



An empirical study on the use of Google classroom platform in Vietnamese EFL speaking classes

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ABSTRACT

The application of Google Classroom in EFL classes is no longer a strange phenomenon amongst educators, especially in Vietnamese context. It is easily known as a combination of the face to face classroom and the high-tech E-Learning with the virtual platform in which students do some extra learnings outside class under the teacher's supervision. To the best of our knowledge, while blended learning with Google Classroom application classrooms are commonly generated all over the world, very few researches have been conducted to uncover the effect of Google Classroom application on teaching speaking skill at Universities in Viet Nam, or at Phu Yen University to be exact. For this reason, this research aims to discover students' perceptions towards the use of Google Classroom application as a learning tool for further English speaking practice off the classes. Further more, this research also investigates students' academic performances based on the increase in the frequency of students' practice on Google classroom platform compared to solely traditional face-to-face classes. The research was conducted rigorously using both quantitative and qualitative methods. The data in this study were collected from forty eight students in 2 separated classes, traditional face-to-face class and Google classroom application-integrated class at Phu Yen University. Results from students' academic performances revealed that Google Classroom could enhance students' speaking skill as well as boost their engagement in speaking practice.

1. INTRODUCTION

English, which is often referred to as an international language, holds a position of great importance in the world today. People can travel around the world when they are good at English. Speaking is one of the four main skills that learners need to master. This skill is considered to be crucial as it is used in daily life by many people for communication. As suggested by Parupalli Srinivas Rao (2019), "speaking skills are very important for learners to sustain in this globally competitive world. Therefore, the English teachers have to introduce a variety of techniques in their classrooms by selecting simple and useful material that creates more interest and attentiveness among the English language learners towards learning speaking skills."

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The development of technology exerts great influence on language learning. According to Dudeney and Hockly (2007), “the term TELL (Technology Enhanced Language Learning) appeared in the 1990s, in response to the growing possibilities offered by the Internet and communication technology”. They emphasized that technology can be used not only in the classroom, lecture hall, computer room or self-access centre; it can also be used at home. Technology in the classroom has transformed the teaching-learning process by providing new tools and approaches that enhance educational experiences.

Google Classroom is valued as one of the most prominent platforms for promoting teaching process. Xanthoula (2015) reckoned that Google classroom offered a range of features that make it a great tool for both educators and students. He kept mentioned “Classroom helps teachers save time, keep classes organized, and improve communication with students.” This platform enables students to get more engaged in lessons and practise more outside classes. Furthermore, it is widely accepted that Google classroom application is easily accessible and usable to instructors and learners in both face-to-face learning environments and fully online environment.

At universities in Viet Nam, English-majored students are required to enroll in speaking courses during the first two academic years of their tertiary education. Albeit the employment of Communicative language teaching method (CLT) in speaking classes, the students’ practice times have yet to be optimized in the traditional face-to-face lessons which leads to the limitation in students’ opportunity for hands-on practice. Therefore, they usually feel hesitant to speak English and cannot express their thought fluently as they have too few opportunities to practise speaking and to have their performances fixed by the lecturers. These tremendous problems of students are regarded as a motivation for the research to be conducted.

Previous studies have put forward the importance of Google classroom application in teaching-learning process. However very few researches showed the effectiveness of integrating Google classroom into speaking classes, especially in Vietnamese tertiary EFL context. Thus, this study is conducted with the aim to investigate the effectiveness of Google classroom platform on students’ speaking performance by comparing the results of controlled group and experimental group. Furthermore, the teacher’s as well as students’ perceptions of Google classroom application was figured out to modify the study’s purpose. The study was conducted with two research questions specified as followed:

- 1) What are EFL teacher’s and students’ perceptions of the integration of Google Classroom platform into speaking classes?
- 2) How effective is Google classroom platform in enhancing students’ academic speaking performance?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Kayi (2006) stated in his study that teaching speaking is a crucial aspect of acquiring a second language. The capacity to express one’s ideas clearly and effectively in a second language contributes to a learner’s success in school and throughout various stages of life. Therefore, it is imperative that language teachers pay great attention to teaching speaking. Likewise, Bahrani & Soltani (2012) reckoned speaking is a crucial part of the language learning process. The major goal of teaching speaking skill is communicative efficiency. Therefore, focusing on enhancing students’ speaking competence is one of the top priority for teachers in EFL classes.

Information technology may assist in the facilitation of learning or serve as the actual educational structure allowing learning to occur. According to Rodinadze & Zarbazoa (2012), Information technology does wonders for not only conventional education institutions but also online educational models in elementary ways. Nowadays, information technology has made it easier to study as well as teach in groups or in clusters. With respect to the research of Bahadorfar & Omidvar (2014), technology is a mean used to access to this modernized world. Beyond just communication, trade, and transactions, technology is now extensively utilized in the education sector. Technological tools are viewed as methods to assist students in enhancing their language abilities, including speaking skills. Internet, podcasts, video conferencing, videos and speech recognition software are valued as the most efficient tools for teaching this skill.

Google Classroom serves as a platform for facilitating teaching-learning activities. There are benefits of using Google Classroom application. Iftakhar (2016) reckoned that Google Classroom enables educators to reduce their teaching time, maintain a structured classroom environment, and improve mutual interaction with learners. Through Google Classroom, teachers and students can engage in both written and verbal communication, fostering an effective exchange of information. Al-Marroof and Al-Emran (2018) also stated Google classroom promotes a well-organized structure of the files. What is more, Google classroom is a time-saving choice for educators. As can be read in Iftakhar’s study (2016) that this application can be used in both

face-to-face class or online class by any types of smart devices connected to the internet, showing its asset of flexibility.

However, there still exists some certain difficulties in utilizing Google Classroom during the learning process. As Putri (2017) stated in their theory, Google Classroom only allows access from a limited number of domains. Furthermore, Students are unable to share their work with classmates until they have taken full ownership of a document, and even then, they must accept sharing choices, which can lead to confusion if they want to share a document with others. When a teacher assigns a task to students, they automatically become the document's owner and gain the power to modify it. This means they can inadvertently delete parts of the assignment at any time, potentially causing issues even if it's an unintentional mistake. Specifically, it lacks the ability to automatically generate quizzes and exams, making it more suitable for blended learning environments where online and offline components coexist. As a result, it may not be the ideal solution for entirely online programs.

Review of previous studies

Ratnaningsih (2019) investigated students' lived experience of using Google Classroom application as the media for submitting English assignments in the form of writing and speaking. It can be concluded that Google Classroom application is beneficial to enhance writing and speaking skills. From the empirical themes, it can be concluded that Google classroom increases the participants to be more practical, independent learning, easy to use the application, know well the feature application, and able to use for video and audio assignments. From the transcendent themes, despite some inconvenience, the participants in the study become more motivated, disciplined, and convenient.

Similarly, in the research of Albashtawi & Al Bataineh (2020), the attitudes of students toward using Google Classroom as an innovative online platform were revealed. The results showed that "Google Classroom improved the reading and writing performance of Syrian students. Students showed positive attitudes toward using Google Classroom in terms of its ease of use, usefulness, and accessibility."

In Vietnamese context, Dieu & Tuyen (2022) undertook a study on EFL learners' perceptions of Google Classroom application in speaking classes. The results revealed that students highly perceived the benefits of using Google Classroom in speaking class. The mean score of learners' English-speaking performance in the experimental group was higher than that of the control group. This means that the learners in the experimental group improved English speaking performance more than those in the control group.

Rajaindaran & Abdullah (2023) conducted a research which drew the attention to teachers' perception towards the usage of Google Classroom in teaching speaking to Primary ESL students and how the tool assisted in producing better speakers of the language during the pandemic. The results of the research findings prove that Google Classroom had been an effective tool in enhancing speaking performance among students. Next, the research of Kurniawan & Misriani (2023) revealed that via integrating Google classroom application into traditional speaking classes, student activities depicted positive changes, were more interested and enthusiastic in learning speaking skills.

The results from the study of Mekheimer (2024) showed that the Google Classroom-based speaking programme has an overall positive impact on the development of connected speech skills. Findings also illustrated that learners achieved course learning objectives in speaking proficiency, demonstrating an upper-intermediate level of proficiency.

Maulaniam Sholah (2020) conducted a research named *Teaching and Learning English Using Google Classroom for Indonesian Students*. The study indicated that Google Classroom not only could help teachers to manage the class, assignments, and report well but also facilitated students' ability to learn any materials at any time and anywhere, track their progress, and enjoy their learning process.

Munandar, Faridah, & Racmawati (2022) conducted a research on student perceptions of EFL teacher educator in developing teaching materials for the online speaking class using Google Classroom. The students responded that learning online speaking classes through Google Classroom gave them a sense of interest and excitement. Furthermore, students found teaching-learning process really effective and satisfying. For that reason, the students thought that interaction with EFL teachers in google classroom is a favourable alternative as Google Classroom is easy to use.

In general, the previous studies focused on the use of Google classroom as an alternative for traditional classroom. Furthermore, little research in the field has been found in the literature review. Most of the previous papers just focus on investigating the use of Google classroom during the Covid-19 pandemic, without referring to further application of this platform after the normalization of the pandemic. In addition, many of

the researches just discover the benefits of using Google classroom in teaching integrated skills (writing-speaking) without going deeper into a solely skill (speaking). This is why the current research study is carried out in the context where Vietnamese undergraduates are taught speaking skill, hopefully to fill this research gap.

3. METHOD RESEARCH DESIGN

This will be experimental research with a mixed-method approach that included both quantitative and qualitative techniques. The first two research questions were tackled by using questionnaire from quantitative method as well as a semi-structured interview from the qualitative method. To address the third research question, a pre-test and post-test from the quantitative approach were employed.

Table 1. The Sequence of Experimental Research

	1. Pre-test	2. Treatment	3. Post-test
Experimental group	X	X	X
Control group	X		X

3.1. Participants

The population of the study consisted of 48 undergraduates who were in the second year of Phu Yen university, Phu Yen Province, Viet Nam. These students were from two separate classes of the university and were chosen randomly for the experiment. The students then were divided into two equal groups. In the control group, there were 24 students. In the experimental group, there were 24 students. A set of questionnaire was delivered to 24 students in experimental group to figure out their views regarding the integration of Google Classroom platform into speaking classes. Moreover, 3 lecturers in charge of speaking courses at Phu Yen University also participated in a semi-structured interview to shed more light on the benefits and drawbacks of Google classroom application in speaking classes.

3.2. Instrument

This research employed a mixed methods approach, which aimed to examine the students' perceptions towards the Google classroom-blended speaking class and the effectiveness of this application on students' performance. To achieve the aims and objectives of the research, a qualitative approach (interview) was used with the support from quantitative method (questionnaire, pre-test & post-test).

Table 2. Instruments used in the study

Instrument	Pre/post-test	Questionnaire	Interview
Function	To measure the effectiveness of Google classroom platform in enhancing students' academic speaking performance.	To gauge students' views on the Google classroom-integrated speaking classes.	To uncover the advantages and difficulties that teachers encounter when using Google classroom in speaking classes.
Elicitation format	A range of speaking questions posted on Google classroom	A 2-scale questionnaire	A set of interview questions
Response Format	Spoken Recording voice answers	Written Writing appropriate responses	Spoken Giving appropriate responses

3.3. Data collection

In this study, the quantitative data (pre-test/post-test; questionnaire) was conducted before the qualitative data (interview) to foster understanding and interpretation of the results.

A set of questions in the questionnaire was created to ask about students' perceptions toward the act of practising speaking outside class via Google classroom. In this survey, they were required to answer ten 2-scale questions (yes/ no questions) with regards to their feelings of learning, the benefits and difficulties of using Google classroom (recording and uploading process), their preference for learning in a Google classroom-blended speaking classes to a traditional face-to-face ones.

Semi-structured interviews with three teachers were implemented to figure out their perspectives regarding the application of Google classroom in English speaking classes. The questions applied in this interview include: “What are the advantages and disadvantages of integrating Google classroom into your speaking classes? Will you still keep using Google classroom platform for further speaking classes?”

The purpose of obtaining data is to underline the effectiveness of Google classroom platform on students' academic speaking performance as well as exploring both teachers' and students' viewpoints regarding the Google classroom-integrated speaking classes.

3.4. Data analysis

As for the quantitative data, the study used Google Classroom grading system and the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) computer program to help the researcher gather and analyze the scores from the pre-test and post-test of the two groups. In addition to that, the data from the questionnaire regarding students' perception of Google classroom application was calculated and presented in percentage by using online Google form.

After collecting and analyzing the data of the pre/post-test and the questionnaire, a semi-structured interview with three Vietnamese EFL lecturers was employed to find out the merits and demerits of Google Classroom application drastically and effectively. All the answers from the teachers were recorded for further reference afterward.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Research Question 1

To begin with, up to 22 out of 24 participants agreed that they were proactive about time and study in Google classroom-integrated speaking classes. When being asked about the level of pro-activity, they expressed their view that the practice on Google classroom allowed them to know the speaking topics beforehand, then have a preparation for their speaking before posting the records on the platform. In addition to the flexibility of time and study, most of the participants also voiced that they feel enjoyed learning through Google Classroom (20/24), and become more excited and engaged in speaking learning process (22/24). Some students stated: “I feel less stressed when joining Google classroom after face-to-face speaking classes. When I have to answer the questions from the teachers one-on-one, I always have a sense of nervousness. However, practice on Google classroom at home dispels my fear as well as enables me to express my idea confidently.” Exact one hundred percent of students voted that by submitting assignment on Google Classroom, they have more time to prepare their speaking and check pronunciation. It does mean that Google classroom is able to generate positive impacts on students performance to some extent, sharing the same result with Kurniawan & Misriani (2023) - “*Utilizing Google Classroom Applications in Learning Speaking Skills During the Covid-19 Pandemic*”, which stated that via integrating Google classroom application into traditional speaking classes, student activities depicted positive changes, were more interested and enthusiastic in learning speaking skills.

When being asked whether learning through Google Classroom made them become more discipline in submitting homework or not, most of the participants (23/24) confirmed that the application really helped them become more aware of the learning duty, urging them to finish their submission as soon as possible. Only two students out of twenty five reckoned that it was not disciplined sometimes, when the teachers did not set the deadline for the given tasks. Although more than fifty percent of participants subscribed to the view that they were more active when learning through Google Classroom, it is noticeable that nine in twenty five students were still unsure with the level of activeness they gained via Google Classroom-blended speaking classes.

The acquired data from question number seven delineated that nearly ninety percent of students (22/24) thought Google Classroom could improve their speaking skill. In other words, it can be guessed blended speaking classes are able to help them enhance speaking competence including fluency, pronunciation, intonation,... The questionnaire also revealed that 23 out of 24 investigation takers found it quite easy to upload their assignment on Google classroom platform, which can be inferred that students did not encounter any difficulties in manipulating this application. Furthermore, when being asked about their preference of Google classroom-blended speaking classes, well over ninety percent of the participants indicated they preferred to learn in a Google classroom-blended speaking class rather than a traditional face-to-face one. Question number nine showed that most of the students felt more comfortable when speaking on Google classroom than in a face-to-face class. This result, therefore, may be the trigger for their inclination to learn in a Google classroom-integrated speaking class.

Research Question 2

The findings from the interview with Phu Yen University's lecturers revealed that Google Classroom application offers teachers with a host of benefits when this platform is integrated in speaking classes. All of the three lecturers involved in the interview agreed that Google Classroom optimized their students' speaking time, enabling them to practise more after every offline speaking classes. The teachers believed: "Since I applied Google Classroom in my speaking classes, I have noticed that my students are more active in practising their speaking skill compared to a solely traditional speaking class with no Google classroom integration". They added: "Via Google classroom platform, I can keep my students' extra practices under surveillance, which is a different story when it comes to a normal face-to-face class that we do not know whether students do their practice at home or not". It does mean that the teachers all showed positive attitudes toward the application of Google Classroom to their classes. They considered it as an alternative channel for students to practice their speaking after the class. They confessed a normal class could not offer plenty of time for learners' practice, therefore, students just had a limited amount of time to interact at classes. "How can we ensure that all students can get the opportunity to display their speaking performance and have them corrected by the teachers in front of the class? Just Google classroom or some other similar platforms can do that.": A teacher affirmed.

On the other hand, two out of three lecturers at Phu Yen University provided firm information that a Google classroom-integrated speaking classes has still existed a drawback. They subscribed to the view that Google classroom did not enable students to access to the others' audio records, leading to the lack of interaction and mutual assessment, making it impossible for students to give comment on their friends' performances and learn from their results. Teachers emphasized: "Learners cannot share their work with their peers, making it impossible for them to learn from their friends' errors. This problem fails to turn Google classroom into a lively learning platform". It is obviously seen that the teachers did not think Google classroom can be a vibrant and interactive environment for students to share and to be shared.

However, with more blessing than curse, the teachers recapitulated Google Classroom was worth being used in speaking classes as a supporting platform in the the teaching process. Similarly, Dieu & Tuyen (2022) stated in their study "*EFL learners' perceptions of Google Classroom application in speaking classes*" that participants had positive thoughts about learning English speaking through Google Classroom application. Consequently, it can be concluded that Google Classroom can make the teaching and learning experience more enjoyable in certain situations, while also decreasing the boredom and stress of the learning process.

Research Question 3

The results collected from the experimental group showed that most students achieved greater gain in performance in the post-test over the pre-test. There were 15 out of 24 students who gained higher scores; 5 out of 24 students remained the same score as in the pre-test; only 4 student got lower point than the pre-test.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of the mean performance in the pre-test and the post-test of the experimental group

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
Pre-test	24	2.00	9.50	6.0625
Post-test	24	4.00	10.00	6.3542
Difference in mean				0.2917

As can be seen from Table 3.1, the mean difference between the pre-test and the post-test was 0.2917. Most of the participants obtained higher scores in the post-test than in the pre-test. What is more, the minimum and the maximum in the post-test were also higher than those of the pre-test. In the post-test, the maximum gain was 10.00 and the minimum gain was 4.00 while in the pre-test the maximum was 9.50 and the minimum was just 2.00. There is obviously a big gap between the minimum score in the pre-test and in the post-test.

When it comes to the data collected from the students' speaking performances in the control group, it can be seen that only 8 out of 24 students gained higher scores (this number is much lower than that of the experimental group); 4 out of 24 students remained the same score as in the pre-test; up to 12/24 student got lower point than the pre-test (three-fold higher than the figure for experimental group).

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of the mean performance in the pre-test and the post-test of the control group

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
Pre-test	24	4.00	10.00	7.1667
Post-test	24	4.50	9.00	6.8125
Difference in mean				-0.3542

As shown in Table 3.2, the mean difference between the pre-test and the post-test was -0.3542. The participants generally got lower score in the post-test than in the pre-test. In the post-test, the maximum gain was 9.00 and the minimum gain was 4.50, whereas in the pre-test the maximum was 10.00 and the minimum was 4.00. This result of the control group can be attributed to the lack of students' practice after class, leading to the decrease in their speaking scores at the final stage of the study when the teachers' requirement was much tougher and more demanding.

5. DISCUSSION

Through the data collected from the questionnaire, EFL learners showed a positive attitude towards Google Classroom application as outside-of-class activities and how their speaking proficiency (including pronunciation, vocabulary, fluency...) has been improved when practising English speaking through Google Classroom. The students' answers from the questionnaire claimed that they gained interested in taking part in Google Classroom application, had the sense of convenience of using this application for extra-practice (Munandar, Faridah, & Racmawati, 2022).

Moreover, the teachers' perceptions obtained from the interview delineated that Google classroom has given significant support to the teaching-learning process, offering students with more chance to speak after school. The results are consistent with previous studies such as Iftakar (2016), Dieu & Tuyen (2022), Kurniawan & Misriani (2023).

The results from the t-tests generally match with previous studies' findings, such as Dieu & Tuyen (2022) about the impact of Google Classroom application on learners' speaking performance. By integrating Google classroom in speaking classes, teachers could improve learners' English speaking performance and their scores on the English-speaking regular tests. The authors stated that the considerable differences between pre-test and post-test of the participants' English speaking performance in experimental group can be noticed as a positive effect of applying Google Classroom platform on students' speaking performance.

Consistent with other research results, it is reasonable to assert that using the Google Classroom application effectively enhances learners' speaking ability. Not only can it create a positive environment for students, but it is also a great tool in supporting teaching process.

6. IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

This study aimed at identifying, describing, analyzing the effectiveness of Google classroom-integrated speaking classes on students' performance. The sample in this study was forty-eight students who are in the second year of Phu Yen University. These students were divided into 2 separate groups (control group and experimental group) to join traditional speaking classes and Google Classroom-blended speaking classes (students attended face-to-face classes together with interacting with the teacher and completing speaking assignments on Google Classroom platform). As a result, the number of participants in the experimental group gaining better scores (15/24) is much higher than that of the control group (8/24). The mean difference between the pre-test and the post-test of the experimental group was 0.2917, while this figure of the control group was -0.3542. It proved that students learning in Google Classroom-blended speaking classes significantly improved their speaking performance at the end of the course. Students felt more excited and engaged in speaking learning process and had a preference for learning in a Google classroom-blended speaking class to a traditional face-to-face one.

The findings in this study have suggested some implications and recommendations which are of significance to EFL teachers as follow:

Google Classroom application offers teachers with a host of benefits when this platform is integrated in speaking classes. Google Classroom optimizes students' speaking time, enabling them to practise more after every offline speaking classes. Teachers therefore can consider Google Classroom as an alternative channel for students to practice their speaking after the class.

7. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The present study is limited in these aspects. Students were required to do the speaking assignment on Google Classroom by uploading their records at home, therefore, the speaking process was not under scrutiny and the time to prepare their speaking was not equal amongst students. In addition, it is the limited population of the study that might not boost the generalizability of the results. This study tackled a limited number of participants in the t-test due to the limitations of space and time.

The study just collected data from students' speaking records without focusing on other skills such as writing, reading, listening, thus the results might be more or less different in those contexts.

Future research should shed more light on other aspects of the English language use such as writing, reading, listening skill. Furthermore, research is also needed to proliferate the number of participants to enhance the level of accuracy of the findings.

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Nghiên cứu thực nghiệm về việc sử dụng nền tảng Google Classroom trong các lớp kỹ năng nói tiếng Anh tại Việt Nam

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TÓM TẮT

Việc áp dụng Google Classroom trong các lớp học tiếng Anh không còn là điều xa lạ đối với các nhà giáo dục, đặc biệt là trong bối cảnh tại Việt Nam. Nó dễ dàng được biết đến như sự kết hợp giữa lớp học trực tiếp và lớp học trực tuyến công nghệ cao với nền tảng ảo mà ở đây học sinh học thêm bên ngoài lớp học dưới sự giám sát của giáo viên. Theo hiểu biết của chúng tôi, trong khi việc học tập có sự kết hợp với ứng dụng Google Classroom phổ biến trên toàn thế giới, rất ít nghiên cứu được tiến hành để đào sâu tác động của Google Classroom đối với việc giảng dạy kỹ năng nói tại các trường đại học ở Việt Nam, hay chính xác hơn là tại Đại học Phú Yên. Chính vì lý do này, nghiên cứu này nhằm mục đích khám phá nhận thức của sinh viên đối với việc sử dụng ứng dụng Google Classroom như một công cụ học tập để thực hành nói tiếng Anh nhiều hơn ngoài lớp học. Hơn thế nữa, nghiên cứu này cũng điều tra thành tích học tập của sinh viên dựa trên sự gia tăng tần suất sinh viên thực hành trên nền tảng Google Classroom so với các lớp học trực tiếp truyền thống. Nghiên cứu được tiến hành nghiêm ngặt bằng cả phương pháp định lượng và định tính. Dữ liệu trong nghiên cứu này được thu thập từ bốn mươi tám sinh viên trong 2 lớp học tách biệt, lớp học trực tiếp truyền thống và lớp học tích hợp ứng dụng Google Classroom tại Đại học Phú Yên. Kết quả từ thành tích học tập của sinh viên cho thấy Google Classroom có thể nâng cao kỹ năng nói của sinh viên cũng như thúc đẩy sự tham gia của họ vào việc thực hành nói.