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### RESEARCH ARTICLE

## THE APPLICATION OF GOOGLE CLASSROOM TO MOTIVATE ENGLISH NON-MAJORED STUDENTS

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#### **Abstract**

This research aims to report the overall view of Google Classroom application on teaching and learning English of teachers/researchers and learners in an effort to improve their performance. To achieve the objectives, the study was done over one semester with two classes of Commerce students at Van Lang University. In-depth interviews with the students and the teachers, and questionnaires were used as main tools for data collection which served as a basis for assessing the innovation of using Google Classroom effects. The analysis of the questionnaire summarizes the results of the study as follows: In overall, both the teachers/researchers and the students considered learning using Google Classroom as a blended tool more interesting and effective than traditional ones, and the study presents some evidence on the potential of Google Classroom in teaching. Nonetheless, there still existed some problems at the end of the semester. The paper will further highlight the benefits of Google Classroom activities and their impacts on students' motivation.

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#### **Introduction:-**

##### **Rationale:**

Nowadays, the Internet of Things (IOT) technology has influenced all aspects of human life, and education is not an exception. In fact, education has played a very important role in helping people approach great achievements of information technology to produce a qualified human resource keeping pace with the common trend of the Industry 4.0 age. To obtain this target, the digital technology has introduced some social networks, such as Facebook, Blog, Weblog, Twitter, Zing Me, Google, and so forth utilized as means to support students in learning. Among these networks, Google has announced Classroom as a new tool in Google Apps for Education, which is really a virtual classroom allowing participants to communicate with one another, view presentations or videos, and engage with learning resources in groupwork.

Dealing with Google Classroom, Hariadi, Dewiyanis & Sudarmaningtyas (2016) affirms that Google has been a front-runner in the field of technology and created a series of applications designed especially for teachers and students. This may be also true as Shinsky and Stevens (2011) assert that Google has created complete applications which enhance teaching and learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, based solely on Web 2.0 abilities. In addition, Iftakhar (2016) states in his paper that Google Classroom - a new tool introduced in Google Apps. for education in 2014 - facilitates the teacher to create and organize assignments quickly, provide feedback efficiently, and communicate with their classes with ease.

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In order to define Google Apps for education in more details, Shinsky and Stevens (2011) describe that they are cloud-based applications which Google provides free for educational institutions, and available to users from any Internet-connected computers and mobile devices using a browser. Because the software and data exist on the web, cloud-based programs can run seamlessly from a wide variety of computers and mobile devices; they are not necessary to be set up on the users' computers like other traditional computer programs.

Kathleen (2016) asserts that Google Classroom is a free paperless application including Google programs, such as Gmail, Google Docs, Google Forms, Google Presentations, a calendar, website creation software, and a set of office applications for word processing, spreadsheets, drawings, slideshows, and surveys. Google Classroom can produce, collect and grade assignments for the teacher, and provide immediate feedback to students. Teachers and students can sign in Google Classroom from anywhere and utilize the application at home to complete assignments. The online workspace can function as a file locker, where lots of documents can be uploaded for storage and sharing.

In brief, Google Classroom depends on Google documents, cloud storage, and Gmail mail through which a teacher needs to invite students to register for this application. It will convert a part of or all of the education process (depending on the aim of the course) into a fully electronic learning environment: the service provides tools for the teacher to make the lessons, deliver assignments, homework, questionnaires, and tests to students electrically. The Classroom learning platform will also enable teachers to immediately interact with their students, guide them during the completion of the assigned tasks, follow up the students, receive and correct students' answers, and give feedback to them all electrically. Besides, teachers can get a drive that stores their course materials, and choose them to share with specific students' email addresses generated from the student email list. On the part of students, they can access teachers' course materials or requirements through the use of Google Drive at any time and any place with multiple devices like smartphones, computers, or tablets.

It is easy to see that Google Classroom is rather popular in foreign education; however, in Vietnam, it has appeared still limited. In 2018, the Information Technology Faculty of Ho Chi Minh City University of Food Industry advanced an official decision of applying the open industry, Google Classroom, to its own teaching and learning. Nevertheless, not much research on the efficiency of this performance has been taken into account.

### **Problems affecting teaching and learning English of English as a Second Language (ESL) learners at Van Lang University:**

Over-size and multilevel in an English class at Van Lang University really present challenges to teachers. This situation itself produces a lot of difficulties for teaching; therefore, it prevents the success of teaching and learning English.

"A study done by the team of the Lancaster-Leeds Language Learning in Large Classes Research Project indicates that an average perception of the large class may be around 45 students" (cited in Ur, 1996:302). A large class makes difficult for teachers to manage learning activities in class, and causes lessons to become stiff. In addition, these over-sized classes are often teacher-centered, i.e. the teacher is the host who speaks all the time in class while students listen and take notes. Unfortunately, many studies show that teacher-dominated classes can hardly bring about effectiveness to learners (Edwards, 1987)

Today, an over-sized English class is a general phenomenon at Van Lang University. The more this problem endures, the more serious the status of multilevel in a class becomes. It means learners among whom there are marked differences in terms of language knowledge, learning style, attitude to the language, learning experience, confidence, motivation, interest, etc. sit in the same class. In general, it is the difference in the level of performance in the foreign language. Ur (1996) asserts, "the situation of multilevel class is the most problematical"; that is, it produces various teaching problems (p.302).

Certainly, organizing placement tests for the first year students has been implemented at Van Lang University, but in the second semester they join the same class again. As a result, the difficulties in teaching and learning have been unavoidable: those who are rather good at English feel impatient when learning with the beginners; in contrast, the rest of them cannot avoid feelings of puzzle, frustration, and inferiority when sitting beside those who can answer fluently their teachers' questions. In fact, to some students, going to the English class is to cope with being penalized their "diligent marks"; they are not motivated.

As teachers/reachers, we found that with the reviewed benefits of Google Classroom, applying this application in our classes was a necessary experiment which we carried out with the hope that we would make some contribution to the improvement of teaching and learning using IOT at Van Lang University, and might help to improve the students' attitude towards learning English.

The research was particularly sought to answer the following questions:

1. Is accessing Google Classroom easy to the second year students majoring in Commerce?
2. Do these students find Google Classroom useful?
3. Is the interaction between the lecturer and the students and among the students themselves good in the virtual classroom environment?
4. Is the lecturer's delivery of instructions, feedback, and due dates to the students obvious and on time via Google Classroom?
5. Are the students satisfied with learning through Google Classroom?

### **Methodology:-**

#### **Research approach:**

Two different tools were utilized: questionnaires and interviews. Finch (n.d.) has a severe look that "the isolated use of a single research instrument can produce mis-leading results" (p.5). Consequently, with the wish of getting reliable findings, these two instruments were combined in this study. All of the teacher's and the students' responses were recorded, and data were analyzed qualitatively.

#### **Participants:**

The first participating objects in this study were two second-year English non-majored classes of Commerce Department at Van Lang University, which consisted of 90 male and female students. According to the assigned timetable, they took three classes a week with three periods for each, lasting 5 weeks with the total of 45 periods.

The second agents were the researchers themselves – the teachers. However, the main focus was on the students. Believing that we were very important objects of the experiment, we really invested a lot of time and attempt on teaching the selected classes as well as on this study. In five weeks of collaborating with the students, our good relationship was set up, facilitating the co-operative work of this project.

#### **Data collection:**

##### **Questionnaires:**

In questionnaires, the respondents were asked to answer twenty-five closed and open questions designed for five main problems put in the introduction. As closed questions are often thought of constraining to a limited extent anticipated by the researcher, open questions were used to give the respondents a chance to raise other issues of concern. They were likely to produce more unexpected and interesting data as a plus point to yield perfect questionnaires. Closed questions were composed in the format with four options (strongly disagree, disagree, agree, strongly agree) while open questions had space for the respondents to write down. Collecting questionnaires was done by using ninety copies of questionnaire paper to distribute to ninety learners, but a return of sixty seven valid ones was received.

##### **Interviews:**

The interviews had a small schedule of questions, which were almost collected from questionnaires, to confirm what had been obtained from the questionnaires. The researchers allowed the interviewees to raise any items they liked within the researchers' area of interest and far more. The major question asked was "What do you think is/isn't good about Google Classroom?" Each personal in-depth interview lasted for approximately 30 minutes in friendly and relaxed atmosphere.

##### **Teaching procedures:**

The posted lessons in Google Classroom were followed the lessons in the students' textbook, American JetStream (Pre-intermediate). However, a great deal of materials in different formats, such as Youtube videos, pictures, Google Docs, Google Slides, and so forth were added for student references. The procedure of learning and teaching with Google Classroom was flipped compared to the traditional method. There were three stages in learning process including pre-class, while-class and post-class.

**Pre-class:**

One day before class, the teacher uploaded materials for the coming lesson including Youtube video references, documents and assigned exercises.

**While-class:**

During class time, the teacher asked the students to do the posted exercises and submit them directly in their cell phones. At that time, the teacher could see the answers of each student immediately on his tablet screen. The teacher then corrected the mistakes and reviewed them in comparison to the reference materials.

**Post-class:**

The students were asked to do Cyber Homework on Helbling Ezone to consolidate the knowledge and receive their marks.

Besides, the students had some learning activities such as group work and speaking practice. With these activities, the students had to use Google Classroom to discuss, record the videos of their conversations, and would receive assessments from the teacher electrically afterwards.

**Findings:**

**Figure 3.1:- Problem 1: Ease to access Google Classroom.**

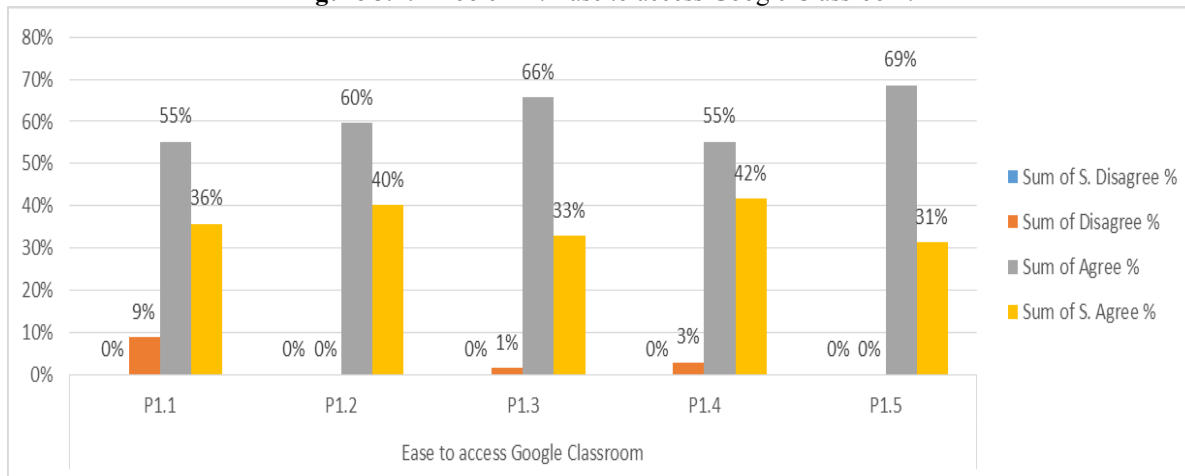


Figure 3.1 shows the ease to access Google Classroom to the students. Based on this Figure, it can be clearly seen that the majority of the students (over 90%) agreed and strongly agreed with the 5 designed questions for the first problem: they thought this application was easily accessible. However, with problem 1.1, about 9% of the respondents asserted that they were not given adequate facilities to connect the Internet. With the ideas shared in the open question section, they explained that the weak university wi-fi, lack of affordability and unavailability of digital devices were main causes for not being able to access the virtual class.

**Figure 3.2:- Problem 2: Finding Google Classroom useful.**

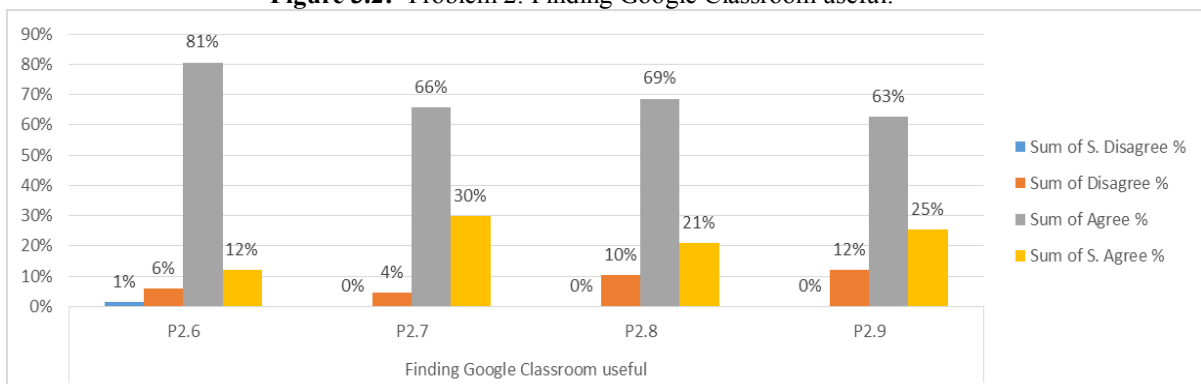
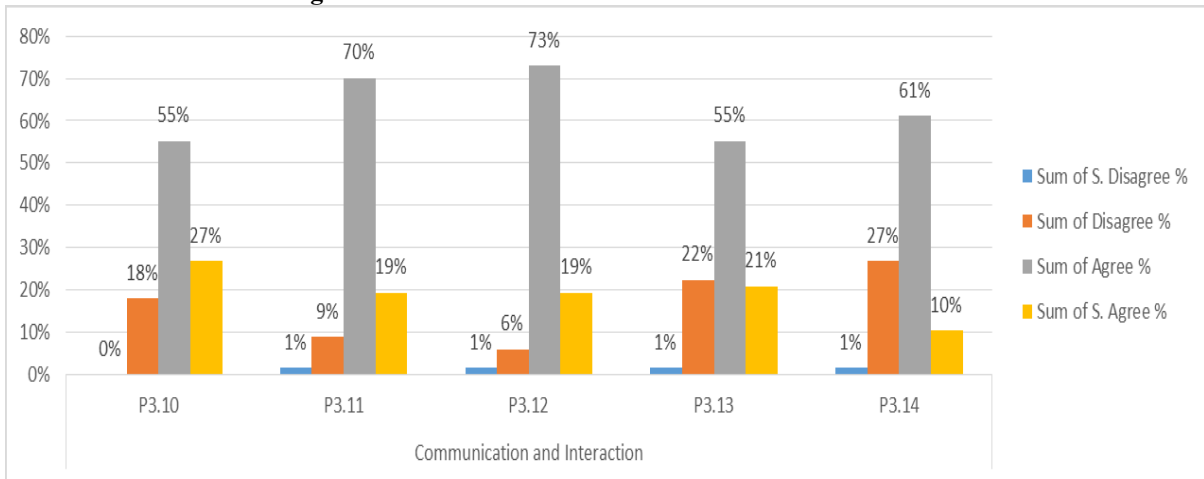


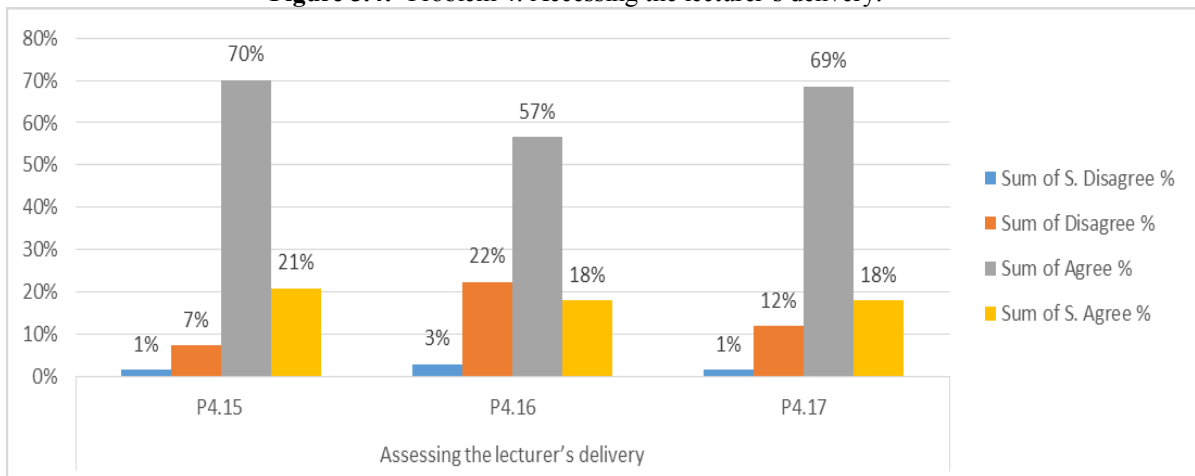
Figure 3.2 illustrates whether the learners found Google Classroom useful or not. Overall, the Figure shows that a large number of the participants (at least 88%) perceived the helpfulness of the virtual classroom. Nevertheless, 7.5% of the respondents did not find it useful as they did not see the efficiency and effectiveness for the interaction between the lecturer and the students via this intermediary. Besides, around one-tenth of the attendees affirmed that the feedback provided by the instructor was unhelpful, and the support of Google Classroom grading system in helping them monitor their performance, marks and assessment was not productive.

Figure3.3:- Problem 3: Communication and Interaction.

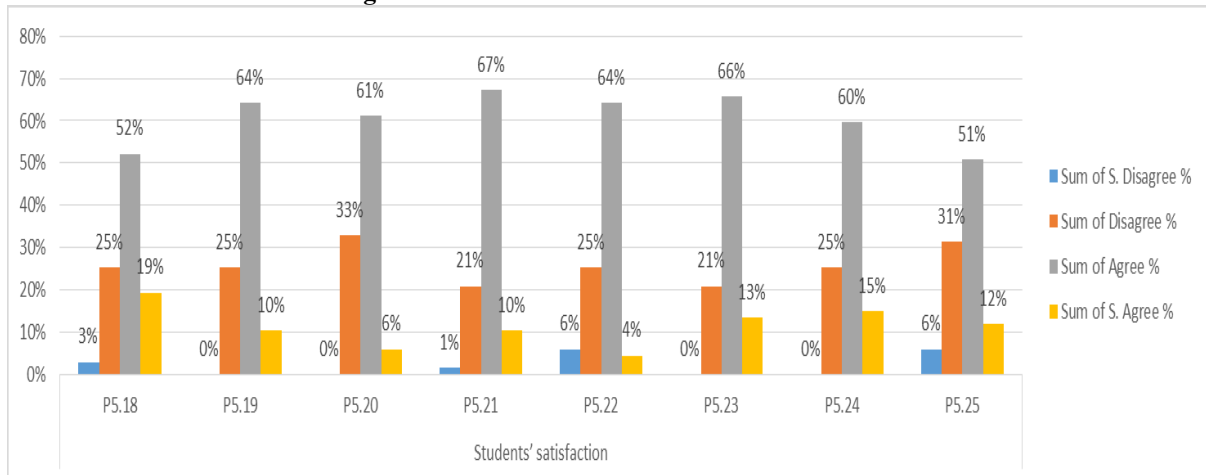


Rather different from the two above problems, while positive results of the agreement scale for five questions of this matter fluctuate from 70% to 90%, which means the students mainly sensed the efficiency of the interaction between the lecturer and the students and among the students themselves, the negative results are considerable. Nearly one fifth of the respondents considered the lecturer unapproachable via Google Classroom. Besides, the number of learners thinking that the lecturer helped them to engage and participate in productive discussions and was really enthusiastic in teaching via Google Classroom are 7 and 5 students respectively. Additionally, around a quarter felt their experience through Google Classroom was unsatisfactory since there were still difficulties in interacting with their peers as well as getting acknowledged when sharing their perspectives.

Figure 3.4:- Problem 4: Accessing the lecturer’s delivery.



Dealing with accessing the lecturer’s delivery, clear instructions on how to join the course learning activities and obvious notices of significant deadlines were approved by around 90% of the total. In term of the tutor’s post-submission delivery, a quarter affirmed that the feedback provided did not allow them to review and learn from their mistakes.

**Figure 3.5:- Problem 5: Students' satisfaction.**

The final major issue permits us to evaluate the overall satisfaction of the respondents. An average of 70% was satisfied with Google Classroom and considered it as a more superior mode than the traditional one. However, such results are also inferred that more than a quarter of the students were in opposition. The interview data shows that these subjects either still preferred the old-schooled way of learning or underestimated the support of Google Classroom. Furthermore, 25 students stated that they did not mind learning through Google Classroom, which indicates that the implication of Google Classroom may be questionable.

In short, from the above data analysis, open sections in questionnaires and interviews, salient opinions dealing with Google Classroom can be summarized in terms of students' perspectives and teachers' perspectives as follows:

#### **Students' Perspectives:**

First, Google Classroom was easy to use. Having had Gmail id, students could readily join the virtual class by using home computers, tablets, laptops, ipads, smart phones, etc. from anywhere and any time. Moreover, being computer- and smart phone- friendly, they felt little scared when motivated and instructed to use Google Classroom. Handling Google Classroom was facile to them, and they did not need training on features of Google Classroom a lot. However, they understood that high speed Internet was mandatory to facilitate their learning.

Second, Google Classroom was useful. In the interaction between the lecturer and the students, due dates for what was coming up, a calendar to keep track of things, and lots of reminders of deadlines were visible. Moreover, monitoring the students' performance, marks, and opportune assessments released by the teachers was also quick and engaging. Nevertheless, some students who did not pay much attention to Google Classroom because of many different reasons like too much extra work, lack of qualified smart phones, or facing weak data transmission often felt overwhelmed by materials on Google Classroom. In this case, their concern was the stream of Google Classroom: messages, discussions and activities were posted in Google Classroom stream, with the most recent messages appearing at the top and older ones moving further down the stream. That means it could be harder to find the older since more and more posts to the stream were made, which could necessitate lots of scrolling for the students. These students usually did not keep pace with the process of this virtual classroom.

Third, Google Classroom produced efficient collaboration: it allowed the students to work together, i.e. multiple students could edit the same document, or conversation videos at the same time, and receive the teachers' digital feedback. They identified that the use of Google Classroom changed the nature of the classroom in a positive fashion: they could have a voice in the classroom to contribute in a way that they felt comfortable with - they could take as much time as they needed on the task in their own time. However, some still found difficult in interacting the teacher and their peers. To be honest, some participants did not highly appreciate the teacher' feedback. Thereby, the teacher should put more effort into this work.

Fourth, the use of Google Classroom was generally well received by the students although there were some not minding to learn through Google Classroom.

**Teacher' Perspectives :**

First, the teacher could keep all of the documents in Google Classroom to minimize paper used, and organize students' work automatically.

Second, the teacher could invite other lecturers to join his virtual class so that they could learn from experience to form teaching staff working better.

Third, Google Classroom facilitated quick and easy feedback. The teacher could go to students' work and highlight sections of text, leave comments, and send messages to the students on what to change.

Fourth, the teacher could quickly identify which students might be struggling with their exercises as he could keep track of them via assigned tasks.

Fifth, Google Classroom could help students keep their files more organized because all their work could be stored paperlessly in a single program.

Sixth, the teacher agreed that Google Classroom could promote collaborative learning. Students could make a group and submit their project work, or upload their videos on character presentation, and the teacher could easily assess their own performance and justify the grade.

Seventh, Google Classroom created too much workload for the teacher. He thinks with an ordinary semester, a lecturer takes at least eight classes, performs lots of quizzes, one presentations, assignments, mid-term and final exams for the students in each class. The teacher also has to spend 10-12 hours on counseling students in each virtual class.

Additionally, a teacher is involved in some other academic activities like attending meetings and doing scientific research. Infact, too much workload influences teachers' acceptance of new technology when it is broadly applied (Neyland, 2011). Thereby, the university should lessen teachers' workload for an effective implementation of Google learning.

Finally, the instructor was broadly pleased with Google Classroom as a supplementary tool for classroom learning.

**Appendix 1:-** Questionnaire for the students

<b>Problem</b>	<b>Questions</b>	<b>S. Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>S. Agree</b>
<b>Ease to access Google Classroom</b>	1. I have the Internet connection easily.				
	2. Getting acquainted with Google Classroom functions is a simple task.				
	3. Receiving unit materials and the assigned tasks is carried out by only one click.				
	4. Receiving and submitting exercises is easy.				
	5. Handling Google Classroom functions is not complicated to understand.				
<b>Finding Google Classroom useful</b>	6. Google Classroom is an efficient and effective intermediary between the tutor and the students.				
	7. Google Classroom helps me to submit tasks on time as it is an installed application which reminds the subject deadlines beforehand.				
	8. Feedback provided by the lecturer is helpful.				
	9. The grading system in Google Classroom supports me in monitoring my performance, marks and assessment.				
	10. The lecturer is friendly and approachable via Google Classroom.				
	11. The tutor helps to keep me staying engaged				

<b>III. Communication and Interaction</b>	and participating in productive discussions.				
	12. The tutor is enthusiastic in teaching and explaining via Google Classroom.				
	13. I feel comfortable interacting with my peers in doing tasks through Google Classroom.				
	14. My point of view is acknowledged by my classmates through this medium.				
<b>IV. Assessing the lecturer's delivery</b>	15. The lecturer provides clear instructions on how to join the course learning activities.				
	16. The lecturer provides feedback that allows me to better understand the content of the course and my mistakes after doing tasks.				
	17. The lecturer clearly notices important due dates for learning activities.				
<b>V. Students' satisfaction</b>	18. Google Classroom delivers a more convenient learning system than the traditional mode does.				
	19. I will improve my performance in learning English via Google Classroom.				
	20. I enjoy being taught through Google Classroom.				
	21. I find Google Classroom a better solution since I am unwilling to attend classes.				
	22. I am able to exchange exercises with each other easily.				
	23. I would recommend this method of learning to be applied to other appropriate subjects.				
	24. The subject meets my personal goal through Google Classroom.				
	25. I do not mind to learn through Google Classroom.				

#### Appendix 2:-Interview questions for the teacher

1. What do you think of Google Classroom and the way it is used in the subject?
2. Do you find Google Classroom enjoyable and interesting as your teaching companion?
3. Does it take you a long time to get used to all the functions of Google Classroom?
4. Is Google Classroom a failure if there is bad internet connection?
5. Do your students feel encouraged by learning via Google Classroom?
6. What are Google Classroom benefits?
7. What are Google Classroom drawbacks?
8. Do you expect Google Classroom to become the upcoming mainstream?
9. Do you prefer all courses to be taught through Google Classroom?
10. Do you prefer Google Classroom to traditional modes?

#### Conclusion And Future Work:-

This study clearly shows that a majority of the students and the teacher were satisfied with Google Classroom, and found it effective as an active supplementary learning tool. However, as the finding identifies, both sides – the teacher and the students – had limitations which were factors affecting their Google Classroom acceptance. As a result, some did not feel well pleased with this medium. Anyway, with five weeks of learning using Google Classroom, the participants perceived benefits of this application, and felt more engaging and interesting than traditional teaching and learning. We cannot deny the fact that Google Classroom contributed to the students' motivation. We have the sense that teachers' professional development is a key factor to successful integration of technology beside good infrastructure management of the university, which may inspire students to use Google Classroom effectively to operate 21<sup>st</sup> century skills involving communication, collaboration, critical thinking and creativity in a virtual class.



Teaching in the 21<sup>st</sup> century does mean teaching the 21<sup>st</sup> generation; therefore, teachers must be very well welcoming to any new technology to ensure the best learning in the virtual classroom besides the physical one.

The limitations of this study could be summarized as follows. Due to the time limitation (only five weeks), the paper did not cover factors which could have orchestrated the students' learning improvements like instruction, self-efficacy, and motivation. And how the students' four skills improve via Google Classroom was also left open. Hence, follow up studies can be conducted to delineate these factors.

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