



EFL Students' Perceptions towards Using Google Docs and Google Classroom as Online Collaborative Tools in Learning Grammar

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ABSTRACT

In teaching English as a foreign language, numerous Palestinian institutions rely on traditional approaches towards grammar. Grammatical rules are taught to students directly from the textbook and in return, students are required to complete a number of activities in their workbooks to showcase their understanding and application of such rules. There is a lack of student exposure to technological learning tools and the application of a flipped classroom approach to teaching. With that said, the present study is an attempt to elicit students' responses prior to using Google Applications namely Google Docs (a web-based application allowing for documents to be written, edited, and stored online) and Google Classroom (a web service which enables teachers to create, share, and evaluate assignments within a paperless environment) in their grammar course and after doing so for the purpose of finding out the effectiveness of such applications in building a collaborative learning environment and adhering to the principles of a flipped classroom. Data was elicited from six EFL university students taking a Grammar I course at Palestine Ahliya University in Bethlehem via pre and post-questionnaires as well as a semi-structured interview. The findings of the study suggest that according to the students, Google Applications help establish a collaborative learning environment since they support teacher-to-student and student-to-student interactions and the majority of the participants prefer using such applications for future courses given that they can benefit from the availability of teacher written feedback and the easy access to course materials.

Keywords: Google docs; collaborative learning; google classroom; flipped learning; EFL learning

1. Introduction

In the Palestinian context, English as a foreign language was implemented by the Ministry of Education as a core subject from the first grade (Awad, 2013). Thus, learning English grammar has become a fundamental step in the preparation of students for future educational and professional goals. In schools and universities, most teachers and instructors place a great deal of emphasis on the teaching of grammatical concepts, believing that learning a second language entails the mastery of its grammatical rules and structures. In teaching English as a foreign language, numerous Palestinian institutions rely on traditional approaches towards teaching grammar. Grammatical rules are

taught to students directly from the textbook and in return, students are required to complete a number of activities in their workbooks to showcase their understanding and application of such rules. This process has become somewhat of a routine and the completion of grammar exercises in workbooks is viewed to be a doctrine which teachers should follow. However, in his evaluation of English for Palestine 12nd grade textbook, Awad (2013) asserts:

There is no perfect material that suits every situation in any classroom or that suits all students' needs of learning styles and strategies. . . In this respect, teachers may use supplementary relevant material, substitute or even omit trivial or irrelevant items where the need arises either to comply with student needs in order to compensate for any weak or unsatisfactory points in the textbook or according to the teachers own needs in certain teaching situations. (p. 2404)

In the light of the aforementioned situation, the problem which this study aimed at addressing was the lack of collaborative approaches in teaching grammar. The conventional approach of being bound to textbooks and workbooks in the teaching and learning of grammar limits students' exposure to a variety of learning materials relevant to their course topics. Given that we are in what is referred to as the Digital Age, such a traditional approach is a restriction to developing students' technological skills, building their autonomy in learning, and assisting them in becoming active learners. Various studies have dealt with collaborative teaching approaches through the use of electronic learning platforms; nevertheless, to the best of the researcher's knowledge the use of Google Applications in the teaching of English Grammar at the university level in Palestine are limited. With that mentioned, this study aimed at filling this gap in the Palestinian context.

2. Literature Review

In carrying out his study on the application of technology in teaching grammar, Saeedi (2016) asserts that the considerable effects which technology has brought forth into our lives during the past decades are inevitable. According to Saeedi (2016), language teaching/learning is one of the many areas that witnessed the positive impacts afforded by technology (p. 20). In support of Saeedi's claim, Al-Harbi and Alshumaimeri (2016) state that including technology in the teaching of grammar will give students control over their learning and provide opportunities for them to practice the target language in the classroom, making them autonomous learners. In addition, Parvin and Salam (2015) state that despite the positive effects of technology on assisting learners to become autonomous, teachers need to guide the students by providing instructional support. With that mentioned, in providing support, teachers minimize the chances of technological challenges which can stand in the way of the learners and keep them from completing the assigned tasks successfully.

With respect to the role of technology in teaching, Maddux (2002) distinguished between two types of technology. "Type I uses make it quicker, easier, or more convenient to teach in traditional ways while Type II uses make it possible to teach in new and better ways that are not otherwise available" (as cited in Hegelheimh & Fisher, 2006, p. 260). Taking that into consideration, it can be argued that using technology in the classroom does not always ensure that the teacher is employing new pedagogical approaches. The instructor can simply make use of technology for his/her benefit in teaching a particular subject that is by not having to write very often or perhaps make copies of the course materials in advance, but still teach the subject traditionally. On the other hand, the instructor can use technology to the learners' best advantage and introduce new modes of teaching which differ from the conventional ones.

2.1. Web 2.0 Technologies

According to Tamimi (2017), Web 2.0 technology is a concept referring to a system of advancing technologies which are currently being used by millions of people around the globe for interaction, collaboration, networking, and entertaining purposes (p. 86). Web 2.0 technologies are available to their users in various forms including the following: web applications (e.g. Google Docs, Google Sheets, Google Slides); social networking sites (Facebook and Twitter); video sharing tools (e.g. Youtube); wiki engines (e.g. Wikipedia); and online blogs (e.g. Blogger.com and WordPress). Such tools allow people to communicate with one another and share unlimited amounts of files

and personal creations at the click of a button. Web 2.0 technologies have been integrated for many years into educational systems for the purpose of facilitating curriculum design, enriching pedagogical material, and enhancing collaborative work among teachers and students.

2.2. The Flipped Classroom

In their study, *The Flipped Experience for Chinese University Students Studying English as a Foreign Language*, Doman and Webb (2017) state that the “term flipped classroom was originally coined by Baker (2000) and Lage, Platt, and Treglia (2000)” (p. 102). It is an upside-down mode of teaching where students have the opportunity to be more engaged with classroom materials interactively rather than maintaining their roles as passive listeners during class lectures (Doman & Webb, 2017). In their definition, Al-Harbi and Alshumaimeri (2016) state that “the flipped classroom strategy is a pedagogical model in which lesson content is learned at home by means of technology, allowing teachers to devote class time to practicing lesson content with exercises, activities, discussions, or projects” (p. 60).

Doman and Webb (2017) assert that when teachers follow the flipped classroom strategy in teaching, they are no longer lecturers. They adopt the role of facilitators and mentors for students and are available outside the classroom to answer their inquiries. To add to that, learning becomes collaborative since students can use Web 2.0 technologies to communicate and exchange information with their teachers as well as their peers. Similarly, Doman and Webb (2017) state, “Flipping also allows for more individualization in the classroom because lectures or detailed explanations can now be viewed at home via video or handouts, where students can view incorrect answers and learn from their mistakes, and forums in which students can get direct feedback from each other and the teacher (p. 104).

Al-Harbi and Alshumaimeri (2016) believe that the flipped classroom has positive effects on student performance and proficiency levels in different areas of foreign language learning. That happens to be the case since students spend more time learning grammatical concepts at home passively and in turn have most of the class time at their disposal to engage in discussions and transfer their passive knowledge into active communication. The researchers investigated the flipped classroom strategy in an experimental study with regard to whether the new model of teaching can bring about significant differences in student achievement in English grammar. The findings of their study showed that the flipped classroom improved students’ knowledge of grammar by allowing them to take charge of their learning and become active learners. Learners were able to apply the learned grammar rules in the flipped classroom in their writing and speaking courses. Similarly, the availability of educational videos and supplementary materials technologically speaking, fulfilled the gaps within the curriculum and helped expose students to native-like English and other authentic communicative contexts.

2.3. Google Docs

Google Docs is a word processing application provided by Google and is available as a web and mobile application for Windows, Mac, Android, and IOS operating systems. According to Boyes (2016), “Google Docs allows instant feedback and collaboration on student-generated text when students are online at the same time” (p. 229). Moreover, learners no longer need to rely on USB memory sticks to store their written assignments since Google Docs saves the work instantly and guarantees that students will never lose their documents. In addition, learners have the advantage of sharing their documents at the click of a button with their teachers and peers who can view as well as edit them. To use Google Docs or any other application provided by Google, the students and teachers need to create a Gmail account. Once they have done so, they can easily access their work from a computer or mobile phone anywhere and anytime.

In support of Boyes’ (2016) take on Google Docs, Ragupathi (2013) claims that the aforementioned application can create a collaborative learning environment between the teacher and student for a number of reasons including the following: (1) “control edit setting, (2) allow simultaneous work, (3) chat with other students, (4) save changes and retrieve past versions, and (5) offer clear online tutorials and help sections” (p. 2). By providing a control edit setting, teachers can view, edit, and comment student work. As for simultaneous work, students can see the changes being made to

their documents at the same time. In addition, the changes made by others will be automatically saved and color coded on the document. Furthermore, students and teachers can chat with each other while editing the documents which allows for collaboration and clarifications of misunderstandings. All versions of saved documents can be retrieved easily in case of deletion. Not to mention, students and teachers no longer need to worry about converting their documents into a compatible version of the word processing software since Google always provides an up-to-date version with every access.

2.4. Google Classroom

Google Classroom is another application provided by Google Inc. which is used as an online educational platform. Google Classroom is very easy to set up and it allows instructors to create classes, distribute assignments, post announcements, send feedback, and upload course materials for students to view. It is free and versatile; no payment is required and teachers can get in touch with students and their parents as well as access other Google tools such as Google Forms, Docs, Slides, Sheets, and so on. When students turn in their assignments, the instructor can highlight the contents of each assignment and provide the learner with instant constructive feedback and evaluate his/her performance. In addition, the teacher can invite other colleagues or guests to view the posts on the application. Google Classroom can be used for any course in any educational institution and is very convenient and manageable.

2.5. Significance of the Study

According to Saeedi (2016), "grammar is equated with meaningless and decontextualized forms which were isolate from use" (p. 18). As a result, the emergence of the Communicative Language Teaching Approach helped in pushing grammar out of the boundaries of the traditional language learning scene. This left teachers to shift their focus from teaching grammar passively to applying more active and engaging approaches. However, finding the appropriate teaching techniques that contextualize and motivate students to learn has become problematic. Despite teachers' efforts in approaching grammar with activating techniques in the classroom, students remain reluctant in terms of practically applying the rules learned outside the classroom. As a result, Saeedi (2016) and Keshta and Harb (2013) assert that grammar should be verged upon using interactive technological platforms which can serve as a motivator and at the same time expose students to endless online input sources to better their learning and be one step closer in terms of achieving their goals.

Tamimi (2017) states that "millions of people now communicate through Web 2.0 technology tools and use them for teaching and learning, receiving feedback, evaluating various genre, and utilizing them as ranking instruments" (p. 85). By engaging students in electronic learning applications and following a blended learning approach in teaching, teachers can make use of a complete package of various multimedia to overcome passive learning and the demotivating factors which conventional approaches give rise to in the English classroom. Integrating technological applications in the teaching and learning of the English language, teachers can create a collaborative learning environment where students have the advantage of sharing their ideas with peers, receiving teacher feedback, and having a plethora of learning materials at their disposal. In carrying out this study on students' perceptions towards using Google Applications as online collaborative tools in learning grammar, the researcher strongly believes that the findings will support the claim centered on the notion that technology in the English classroom can yield positive learning and teaching outcomes for both students and teachers.

The present study is an attempt to elicit students' responses prior to using Google Applications in their grammar course and after doing so for the purpose of finding out the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of such applications in building a collaborative learning environment and adhering to the principles of a flipped classroom learning environment. In addition, it aims at filling the gap in relevant literature in relation to using Google Applications in the teaching of grammar within the Palestinian context.

Research Questions

The primary research questions that the present study aimed at were:

1. What are the learners' attitudes towards the use of Google Applications namely Google Docs and Google Classroom as online collaborative tools in learning grammar having used them for the very first time?
2. Do the students prefer the flipped classroom model of employing such applications in future courses?

3. Methodology

3.1. Participants

Six Palestinian EFL learners, 4 females and 2 males between the ages of 16-40, served as the participants for this study. They are enrolled in the first semester of the English Diploma for Professional Purposes Program at Palestine Ahliya University in Bethlehem. The program was run by the Continuing Education Center and was open to all learners from different backgrounds. With that mentioned, the participants indeed came from different professional and educational backgrounds since 2 students were majoring in Physiotherapy, 2 others in Management and Information System, and 1 in Business Administration. The remaining participant obtained an MA degree and was an employee. The learners were taking a Grammar I course which was one of the three courses offered in the first semester of the program alongside Oral Communication Skills I and Reading and Vocabulary. There was a total of 7 students in the grammar course, but only 6 agreed to participate in the present study.

3.2. Instruments

Prior to conducting this study, the researcher obtained an ethical approval from the coordinators of the Continuing Education Center at Palestine Ahliya University. A cover sheet was attached (see Appendix A) to both questionnaires explaining the purpose of the study and assuring the participants that their participation is voluntary and that the results will remain confidential.

A pre and post-questionnaire (see Appendix B & C) adapted from Alsubaie and Ashuraidah's (2017) questionnaires (see Appendix E & F) were tweaked to suit the online learning tools that the present study aimed at exploring. The original questionnaires were intended to elicit students' experiences and evaluations relevant to using Google Docs for writing. However, the present study intended to explore students' perceptions and evaluations regarding Google Docs and the Google Classroom Application in relation to learning grammar. The participants were given no longer than 10 minutes to complete the sections of the questionnaires. Both questionnaires were sent to two experts at Palestine Ahliya University to ensure their reliability and validity. In addition to the pre and post-questionnaires, the researcher carried out a semi-structured interview (see Appendix D) for the purpose of eliciting open-ended responses from the participants.

The pre-questionnaire was adjusted to survey students' knowledge and experience with Google Docs. It was divided into two sections: (1) Demographic Profile and (2) Online Learning Tools. The former elicited demographic data such as age, gender, educational qualification, employment status, major, and college year level. Whereas, the latter contained questions related to the students' experience with Gmail, Google Docs, other online learning tools, as well as their evaluation of such tools. On the other hand, the post-questionnaire consisted of 10 statements divided into the following two parts: (1) Google Docs and (2) Google Classroom Application. A total of six statements regarding students' evaluation of Google Docs were presented in the first part and 4 statements relevant to the Google Classroom Application were in the second. The questionnaire followed a 5 point Likert scale based on the following opinions: strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, and strongly disagree. Lastly, the semi-structured interview consisted of 5 questions which were in unison with the statements that received either a 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree' response in the post-questionnaire. The researcher asked follow-up questions accordingly.

3.3. Procedure

The pre-questionnaire was distributed to the students before they started taking the grammar course. During the course, which lasted for 10 weeks (totaling 20 hours), they were given grammar

rules and concepts to learn at home via Google Classroom as well as tasks and exercises to complete and submit using Google Docs every week. Once the grammar course came to an end, the post-questionnaire was distributed to elicit their evaluations and perceptions towards using Google Docs and Google Classroom. After the results of the post-questionnaire were analyzed, the researcher marked the statements which the participants disagreed on and interviewed them to elicit more elaborate answers. The researcher used the pre-determined questions as a guide during the interview and posed follow-up questions when needed.

3.4. Results

The findings of the study are presented in the following section. The results are parted into three sections since two questionnaires (see Appendix B&C) were distributed and a semi-structured interview (see Appendix D) was carried out. The first section reports the results of the pre-questionnaire, the second reports the findings of the post-questionnaire, and the third section summarizes the results of the post-research interview. The results consist of both qualitative and quantitative data. The quantitative data was analyzed using Microsoft Excel 2010 Analysis ToolPak and is reported by means of tables and graphs.

Results of Pre-Questionnaire

As mentioned earlier, the primary aim of the pre-questionnaire was to elicit students' knowledge and experiences with Google Docs and or other online learning tools prior to using the Google Docs Application in their Grammar I course. The first section of the questionnaire was to gather students' demographic profiles. The questionnaire revealed they all come from different professional and educational backgrounds. Two participants have completed their undergraduate education while the remaining 4 participants are in the midst of their university education. The participants consisted of 4 females and 2 males who will be referred to by the following pseudonyms: Aleen, Suzan, Sarah, Hala, Ahmad, and Ali.

The first question in the second section of the pre-questionnaire asks if the students have a Gmail account. The participants, Aleen, Suzan, Ahmad, and Ali, responded with 'yes' while the remaining 2 participants (Sarah and Hala) responded with 'no'. This shows that the majority of the participants (67%) had Gmail accounts before being introduced to Google Applications while the remaining 33% did not. The second question asks if the students used Google Docs or any other learning tool before. Aleen, Ali, Ahmad, and Sarah responded with 'no'; while, Suzan and Hala answered 'yes'. The following questions were only applicable to those who answered 'yes'. Given that Aleen, Ali, Ahmad, and Sarah did not use any online learning tools, they did not answer those questions.

Meanwhile, Suzan and Hala identified the online learning tools that they used before which included the following: 'e-learning' and 'e-school'. Suzan mentioned that she used the e-learning tool to complete a course task stating, "We used it in school for technology and programming and article networks". Additionally, she found the e-learning tool as "good and easy". On the other hand, Hala did not use the e-school tool to complete a course task. In her evaluation of the learning tool, she mentioned that "it was very bad, not helpful, [and] difficult to know new information". Taking the responses of the participants into consideration, the researcher concluded that the majority (67%) have no experience with learning tools while the remaining 33% have opposing views regarding their experience.

Results of Post-Questionnaire

The primary goal of the post-questionnaire was to survey students' evaluations and perceptions towards using Google Docs and Google Classroom. The post-questionnaire was given to the participants after their completion of the Grammar I course. Table 1 below provides a correction key with the intervals which correspond to the 5 point Likert scale reflecting the following opinions: (1) strongly agree, (2) agree, (3) neither agree nor disagree, (4) disagree, and (5) strongly disagree. The total number of intervals (4) was divided by the number of opinions (5) which resulted in a distance of 0.8 between each point. The distance of 0.8 was then added to each point and 1 percent was subtracted to avoid repetition.

Table 1. Correction key for post-questionnaire means

Mean intervals	Opinion scale
1 — 1.79	Strongly agree
1.8 — 2.59	Agree
2.6 — 3.39	Neither agree nor disagree
3.4 — 4.19	Disagree
4.2 — 5	Strongly disagree

Table 2. Post-questionnaire means and standard deviations

Statements	M	SD
Google Docs		
1. I enjoyed completing grammar tasks using Google Docs.	2.3	3.11
2. I feel comfortable completing the tasks using Google Docs.	2	3.03
3. I would use Google Docs for my studies in the future.	2.2	1.55
4. I would like to complete similar tasks again.	2.2	1.55
5. Google Docs influence our group's collaborative experience positively.	3	3.55
6. I feel that teacher written feedback via Google Docs helped me understand grammatical concepts better.	1.8	2.08
Google Classroom Application		
7. Dealing with the Google Classroom application was convenient with regard to keeping track of my learning.	2.5	3.01
8. Reading the course materials at home via Google Classroom helped me be well prepared for class discussions.	2.2	3.91
9. The attached course materials were easy to access on Google Classroom.	2.2	2.83
10. I prefer using Google Classroom application for future courses in the diploma program.	1.8	2.26
Total	2.2	2.68

Table 1 shows the following 5 mean intervals: (1-1.79), (1.8-2.59), (2.6-3.39), (3.4-4.19), and (4.2-5). The mean squares between the first interval (1-1.79) mirror that the students strongly agree on the given statements; whereas, mean squares within the second interval (1.8 -2.59) reflect the opinion 'agree'. The third (2.6-3.39), fourth (3.4-4.19), and fifth (4.2-5) intervals represent the following opinions: 'neither agree nor disagree', 'disagree', and 'strongly disagree' respectively. The means and standard deviations of the post-questionnaire statements were calculated and listed in Table 2. They were divided into two main sections since the post-questionnaire statements were designed to address two Google Applications namely Google Docs and Google Classroom.

It is evident from Table 2 above that the majority of the means relevant to the post-questionnaire statements fall into the second mean interval of (1.8-2.59). This means that the participants' responses reflect that they 'agree' with the given statements on Google Docs and Google Classroom. The fifth statement in the post-questionnaire received the highest mean score of 3 which falls into the third mean interval (2.6-3.39) representing 'neither agree nor disagree'. The total mean score was 2.2 which confirms the claim that most of the students agree with the effectiveness of the Google Applications. In addition, the total standard deviation was 2.68 which reveals that the students' responses were not significantly spread out from the mean. To highlight each student's response on each statement, Figure 1 below shows the students' responses with regard to the statements which focus on Google Docs in the post-questionnaire.

Figure 1 shows the number of students' responses regarding the post-questionnaire statements on Google Docs. It can be seen from the graph that 4 respondents (67%) 'agree' with the first statement regarding the enjoyability of completing grammar tasks. The remaining 2 participants (33%) 'neither agree nor disagree'. Similarly, 4 participants 'agree' with the comfortability of completing grammar tasks using Google Docs in the second statements. As for the remaining 2 participants, one of them 'strongly agrees' with the aforementioned statement while the other

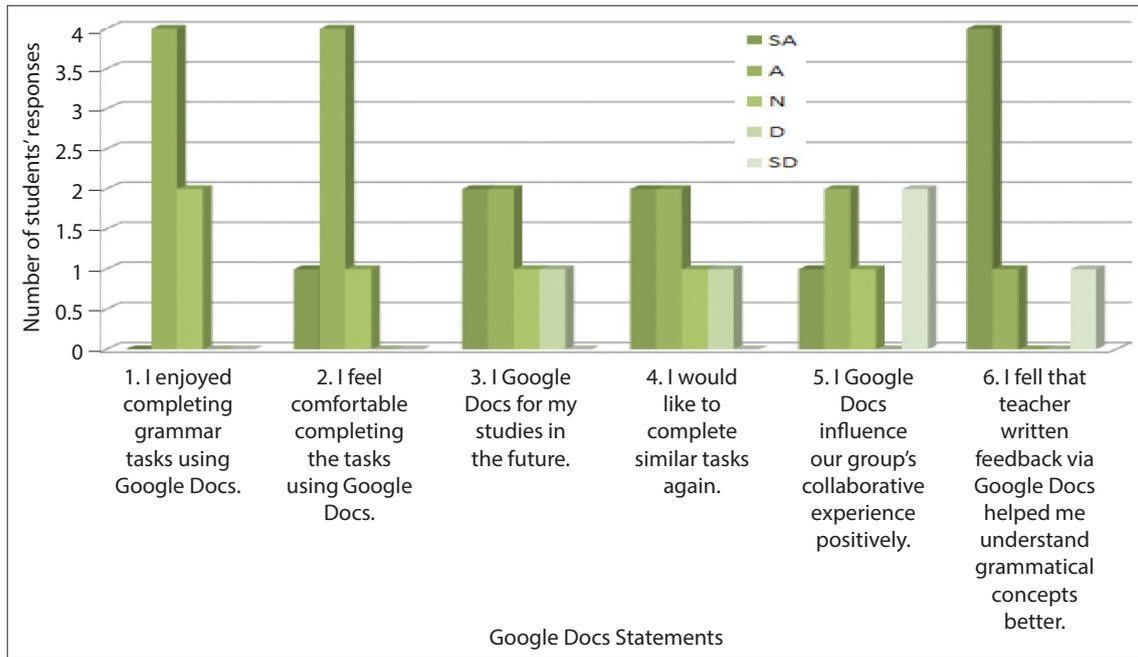


Figure 1. Students' Responses on Google Docs Statements

expressed a 'neutral' opinion. The participants' responses for the third and fourth statements were similar as shown in Graph 1. For the third statement, two students (33%) 'strongly agree' on the use of Google Docs for future studies; 2 others (33%) 'agree'; 1 participant (17%) 'neither agrees nor disagrees'; and the remaining participant (17%) 'disagrees'. The same results apply to the fourth statement relevant to the completion of similar grammar tasks.

As for the fifth statement, one participant (17%) 'strongly agrees' that Google Docs influence the group's collaborative learning experience positively; whereas 2 participants (33%) 'agree'. This translates into 50% of the participants acknowledge the effectiveness of Google Docs as a collaborative learning tool. As for the remaining participants, 17% (1 participant) reflected a 'neutral' opinion and 2 participants (33%) 'strongly disagree'. With respect to the sixth statement, the majority of the participants (4 out of 6) 'strongly agree' that written feedback provided by the teacher through Google Docs' comments feature was beneficial in terms of helping them understand key grammatical concepts (see Appendix G). It can be seen that one of the remaining participants 'agrees' with the statement while on the contrary, the other participant 'strongly disagrees'. These opinions were relevant to the Google Docs statement in the post-questionnaire. Moving on to the rest of the statements, Graph 2 shows the students' responses for each of the post-questionnaire statements relevant to the Google Classroom Application.

It is evident from Figure 2 above that there are 4 statements relevant to the use of the Google Classroom Application. A total of 4 students (66%) responded to the seventh statement on the convenience of using Google Classroom with regard to keeping track of their learning with 'agree'. In addition one student (17%) responded with a 'neutral' opinion and the other (17%) with 'disagree'. The graph also shows that the majority of the participants (5 out of 6) 'agree' with the eighth statement relevant to the flipped classroom approach using Google Classroom. While the remaining participant answered with 'neither agree nor disagree'. As for the ninth statement, one student 'strongly agrees' that the course materials were easy to access on Google Classroom (see Appendix H). Whereas, three participants 'agree' with the material accessibility and the remaining two share a 'neutral' opinion on the matter. For the last statement, it can be seen that 2 participants 'strongly agree' regarding the use of Google Classroom for future courses in the diploma program. Additionally, 3 students 'agree' and the final participant gave a 'neutral' say.

Results of the Semi-Structured Interview with Participants

As mentioned earlier, the researcher carried out a semi-structured interview (see Appendix D) after analyzing the results of the post-questionnaire. The researcher tracked the statements which

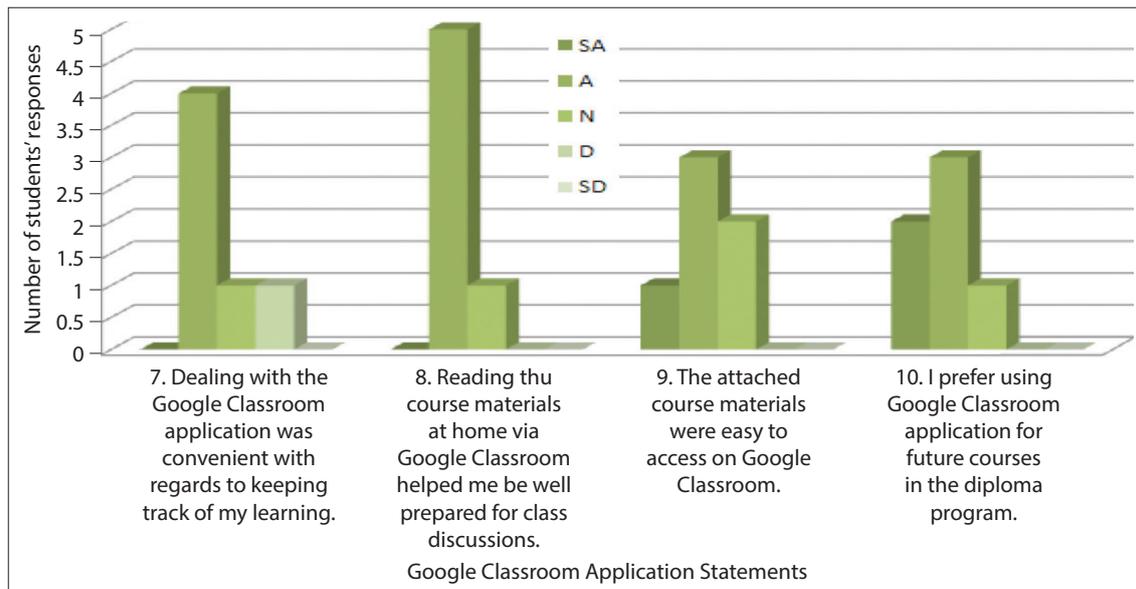


Figure 2. Students' Responses on Google Classroom Application Statements

received either a 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree' response and decided to uncover the reason behind such responses from the participants. All six participants were interviewed and the results are summarized in this section. The participants Ahmad, Hala, Suzan, and Aleen shared positive responses towards the flipped classroom experience. According to Ahmad and Aleen, who shared similar responses for the first question, using Google Docs for future studies is one of their top priorities because it automatically saves all the documents that they create and they do not need to rely on memory sticks to access their work. As for Ali, he mentioned that he expressed a neutral opinion because Google Docs can only be accessed with internet connection which he did not have all the time. Suzan and Hala mentioned that they will consider using Google Docs because they are helpful and easy to use. On the contrary, Sarah disagrees with using Google Docs for future studies because she is not accustomed to using technology in her physiotherapy courses.

For the second question, the students Suzan, Ahmad, Ali, and Hala, mentioned that they would like to complete similar grammar tasks again because they practiced more and learned a lot from the experience. As for Aleen, who had a neutral take on such tasks, stated that she faced some difficulties in completing the work on her own that is why she preferred in-class work. On the contrary, Sarah proposed that she disagreed with the completion of similar tasks in the future because she is not a big fan of assignments and prefers a homework-free course.

With regard to creating a collaborative environment, Suzan, Ahmad, and Aleen were in agreement on the positive influence that online learning tools have on group interaction. They asserted that with Google Docs, teachers and students interact and chat with each other, the teacher clarifies misunderstandings, and the students learn from their errors. Ali mentioned that he is a shy learner; therefore, he was not able to interact with his peers on a regular basis. Meanwhile Sarah and Hala both strongly disagreed that Google Docs can create a collaborative learning environment because this is their first time using the application and they were unfamiliar with the procedures of online interaction.

In relevance to the fourth question on the effectiveness of teacher written feedback via Google Docs in understanding grammatical concepts, Ali, Aleen, Ahmad, Hala, and Suzan were all in favor of the positive impact. They stated that students can understand the grammatical concepts better because the teacher can specifically highlight the errors in the assignment and give a full description of why the error was made and how it can be fixed. As for Sarah, who strongly disagreed with the aforementioned point, she stated that she did not have the time to read the feedback that was given in every assignment and for that reason she was not able to fully grasp the grammar concepts.

Finally, the last question in the interview was centered on the ability of students to keep track of

their learning via the Google Classroom Application. Suzan, Ahmad, Aleen, and Sarah mentioned that they were able to follow up with the course materials since they were all posted in the "About" section in PDF and video format. As a result, they did not have to spend money on printing the materials and were able to access them easily. Ali expressed a neutral response with regard to keeping track of his learning because of his frequent absences in the course stating had he been present for the most part, he would have understood which materials were covered each week. As for Hala, she disagreed with the previously mentioned point because she was not well-acquainted with the online application and how to access the posted materials.

4. Discussion

The present study aimed at investigating students' perceptions towards using Google Docs and Google Classroom in creating an online collaborative environment in learning grammar. The results of the pre-questionnaire suggested that most of the students did not have prior experience with the aforementioned Google Applications in learning atmospheres. With that mentioned, after the students used such applications during their Grammar I course they were able to provide the researcher with their evaluations regarding their experience.

Research Question 1: What are the learners' attitudes towards the use of Google Applications namely Google Docs and Google Classroom as online collaborative tools in learning grammar having used them for the very first time?

To answer this question, it can be said that based on the results of the post-questionnaire and interview 50% of the students were mostly in favor of the positive results of using Google applications in learning grammar because such applications offer features which enable the teacher to provide corrective feedback that shed light on students' errors and suggests ways for improvement. The results are in line with Jeong (2016) who states that through Google Docs, "students could get instant feedback both from the instructor and from their peers" (p. 4). In addition, the results were in agreement with Zhou et al. (2012) and Woodrich and Fan (2017) who mentioned that Google Docs is a useful tool for collaborative learning and is enjoyed by students. Despite the fact that Jeong (2016), Zhou et al. (2012), and Woodrich and Fan (2017) implemented Google Docs for EFL writing purposes as opposed to learning grammar, the fact that such tool is beneficial in providing feedback and supporting a collaborative approach to learning was highlighted.

In support of Google Docs' feedback feature, Alsubaie and Ashuraidah, (2017) assert the following: "Information, comment and feedback can be traded easily in Google Docs" and this support[s] that using [an] online learning tool such as Google Docs can be [a] useful tool that allows editing and sharing in a fixable and simple as compared to the face-to-face or the traditional communication method" (p. 23). As for the remaining 50% of the students who mentioned that they are shy learners or were unable to familiarize themselves with the use of such learning tools for the first time, it can be argued that with further practice and exposure to similar tasks in future courses, they can be able to overcome such obstacles. Moreover, according to Parvin and Salam (2015), the teacher can provide instructional support for the students to avoid technological challenges and foster autonomous learning.

Research Question 2: Do the students prefer the flipped classroom model of employing such applications in future courses?

To answer the second research question above, the researcher found that the results of the present study suggest that 67% of the students would like to use Google Docs in future courses because they are no longer reliant on flash memories and can access their work easily. These findings are in harmony with Zhou et al. (2012) who reported that half of the students who were exposed to Google Applications reported that they would like to use such tools in the future. The fact that the remaining 33% of the students in this study were not in favor of using online applications for future course is attributed to the unavailability of internet access and inexperience with technology. However, the researcher suggests that since most universities have computer laboratories, the students can pay a visit to the library and complete their online tasks when needed. In addition, if the students feel that they lack experience with regard to technology, they can ask for further help

from the course instructor or library assistants.

Similarly, the results of this study are similar to Al-Harbi and Alshumaimeri's (2016) and Doman and Webb's (2017) findings which revealed that by employing a flipped classroom methodology in teaching grammar, students achieve higher and they have the ability to enhance their knowledge of grammatical concepts. The findings of this study revealed that 83% of the students taking the Grammar I course in the English Diploma for Professional Purposes acknowledged the positive impact of the flipped classroom approach to learning grammar. They strongly believe that even if the teacher explained key concepts via feedback outside of the classroom, their focus was directed to their errors; and as a result, they were able to improve their grammar skills. Only one student was in opposition regarding the flipped classroom approach claiming that she did not have enough time to read the feedback and increase her understanding of the grammar concepts. However, the lack of time can be fully understood since the students are enrolled in the diploma program while simultaneously completing their tertiary education. Perhaps if the students were only enrolled in the diploma program, they will be able to devote their time solely to learning English and tackling the required tasks using the assigned online learning tools.

5. Conclusion

To conclude, applying the flipped classroom approach in the teaching and learning of English grammar with the aid of technological platforms can pave the road for students to improve their grammar skills. Similarly, they have endless opportunities to convert their passive knowledge of the rules of grammar into active use during class discussions. By means of using Google applications as an alternative approach to the traditional methods of teaching and learning grammar, the students were able to learn collaboratively and take teacher written feedback into consideration for the development of their grammar skills. Not to mention, the majority of the students enjoyed using such applications due to their manageability and convenience. Therefore, it is safe to say that teachers can now be at ease with the effects of using technology in the classroom since the present study showcases the positive impacts that online learning tools bring along when teaching grammar to Palestinian EFL university students collaboratively.

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Appendix A Pre and Post-Questionnaire Cover Sheet

Dear Participant:

My name is Zeiadee Khalil and I am examining the effectiveness of teacher written feedback on developing students' writing skills. Since you are a student enrolled in the English Diploma for Professional Purposes Program at Palestine Ahliya University's Continuing Education Center, I am inviting you to participate in this research study by completing the attached questionnaire relevant to Online Learning Tools.

The following questionnaire will require no longer than 10 minutes to complete. There is no compensation for filling in this questionnaire nor is there any known risk. Your answers and information will remain confidential. Copies of the project will be provided to my course instructor at Hebron University. If you choose to participate in this project, please complete the following questionnaire and submit it once you are finished. Your participation is strictly voluntary and you may refuse to participate at any time. If you require additional information or have any questions, please feel free to contact me via the email listed below.

Sincerely,

Zeiadee Marie Z. M. Khalil

e-mail: zeiadeekhalil@gmail.com

Appendix B Pre-Questionnaire to Survey Students' Knowledge and Experience with Google Docs

Section 1: Demographic Profile

Please read the statements carefully and tick your answer.

1. Age
 - 16-22
 - 23-30
 - 31-40
 - 40 and older
2. Gender
 - Male
 - Female

3. Educational Qualification

- High school graduate
- Bachelor's degree
- Master's degree
- Doctorate degree

4. Employment Status

- Employee
- Worker
- Self-employed
- Student

4.1 For students only. What are you majoring in?

- Sociology
- Information Technology
- Business Administration
- Law
- Other: Please state _____

4.2 College Year Level

- Freshman
- Sophomore
- Junior
- Senior

Section 2: Online Learning Tools

Please answer the following questions.

5. Do you have a Gmail account?

- Yes
- No

6. Have you used Google Docs or any online learning tool before?

- Yes
- No

If yes, answer the questions below.

6.1 List the types of online learning tools you use:

7. Have you used the online learning tool(s) to complete a course task?

- Yes
- No

7.1 If yes, briefly explain the nature of the course.

8. How did you find such online learning tool(s)?

Appendix C. Post Questionnaire to Survey Students' Evaluations and Perceptions towards Google Docs and Google Classroom

Please tick the appropriate response that reflects your opinion for each of the following statements

Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Google Docs					
1. I enjoyed completing grammar tasks using Google Docs.					
2. I feel comfortable completing the tasks using Google Docs.					
3. I would use Google Docs for my studies in the future.					
4. I would like to complete similar learning tasks again.					
5. Google Docs influence our group's collaborative experience positively.					
6. I feel that teacher written feedback via Google Docs helped me understand grammatical concepts better.					
Google Classroom Application					
7. Dealing with the Google Classroom application was convenient with regard to keeping track of my learning.					
8. Reading the course materials at home via Google Classroom helped me be well prepared for class discussions.					
9. The attached course materials were easy to access on Google Classroom.					
10. I prefer using Google Classroom Application for future courses in the diploma program.					

Appendix D Semi-Structured Interview

1. If you had the opportunity to use Google Docs for future studies, will you do so or not?
2. Having experienced the completion of grammar tasks using Google Docs, would you like to complete similar ones again?
3. In what sense do Google Docs influence a collaborative learning environment?
4. Do you think that teacher written feedback is beneficial in understanding grammatical concepts?
5. Does Google Classroom help keep track of your learning?

Appendix E Pre-questionnaire to Survey Students' Knowledge and Experience with Google Docs by Alsubaie and Ashuraidah (2017)

Please answer the following questions:

1. Do you have a Gmail account?

Circle one: -Yes -No

2. Have you used Google Docs or any online learning tool before?

Circle one: -Yes -No

If yes:

2.1) List types of online learning tools you usually use:

- 1.....
- 2.....
- 3.....
- 4.....

2.2) Have you used this online learning tool to complete a course task or what do you use it for?

Circle one: -Yes -No

Please describe what you did:

2.3) How did you find it?

Appendix F. Post Questionnaire to Survey Students' Evaluation and their opinion about the experience by Alsubaie and Ashuraidah (2017)

Please choose the appropriate response that reflects your opinion for each of the following statements:

1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither agree nor disagree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly agree

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1) I enjoyed doing the tasks using Google Docs.				
2) I feel comfortable doing the task using Google Docs.				
3) I would use Google Docs for my study in the future.				
4) I would like to do similar tasks again in the future.				
5) Google Docs influence our group's collaborative experience positively.				
6) Google Docs is a useful tool for learning writing.				
7) It was easy to deal with the web environment.				
8) I don't prefer using Google Docs in learning writing.				

Appendix G Teacher Feedback Via Google Docs

The screenshot shows a Google Docs document with the following content:

Nouns: Common, Proper, Singular, and Plural

12/20

Search the menus (Alt+)

2 target_
3 kerry's_rusty
4 playston_christmas
5 sarah_mary_valentine luneh

Q.2
1 faurth of july
2 hershey's kisses
3 hawaii_luther_sunday

baper 2

Common Noun
1. library
2. student
3. car
4. dec.

proper Nouns
1. atlantic ocean
2. september
3. tuesday
4. santa claus

Comments:

- This should not be capitalized. The only proper noun is Valentine.
- Zeidee Khalil Feb 14, 2018: Should be written as "Fourth of July".
- Zeidee Khalil Feb 14, 2018: Hershey's Kisses. Remember to capitalize proper nouns.
- Zeidee Khalil Feb 14, 2018: Same here, Hawaii, Luther, and Sunday

Comment bank

Files
Turned in on Feb 13, 11:49 PM

Grade
12/20

Private comments
Add private comment...

Appendix H Course Materials Via Google Classroom

The screenshot shows a Google Classroom assignment page with the following content:

Grammar I Section 1

STREAM PEOPLE

Nouns

0 0 7
TURNED IN ASSIGNED GRADED

Due Feb 14, 11:59 PM

Nouns: Common, Proper, Singular, and Plural

Create a new Google Document, number the questions, and write your answers. You do not have to re-write the questions. Please complete all 4 worksheets and write the title of each worksheet on the top of the page. This assignment is out of 20 points. Please be careful when answering and read the directions well. Good luck.

Proper and Common Nouns Worksheet 1.pdf PDF

Proper and Common Nouns Worksheet 2.pdf PDF

Singular and Plural Nouns Worksheet 1.pdf PDF

Singular and Plural Nouns Worksheet 2.pdf PDF

Recuse post

Create question

Create assignment

Create announcement