

## The Effect of Using Google Classroom Platform on the Iraqi EFL University Students' Writing Performance

Asst. Prof. Qasim H. Al-Ibadi (PhD)

Department of English, College of Education for Human Sciences/University of Wasit

E-mail: qhammadi@uowasit.edu.iq

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**Abstract:** The aim of this experiment is to investigate the effect of Google classroom platform on the university students' writing performance, the sample of the study consists of (60) Iraqi EFL university students studying English in the college of education for human sciences/ Wasit university.

The sample is organized into two groups, the control group and the experimental group, (30) for each. The researcher adopted the experimental design in applying the Google classroom on the sample of the study. However, the experimental group is taught by using Google classroom platform while the controlled group is taught by using the conventional process, throughout the second course of the academic year 2018-2019 (March - April 2019) to share course materials.

The experiment has been applied on second year university level students at the Department of English/ College of Education for Human sciences/University of Wasit.

The results revealed that there are obvious statistical differences in the findings of this study between the experimental and controlled group through the teaching students writing composition by applying Google classroom platform on the sample of the study. The results have shown that such a platform supports university teachers to prepare and announce the readiness of their lectures to be read and visited by students at any time. Google Classroom platform highly fits the new semester policy to be adopted by the ministry of higher education soon. Further, such a platform highly suits the situations whereby students cannot access the classes face-to-face due to lack of security issues, or natural disasters, etc. Students writing performance are highly enhanced through applying this platform.

**Keywords:** Google Classroom, Iraqi EFL University Students, Traditional Learning, Writing Performance.

### Introduction

With the rapid development of web technology and its effectiveness in various educational fields, a lot of teachers are getting deeper into using technology in their teaching to improve their students' language abilities. Networking sites have been known as one of the most common devices that teachers are adopting in teaching the English language. Developing students' writing skills is considered as an important task for language teachers, that teachers use web devices to teach writing skill. One of the available online devices for teachers is Google Classroom which this study tackles with. Google Classroom is a smartphone application and an online social networking website that is designed for both teachers and students. It allows teachers share materials with their students, to communicate and monitor students' development. It is different from other social networks because it has built-in testing tools, such as quiz, assignment, poll, grade book and other devices that support teachers in assessing students. The main aims of this study is to find out if using Google Classroom can affect students' writing performance.

### Aims of the Study

This study aims at

1. Shedding light on the notion and characteristics of Google Classroom.
2. Surveying the similarities and differences between traditional learning and E- learning.
3. Presenting the advantages and disadvantages of both E- learning and traditional learning.
4. Finding out if using Google Classroom can affect students' writing performance of second level university students.
5. Analysing the results and driving conclusion.

### The Questions of the Study

In order to achieving the aims of this study, the following questions are raised:

1. What is Google Classroom platform?
2. Is the Google Classroom platform effective in supporting Iraqi EFL university students in their educational progress?
3. Is the Google Classroom platform effective in solving problems in English language learning and teaching?
5. Does the implementation of Google Classroom platform enhance students writing skill?

### Significance of the Study

The significance of this study is represented by offering students a new technology for learning and teaching.

The use of Google Classroom platform will promote prerequisite knowledge and increase student motivation which the development of the learning experience of using educational technology.

The use of Google Classroom platform will provide opportunities to facilitate learning through the keeping the material available for any time and providing the chance of saving and replaying them.

The use of Google Classroom platform will improve students writing performance.

### **Literature Review**

#### **E- learning applications**

Many teachers consider technological activities as an integral part for the educational material and environment. Multimedia presentations , computer technology and internet searches are used widely by the educational staff . The ability of the teacher to create any educational tasks that enable him to apply cooperative requirement to technological learning activities for enriching student information skills important, whatever the topics, software choices or student age ( Kimber,2007). Learning and teaching processes of using technological devices are a very useful processes that it supports students to enhance different academic skills in the field of critical thinking , psychological affairs, and social thinking , classroom communication and decision making etc. The aim of academic institutions is to increase the potentiality of students contribution in their democratic knowledge-based society and their personal development . For the purpose of gaining the skills and proficiency needed in the communicating with the community , it should become “learning organizations”. A high percentage of ELT students have trained well in the use of computer programmes in learning English language. Moreover, a high percentage of them are skillful in the implementing technological devices in their learning. It is important to increase the potentiality of using visuals to include experiential education by using E- learning devices to improve comprehension and to scaffold previous information. Implementing technological devices will improve the ability of teacher to successfully tackling with the new academic situations. Meanwhile , Google classroom platform had played major roles in academic worlds. Google classroom platforms for Educational purposes is a available nowadays to the academic fields. Although many web devices like Google do not supply the customers with all of their programmed data and present identifiable programmes through accounts. Consequently , Google classroom is one of the most important programme the students and teachers depend on.

One of the characteristics of google classroom platform is to enable students to access to the educational material at any place , any time, by using multiple tools like phones, tablets , or computers.

#### **Google Classroom Platform**

Google Classroom Platform is an up-to-date version of Google for academic institutions to ensure that E- learning devices are used to simplify distributing , creating and scoring assignments by using online devices ( wikipedia.org, 2017). It is a convenient way for the instructors to engage students online for discussing any topic with teacher and classmates , interacting , asking questions, and submitting assignments. As Iftakhar pointed out that Google classroom permits teachers to interact and gather additional time with their students to communicate effectively . Included in the new functionality in Google classroom platform is the chance to add many instructors in the class, in addition to the preparation for classroom tasks in advance ( Iftakhar, 2016) .

Google Classroom is not a well-known platform for many students. Google Classroom was joined with institution based email addresses. Therefore, only students and teachers having institute based domain could use Google Classroom. Google is created to allow any personal Google users to connect classes although they don't prepare the requirements of having a Google , hence , this merit suites the academic staff. After that, it became available for any user of Google to create , join and learn in Google classes. Teachers can add email address and Google Drive folder for any class. Teachers can attach their material outline , teaching exercises and tasks and lesson plan at this platform and the students can join the classroom. If the students have an institutional Google account it is possible to join it. The teachers can ask them to log in to Google Classroom through their personal accounts.

If students do not have the institutional Google account, the teachers can ask them to create a personal Google account. Collect their Google accounts and invite them to join Google Classroom , in this situation students will not require any class code to join the classroom.

#### **The Characteristics of Google Classroom**

By applying Google classroom platform , the participants can benefit the following:

Create announcement: This feature is used for announcing any type of update about the class. The participants can upload web links, videos ,Google Drive and files as class materials as well.

Create question: This feature is very effective to design question and discuss the responses with students. The students can edit their answers and respond to each other if the teachers permit to do so.

Design homework: It is an effective merit of Google Classroom. The participants can post any assignment. Similar to the announcement feature , the participants can upload files, , videos , web links and Google Drive. the participants can see their assignment in the class . They can download the class materials

and achieve their assignments.. The teacher will receive an email notification for the submission of the class assignment. The teacher will be able to check all the class assignments and score them. Finally, the teacher can offer the assignments feedbacks and scores.

Reuse post: In this feature teachers can reuse any useful post that the student used before

#### **Advantages of Google Classroom platform.**

The educational participants can benefit from the following characteristics of Google Classroom platform: User friendly: Google Classroom is designed to simplify the instructional work and the options can be used for deliver in and uploading assignments; To simplify the communication with the whole class or student alone by addressing him with the email , announcements or any type of available notifications in webs (Janzen, , 2017).

Authenticity : Google Classroom provides authentic and professional technological devices to be used in learning and teaching . Google Classroom platforms is one of the most important application used in facilitating academic job especially in the field of.

Cost free: It does not require any cost to use it. Anyone with or without an institutional Google account can create and join a classroom.

Cell phone friendly: As M. Janzen stated, Mobile phone is attractive and easy to communicate with and can easily access to learning materials (M. Janzen, , 2017). Google Classroom is created to be quick to respond. It is suitable to be used on any mobile device.

Time saving: Google Classroom can save time in both students` and teachers` sides. According to Iftakhar, “It integrates other Google apps like Docs, Slides, Drive and Spreadsheets. Nevertheless, the whole process of administering assignments, grading, formative assessment, and feedback is simplified and streamlined” ( Iftakhar, 2016) .

Limited integration options: It is obvious that Google Classroom is not synchronized with Google Calendar or the other calendars. It becomes difficult for the instructors to organize teaching materials and put deadlines for assignments.

Popularity: Google Classroom is defined as too much common and familiar. It is equipped with several buttons which are familiar to Google users . Those who are the first time use this platform may get confused or take more time to get accustomed to its icons. They can find a guideline on YouTube to help video sharing for successful participating.

Editing problems: After making and distributing assignment, students become the owners of the document. They are given the authority to edit it. They can delete or revise any section of their assignments if they want.

Impersonal: Despite offering an E- learning platform, it has not associated other chatting platforms like Google Hangouts. Therefore, it becomes difficult for online interaction between students and teachers through Google documents only.

No automated quizzes and tests: Google Classroom has no provision for automated exams , tests or quizzes. In most cases, Google Classroom is more suitable as an E- learning platform than any online platforms.

#### **Writing as a Process**

To emphasize the importance of writing as a process is very important for the progress of students . Learning how to write by writing is the goal of ELT teaching. Emphasis should be put in writing teaching on the process of facilitating writing instead of focusing on the ending of the process . Therefor. Students should be engaged on writing process and the mechanisms of preparing the writing devices .

Writing process as a an educational activity the following steps: Planning, drafting, revising or refining and editing. At the ending stage , the teacher can follow the responding, evaluating and post writing as a tool for keeping additional correction. (Richard and Renandya, 2003: 316).

Freedman, et.al (1987:13) Point out that in order to have effective performance \_ oriented teaching programme, teachers need to teach Student’s problem solving skills connected with the writing process.

Process writing through the ELT lesson may be designed as a programme of teaching aims to offer students an effective learning and teaching experiences to support them comprehend the ways and techniques used in dealing with writing .

#### **Characteristics of Good Writers**

Krashen (1984:17-18) reviews a research on the composing process and concludes that good writers differ from poor writers in at least three ways:

##### **1- Planning**

Good writers seem to plan more than poor writers do. This means that they follow the systematic steps in writing , it does not necessarily mean that they adopt certain outline in the prewriting stage, but they organize and plan their writing process before starting of writing the first draft.

The writers also prefer to take more time prior to starting the first draft. However, less skillful writers tend to write at the time of the beginning. Thus ,proficient writers prefer to have accessible plans and to

modify their original ideas if they see that it is an urgent need to change them and to try to adopt new way of thinking to suit the new habit of writing .

#### 2- Rescanning

Proficient writers reread and refine continuously what they have written and try to edit every written format before continuing to write. Karshen (Ibid) stipulates that rescanning helps proficient writers to keep a sense of making the general view of the written material and that by rereading / planning what to write next and rescanning to see if the plan fits, writers invariably end up with better products.

#### 3- Revising

Good writers tend to revise more than poor writers do and they revise somewhat differently. While poor writers tend to pay attention to surface form in their revisions, proficient writers achieve more changes in the theme and try to decide which material need revision in the last draft in order to check if the revisions are necessary.

#### **Organizing Thoughts in the Writing Process**

It is the most important section of all. The writer has to think systematically about a topic and idea in order to express it communicatively. When the writer finishes the planning and organization, he has to start analyzing it to measure the effectiveness of the written format .

There are three common methods to organize thoughts: spatial order, most- to- least order or least- to-most order and lastly chronological order.

1- In the first method of organizing thought which is most-to-least order or least-to-most order. In this model of organizing, one can arrange supplying details from most to least or least to most important, familiar, or interesting. One might begin with the most convincing evidence and then less compelling evidence to reinforce it. Alternately, one can arrange details from least to most. One can save most compelling evidence for last, building gradually to strongest point.

2- Chronological Order. The writer can arrange the detailed materials or ideas in a chronological order. This means to write details in the order which they occurred according to their happening time or to begin with an event and progress through the others.

3- Spatial Order. The writer can arrange detailed information and writing them according to their place or position in space. (McWhorter, 2000: 122).

#### **Writing Paragraphs**

The detailed material narrated in the written form should relate to the original idea or to the thesis statement . The writer has to write thesis statement of the paragraph in the first sentence which summarize the main points.

#### **Using Generative Writing**

This type of writing is different from the other types of writing . it is creative writing. Generative writing is similar in the main features to free writing in that it does not have to be limited or related to the traditional aspects of educational writing; Both of them work similarly, initially to enrich writing and in future to enhance writing to develop fluency and accuracy . Generative writing focuses on creative and effective and free writing (Murray, 2005:99).

It is also called creative writing. That the term creative implies imaginativeness in the tasks production such as writing drama, and plays. This type of activities have many characteristics to be recommend. The corner stone here is that the results or the finding is often seem to be some types of achievement. (Ur, 1996 :169).

It is clearly that the above features is for creative writing than for the other standard written products. Moreover. Creativity in writing process is a type of travel in the world of expression or it is of self-discovery of the writer`s own capacity and imagination that will be used to promotes effective learning. Determining imaginative tasks in which all the students engaged effectively, students participate more effectively than the case of usual to write a various written forms in correctness and appropriateness of language and format . (Harmer, 2001:250)

#### **EFL Writing Performance**

Writing is a process of expressing the ideas , thoughts , imaginations , desires or feelings by using written symbols through the following specific rules or format . Sever (2004) stated that writing is one of the four language skills by which the writers express his senses, thoughts, plans and experiences through writing. Since writing is intertwined with mental processes, it contributes to the development of many skills. It supports to enrich students` ideas, enhance their knowledge, enable them to use language appropriately and develop their cognitive vocabularies (Berk & Ünal, 2017). Moreover, it makes easier to assess what the ability to transform the ideas in to written form. For second and foreign language learners, writing is a demanding activity because this skill helps students to perform better in course work and examinations especially, at the university level. An excellent expertise in English writing is crucial to improve students` writing performance, thus educational success. Regardless of its significance, many students consider English writing as a difficult, challenging, and complicated task because of

that they suffer from many difficulties in writing and expressing their ideas especially in the vocabulary, organization, theme, linguistic cohesion and coherence aspects (Liao & Wong, 2010). The students often do writing only in exams and this link between examination and writing may produce the feeling of fear in them in the process of writing.

The poor performance in EFL writing is attributed to a number of factors. Studies have shown that when students do not enjoy learning the target language, they will perform negatively in the language (Andrade & Williams, 2009).

### **Methodology**

This part will offer a description of the procedures and instruments and experimental design of this study. The sample of this study consists of (60) Iraqi EFL university students organized into two groups. The experimental group consists of (30) students and the control group also consists of (30) students. The experimental group is taught writing composition by using the Google classroom platform while the control group is taught writing composition by the traditional method. The two groups are taught by the researcher himself throughout the second semester of the academic year 2018-2019 (March - April 2019). Then the researcher implemented the pre-posttests to examine the research hypotheses and to find out the findings and results related to this study.

### **The Experimental Application**

The experiment started on 3rd of March 2019 and lasted for two months during the academic year 2018-2019 and ended on the 5<sup>th</sup> of May 2019. According to the college schedule, two lectures are allotted for the academic writing in the second stage, they are arranged on Sunday for the control group and on Tuesday for the experimental group per a week.

Two hours a week have been allotted for the composition writing course according to the students' schedule of the prescribed textbook "Introduction to Academic Writing by Alice Oshima (Oshima, Alice 2007). Both groups are taught by the researcher himself.

The following are the subjects of composition that have been presented for both experimental and control groups, they have been chosen by the students themselves and the jury members have mostly agreed on them:

My Family  
Friends  
Learning English Language  
Air Pollution  
My hobbies  
Social Media  
Speaking English  
University Uniforms

### **The Experimental Group**

Before conducting the experiment, the researcher specifies three successive days to the experimental group designed with the Google classroom platform.

The researcher has chosen a topic (Friendship) and designed a plan for conducting this technique.

However, the procedures followed in employing the Google classroom platform are:

Stage One: Warm up

In this stage the researcher had prepared a film about the determined topic to be discussed by the class using the Google classroom platform.

Stage Two: Activities.

Stage Three: Assessment

As homework, students are asked to write their composition.

Before initiating the experiment, a number of lesson plans have been constructed and exposed to the jury of experts to decide their validity. The jury members agree on the validity of these plans. Hence, the researcher followed the lesson plan in his teaching.

### **The Control Group**

This group is taught by using the traditional method in teaching writing composition and by teaching the same textbook taught to the experimental group according to the conventional techniques employed in teaching composition writing.

However, the control group is taught according to the following procedures:

Stage One: Warm up

In this stage the researcher has prepared a film related to the suggested topic. Students are asked to write their notes as well as the received information from the film.

Stage Two: Activities

In this stage students are divided into five groups. Each group consists of six students.

Preparing some questions related to the film, students are asked to discuss and then answer these questions in the written form. Within this stage students can provide peer feedback to others.

### Stage Three: Assessment

As homework, students are asked to write their compositions about the given topic. The next lecture, before starting with new topic, the researcher gives each student an opportunity to share and read aloud her composition to be marked by the researcher and discussed by the class as a whole finding out whether there are any grammatical mistakes, poor ideas and style, sentence formation and mechanics errors.

#### **The Post-Test (Final Administration)**

After finishing the teaching period, the posttest has been implemented on the sample of the research of both groups on 7<sup>th</sup> of May, 2019.

Since the researcher is the instructor himself of the course of the 2<sup>nd</sup> stage in the Department of English, College of Education for human sciences/ University of Wasit, the posttest was achieved smoothly and in accurate way.

#### **Discussion of the Results**

The results of this experiment reveal that:

1. Implementing Google classroom platform affects positively students' performance in composition writing.
2. Using Google classroom platform provides opportunities for students to come up with original and useful ideas.
3. Google classroom platform encourages students to think more widely, to promote deeper reflection, and to avoid impulsivity.
4. By analyzing students' answers of the experimental group in comparison with the answers of the students of the control group, students' ideas will enable them to decrease the weak points in their thoughts, and prepare alternative plans to deal with problems that might arise.
5. Google classroom platform can develop students meta-cognition-ability, willingness, and self-expression association with understanding to reflect on their own thinking process in good composition writing.
6. Group discussion activity in the Google classroom platform seems to be an essential activity for promoting and generating ideas that lead to good composition writings.
7. Self-confidence and autonomy in writing is built by using Google classroom platform, this will support students in their language skills.
8. Moreover, the results indicate that Google classroom platform is a good technique to develop students' critical thinking (black hat) when they write or discuss any given subject.

#### **Conclusion**

In the light of the present study, the researcher has concluded that:

1. Google classroom platform improves students' writing performance.
2. Google classroom platform has shown positive effects on the development of writing skills.
2. The experimental group's students' scores are significantly better than the control group students in their composition writing. When their writing is analyzed based on the compartmentalization of the five writing components (skills), it is undoubtedly obvious that students' show significant enhancement in all the five components of the writing skills. This indicates that the incorporation of Google classroom platform provides the mechanism in improving the students' writing performance through improving the five writing skills which are also vital layers skills in language learning.

#### **Recommendations**

In the light of the results of the present study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Syllabus designers have to design the EFL syllabus by giving the students the opportunity to use the modern technologies such as Google classroom platform in teaching and learning English language.
2. Syllabus designers have to include activities and tasks designed to be implemented by using Google classroom platform and supported students in using this application.
3. English laboratory with the internet devices and service should be initiated in Iraqi English departments.
4. Great attention should be offered to Google classroom platform for its importance in creating useful learning and enable students to be a proficient learner.
5. Developing thinking skills is crucial as it an integral part of teaching writing skill and progressing in writing performance.
6. Attention to train the students to use google classroom applications in learning English.

#### **Suggestions for Further Studies**

A number of studies can be conducted to check the effectiveness of the suggested turn taking strategies used in this study in the EFL classroom:

1. The same proposed procedures can be used to study the influence of Google classroom platform in evaluating the student's oral performance.
2. Further research is needed to determine how the transcript should be utilized as language learning material.
3. Further research is needed to measure the effect of using Google classroom platform on oral testing.
4. Topic initiation, development and termination are important areas to be studied to how participants start, develop, and end the conversations.

5. An assessment of another language skills can be achieved by using Google classroom platform to Iraqi EFL students at preparatory or, intermediate or secondary schools.

6. One study may aim to investigate the correlation between Google classroom platform and EFL students' learning styles.

7. An experimental study can be conducted to study the effect of Google classroom platform instruction in developing students' oral performance.

**Biodata:**

Asst. Prof. Qasim H. Al-Ibadi is a Ph.D. holder in the field of ELT. He is the head of Department of English/ College of Education for human sciences/ University of Wasit. He is interested in teaching English language, curriculum design, psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics, language and culture, and applied linguistics.

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