student to spend more time working together and spend less time on the paperwork. Further, it includes the ability to have more than one lecturer. According to Janzen (2017), *Google Classroom* has been designed to purposefully simplify the instructional link and it is used for tracking assignments; and to communicate with the whole class or the individuals through emails or other communications tools.

Bersin (2004) and Picciano (2007) state that blended learning is a simple way to expand the classroom in space and time, combining a variety of activities. Marsh(2012) asserts that the goal of blended learning is to enhance students' performance, increase students' involvement, and encourage collaborative learning. Further, it provides personalized learning. Djiwandono (2013) argues that blended learning methods improves students' vocabulary. Rohani (2016) states that e-learning supports blended learning because it facilitates communications between teachers and students.

Kintu et al (2017) report that blended learning assists students to develop self-learning, and interact online at any time. Delialioglu (2012) reports that blended learning aids learners to be active and to do more activities. Collins(1992) explains that technology provides learners a chance to seek different types of learning instead of traditional learning. Valcarcel (2014) states that both students and lecturers are satisfied with the learning process using Google Classroom and it has a positive effect on learning.

According to Chai and Tan (2010) blended learning increases students' participation in activities. Gallagher(2005) points out that Google Classroom facilitates the process of communication between the teachers and students in distributing and grading assignments. Further, it encourages students to submit their assignments online with specific deadlines. At the same time, teachers do not hesitate to return feedback to their students at any time. Accordingly, Shaharane et al(2016) explain that Google Classroom has different features which make it effective for both teachers and students. Thus, learners can keep their files organized and stored paperless in a program. Latif (2016) supports the previous view by pointing out that Google Classroom is useful in facilitating teaching and learning process. The teacher role is to facilitate and demonstrate to students the way of using the program.

Jakkaew (2017) emphasizes the self-satisfaction on students' behalf of using Google Classroom due to its usefulness, accessibility, and task completion. Accordingly, Shaharane (2016) shows that teachers can control their observations, analysis, and feedback through Google classroom. Moreover, they can introduce their courses on this effective method of learning which enabling students to succeed

in the online environment. Mafa and Desmond(2017) refers that blended learning permits learners to utilize activities and exercises in and outside the classroom. The advances in technology influencing learners to know what taking place around them. Bebell and Kay (2010) consider Google Classroom as a good way to enhance teaching and learning. Moreover, they refer to it as an important feature to be handled by both teachers and students.

According to Keppler et al,(2014) Google Classroom is a web-based learning method managed to collaborate learners and teachers. It allows the teacher to create classes online, invite the learners and start exchange course materials.

Garrison and Anderson(2002) state that technology has influenced all aspects of life not only education. It provides learners with a valuable relationship with teaching and learning processes. Smeets (2005)points out that the chances of using technology with teachers and students were great, which creates a learning environment for learners. Vykorystannia (2016) states that interactive learning of teachers and students on an online classroom creates the integrity of work between them. Also, it is creating tasks online to students realize effective learning process. Accordingly, *Google Classroom* can be used as an effective tool in active learning. That shows that teachers can constantly control their observations, and analyses of students' assignment through Google classroom technology. Students' academic performance on Google Classroom comes from communications area.

Lai and Wang (2015) express that learners are expected to be more active by using a new approach of learning which enables them to share their views and ideas to obtain knowledge. A combination of different methods and strategies in the classroom through innovative teaching support students' to achieve the desired learning objects. According to Pappas (2015), the use of *Google Classroom* as an online method of learning is effective and valuable. Moreover, *Google Classroom* can be accessed not only from computers or laptops but also tablets or smart phones. It can be accessed easily everywhere and every time . Furthermore, it can provide lecturers to initialize, share, and grade students work.

Thorne(2003) mentions that implementing blended learning in the



classroom is required because it provides students with a meaningful environment. Further, some issues should be included in blended learning as teacher's activity, instructional design, learners' performance, and satisfaction. Jeffrey et al (2014) explain that the Internet is a support to both teachers and students by providing the lesson materials that they can access and utilize during introducing the classes, and cooperating with partners on activities.

According to Zhang (2016), the basic use of *Google Classroom* is that in the first time you access Google classroom, the application will ask whether you assign the lecturer or learner role to your account. Then you have to choose it correctly. If you do not apply as a teacher, the account will be designated as a student. Being a class teacher will include options that are not visible to students and allow a teacher to change what students can do on *Google Classroom*. The teachers will be able to add students to classes, make announcements and assignments, and simply upload material from their view. Furthermore, there is an interaction between lecturers and students in a personal comment and between the students themselves. Therefore, *Google classroom* has an important role in English learning.

According to Latif (2016) blended learning is an instruction combining the advantages of both face-to-face teaching in the classroom and online sessions. It means that the teaching and learning activities happen both in the classroom and in the online contexts. The online sessions are regarded as an extension of the face-to-face teaching interaction. Therefore, the materials the learners learn within the online sessions supplement the materials they utilize in the classroom Staker and Horn (2012). Hence, for the online sessions, teachers typically give the students additional materials and exercises related to the topics being discussed in face-to-face classroom and send the materials through online platforms.

3. Methodology

This study included 90 Libyan learners studying at different departments at Sebha University in Libya. The participants were from the first and second semesters and they are studying English courses at their colleges. They were 20 males and 70 females. Their ages between 19 to 24 years old.

The study applied two types of research instruments to collect data, namely

a questionnaire and an interview. The study is analytical in nature. The questionnaire and in depth-interview were used to specify the level of performance of both groups. The study tests the effectiveness of using Google Classroom on students' performance in learning the English language. The class meets twice a week. The period of each class was forty-five minutes for six weeks. All learners had similar materials. The purpose of the questionnaire was to evaluate and investigate the way the English language is taught through Google Classroom.

The questionnaire statements take almost ten minutes to be completed. Students who took part in the research received written instructions regarding the process and the purpose of the study. The questionnaire is relevant to teaching English as a foreign language in Libya and via Google Classroom to students. The process of gathering responses took about two weeks. The questionnaire aimed to examine the effect of blended learning on student's performance of using Google Classroom. It involves students of different departments at Sebha University who study English for specific purposes. The questionnaire was adopted from Shaharane et.al (2016). Each item of the questionnaire allows a four-point Likert-scale response (strongly agree, agree, strongly disagree and, disagree). To test the reliability of the instrument, Shaharane's questionnaire and, Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient was used. The questionnaire indicates a high level of reliability. It is used to find out empirical evidence of students' responses to the use of Google Classroom at the University of Sebha. The questionnaire uses 13 items of Shaharane's. The first part of it collects general information such as name, age, gender, and number.

Data were also collected through in-depth interviews to investigate the effectiveness of Google Classroom in the learning process of English language as a second language. Students gave their consent for the interview. The obtained data were then analyzed to describe the information collected in relation to the research questions that study the effectiveness of Google Classroom in teaching the English language

The data gained from the questionnaire were analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, and they were displayed in the form of percentage and frequency. The responses of the interview were analyzed qualitatively.

4. Findings

4.1 Findings of the Questionnaires

The findings revealed that the use of *Google Classroom* is very effective for learning English. The analysis also indicated that the grading system in *Google Classroom* assists in monitoring the performance and understanding of the topic under discussion. Based on the respondents' perspectives, using *Google Classroom* in learning English is effective to a large extent. The respondents thought that assessment and content is consistent with the aid of *Google Classroom*. The data showed that large majority of the Libyan EFL learners view *Google Classroom* as part of the language learning as it can be applied to achieve several of learning purposes and activities.

4.2 Findings of the Interview

Interviews were conducted to find out Libyan EFL learners' perceptions on the use of *Google Classroom* in learning English. When the participants were asked: *What is your opinion about the implementation of blended learning in English courses?* The majority of the students answered that *Google Classroom* must be incorporated with the learning of language since it makes both the learning and teaching processes easy, fast and effective. Further, they had positive attitudes towards the blended learning in the English courses.

While responding to the second interview question: *Does Google Classroom support you in the learning process in learning English course? 'What is your opinion?'* Respondents replied that *Google Classroom* is a very useful and helpful approach to learn English effectively to introduce a variety of activities to learners which make their study convenient. Further, their responses were positive as they strongly supported the blended learning method in teaching. Students can also carry out different academic activities such as downloading PDF books, taking tests online and doing research.

With regard to whether *Google Classroom* can enhance and improve students' learning skills, almost all the participants asserted that the use of *Google Classroom* can develop and improve the four languages skills. For example, in listening activity, learners can listen to an audio of a lecture or listen to English songs. As for speaking, learners can watch English movies and some educational videos. Moreover, some participants reported that

Google Classroom can develop listening and speaking skills.

Concerning the question *whether the teachers should encourage their students to study via Google Classroom for learning purposes*, respondents agreed that learners must be given chance to use blended learning as a part of the learning process. Further, some respondents believe that technology can help students get excited, interested and, organized. Furthermore, through *Google Classroom*, students can have easy access to learning resources, and record a lecture and search for any topic. Here are some of the opinions of the respondents:

As for the question *What is your opinion on using Google Classroom? Is it easy or difficult to use?* Respondents asserted that the use of *Google Classroom* has some advantages. For instance, it can be accessed anytime, and everywhere. Additionally, *Google Classroom* includes many useful activities where learners use in an easy way. Students can also have access to many different activities via this tool of blended learning.

For their opinions of whether *Google Classroom* can prevent students from learning English in a better way, almost all the respondents were against this statement because they mentioned *Google Classroom* can offer better opportunities for students while learning. Further, students can contact their teachers and colleagues in the English language. Here, learners can improve their language skills and become professional learners.

With respect to their opinions on whether the utilization of *Google Classroom* motivates learners and makes them interested to learn the language, most of the respondents expressed similar views in which they emphasized that *Google Classroom* motivates the students during learning. For instance, they can listen to music, watch educational videos, read novels and stories online. Through technology, learners can have fun and be more interactive. For example, using social media makes students enthusiastic and interested to participate in discussions. Thus, using *Google Classroom* technology increases students' attention and helps them comprehend their lessons effortlessly.

5. Discussion

The main purpose of this study was to find out how the use of different types of teaching affects students' performance in a specific course. The



findings confirm that this approach of teaching enhances students' performance. The data analysis has shown that both teachers and students think the use of blended learning facilitates language teaching and learning in diverse ways.

This study found out that students who used *Google Classroom* felt excited using online learning. The application can be accessed easily. They can use computers, notebooks and mobile phones. Additionally, learners can concentrate on their duties because the teacher gives them a great deal of time to submit their assignments. Learners can look at the instructions of work as what topic and when deadlines is. If students are late to submit, a notification will be given in the lecturer's account. Then, learners can easily submit their homework anywhere via mobile phones. Their knowledge has been improved about the blended learning. Students are getting faster to identify the required information. *Google Classroom* has become useful media to learn English.

Based on the findings of accessing *Google Classroom* easily, most learners do not have difficulties in operating *Google Classroom*. In this respect, Iftakhar (2016) mentioned that students think *Google Classroom* is effective and uncomplicated to utilize. Also, it showed that *Google Classroom* is efficient and valuable tools for learning. The results regarding the usefulness of *Google Classroom* indicates that most students agreed with it. This resembled with the responses in Wijaya's (2016) study, where it showed that *Google Classroom* benefits the teaching process. Further, learners stated that *Google Classroom* can increase the effectiveness of completing the tasks giving to them. This study demonstrates that Libyan EFL learners expressed positive views. Regarding this, Al-Harbi and Alshumaimeri (2016) state that the inclusion of technology in languages gives students control over their learning and provides opportunities for them to practice the target language. Similarly, Saeedi (2016) states that language teaching and learning is one of many areas that have positive impacts mainly afforded by technology. The findings of the current study revealed that most of the learners who joining English courses for specific purposes acknowledged the positive impact regarding the use of *Google Classroom* in learning languages. They strongly believe that even if the teacher explained key concepts via

feedback outside the classroom, their focus was directed to their errors; and as a result, they were able to improve their language skills.

6. Conclusion

The study investigated the use of *Google Classroom* in learning English among Libyan EFL learners at Sebha University. It showed that *Google Classroom* has a positive and effective impact on learning English among Libyan EFL learners. The use of *Google Classroom* in the teaching and learning processes can improve learners' skills of language. *Google Classroom* is used as an alternative to traditional methods of teaching and learning the language. It allows students to learn collaboratively by offering feedback from their teachers. Here, students can discuss activities online in a continuous manner and that helps teachers effectively. The present study showed cases of the positive impacts that blended learning emerge through teaching language at Sebha University.

The benefits of using *Google Classrooms* in implementing education in Libya is to improve the lecturers' and learners' quality to use technology wisely, especially for the learning process, saving time, being environmentally friendly, increasing collaboration among students, and timeless communication. This study recommends further research in other Universities in Libya or even abroad. More research is also needed to further investigating the use of different ways of teaching in Libyan colleges as there is a lack of studies in this area. It is also suggested that future research would enable academicians to make better decision on how blended learning can be used more effectively under several circumstances.

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