RESEARCH ARTICLE

Google Classroom as a Tool of Support for Flexible Learning in the New Normal

Jimmylen Zuñiga-Tonio*

[1]Languages Department, Catanduanes State University, Catanduanes, Philippines

Correspondence
*Corresponding Author.
Email: jztonio17@gmail.com

Abstract

The global crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic affected all areas of life significantly paving the way to the new normal set-up. In response, the higher education system in the Philippines opted to implement flexible learning as its delivery model. Flexible learning unlocked critical areas in redesigning the pre-pandemic learning and teaching paradigm, one of which is the deployment of learning management systems or online platforms to contribute to the effective implementation of flexible learning. The present study attempts to explore Google Classroom's potentials and acceptability as a tool of support to flexible language learning and teaching. A survey questionnaire was given to a group of 44 university students who completed the Purposive Communication course. Using the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) analysis of data, the findings revealed that the majority of the students agreed that Google Classroom could provide accessibility, utility, and students' satisfaction. Similarly, students agreed it could support communication and interaction and instruction delivery in flexible learning. Further, a qualitative-inductive approach using thematic analysis of the open-ended question in the survey questionnaire revealed that Google Classroom supports flexible language learning through the following: (a) easy monitoring of tasks, assignments, projects, and announcements; (b) excellent storage of learning materials (ex. backup files); (c) motivates students to manage time; and (d) motivates students to perform well. Therefore, it occurs that Google Classroom, as an educational interactive tool, has the potential to contribute to the effective delivery of flexible language teaching and learning, provided that responsive and timely faculty guidance is in place.

KEYWORDS:
Google Classroom, flexible learning, new normal, language teaching and learning, technology acceptance model

1 | INTRODUCTION

In keeping abreast despite the drawbacks brought about by the COVID-19 outbreak, one of the areas being examined today by several scholars is the role of numerous learning management systems (LMS) or 'platforms' in blended learning in higher education. There is a rising interest in how online and web-based learning tools are used, along with their corresponding pedagogy employed to support them. This area is further explored as to how these tools might contribute to the effective execution of

blended learning and teaching in higher education. While some scholars express their support in the utilization of such tools in revolutionizing higher education (Galway, et al., 2014; Hilton, 2009; Siemens Tittenberger, 2009), others are more cautious, advising only limited or no use of social media applications in the classroom due to the lack of influence on student learning and the risk of distraction (Selwyn, 2007), not to mention issues regarding equal access to Information and Communication Technology (ICT). In other words, varying viewpoints on the use of LMS or online 'platforms' have led to more misunderstanding over how, or whether, higher education institutions should use these technologies. Nevertheless, blended (or hybrid) learning has found a neutral ground between proponents and opponents of online learning resources (Hinkelman, 2018).

This discussion is in line with the fact that pedagogies, particularly pedagogies at all levels of higher education shifted from teacher-centric to learner-centric. Hwang, Lai, and Wang (2015) even argued that there is a lot of focus on incorporating technology into the classroom through new teaching practices and styles that focus on helping students to attain the intended learning outcomes. Likewise, the concept of 'anywhere/anytime learning' (Rossing, Miller, Cecil & Stamper, 2012; Selwyn, 2007) becomes apparent as mobile devices are fast becoming a necessity to 21st-century learners and teachers. Short messaging service (SMS), for example, is an important element of the Filipinos' communication lifestyle, earning the Philippines the title of "SMS capital of the world." The widespread use of cellular mobile phones in all sections of Filipino society is demonstrating that these basic, low-cost technologies are now assisting Filipinos in bridging the digital divide (Bandalaria, 2007).

That being said, educators are impelled to assess the pedagogical implications and advantages of such devices to maximize teaching and learning, particularly in the context of the new normal. However, it is also important to note that the goal of blended and flexible learning should not simply be to incorporate technology into the classroom; rather, pedagogical objectives should dictate the various modes of instruction (O'Byrne & Pytash, 2015).

In line with this goal, since Google Classroom (GoC) offers a free web-based learning tool from Google, it could then be argued that this application could potentially facilitate the implementation of flexible learning in higher education institutions during this time of pandemic when face to face classes are suspended. To support this claim, a study conducted by Shaharanee et al. (2016) along with GoC's effectiveness in Knowledge Discovery in Data (KDD) subject under the Decision Sciences program in Malaysia revealed that the application was highly accepted in communication, perceived usefulness, interaction, ease of use, and overall students' satisfaction as the factors being considered. Meanwhile, in the Philippines, a study by Espinosa et al. (2017) at Pangasinan State University found that GoC was primarily adopted as a Learning Management System (LMS) since it is cost-effective, while collaboration through assignments was seen as a highly successful strategy for increasing student involvement. Although several international and national studies have attested as to the veracity and effectiveness of Google Classroom, it is crucial to keep in mind that these studies were conducted when flexible learning was not yet implemented in the different higher education institutions of the country. As such, an additional gap opens as to the effectiveness of this application during this paradigm shift in the teaching and learning process in Philippine tertiary education.

As mentioned, this study is very seminal in response to the current health crisis that the world is facing due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The crisis impelled the upsurge of innovative tertiary education in the Philippines to compensate for the limited face-to-face classroom interactions, which in turn prompted higher education institutions to modify the customary mode of instruction into the blended type of teaching and learning. Given these contexts, critical analysis of the available and free learning tools such as Google Classroom is imperative so as to avoid offhand implementation that often leads to poor learning outcomes and student engagement. Echoing the words of Chen and Denoyelles (2013), slipshod or haphazard implementations frequently fail, not because of the systems' faults, but rather due to a lack of critical thinking about how to best employ these tools.

Hence, the results of this study offer evidence to State University and College (SUCs) administrators, faculty members, instructional material writers, and curriculum planners of the potential application and overall acceptability of GoC as a tool of support for flexible learning and teaching. Lastly, findings of this study can be used as the basis for SUCs to initiate interventions in retooling faculty members focusing on flexible learning and teaching.

This study carried out a descriptive survey approach which aims to determine the frequency of internet usage of selected university students, views of university students about Google Classroom (GoC) in terms of accessibility, perceived utility, communication and interaction, perceived instruction delivery, satisfaction of students, and how does GoC support flexible language learning and teaching.

2 | REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND STUDY

2.1 | Google Classroom

Google Classroom is an interactive teaching tool that combines the Google Docs text editor, Google Drive cloud storage, Gmail, and other services to create an informatively rich educational environment. Likewise, it is a free web-based learning application or tool that allows teachers and students to collaborate. This is a learning management system that enables instructors to form classes, send out invitations, assign tasks, write notes, and submit assignments and projects. In the same way, after the teachers have assigned and evaluated the supplied learning outputs, students can verify and track their grades. Further, learners can communicate and discuss topics covered in class, and teachers can observe student discussion and written comments through this learning application. Video clips, PowerPoint presentations, PDF files, Word documents, and website URLs can all be shared as assignments.

In addition to the overview of this learning application, several researchers also noted the following distinct features of Google Classroom. Janzen (2014) claimed that the application is simple to use and engage with. He further reported that the use of the application spares time since it has a user-friendly interface and it integrates other Google applications like docs, slides, and spreadsheet. Similarly, according to Chehayeb (2015), the software is created for classrooms to be paperless and save time. He also mentioned that Google Classroom enables instructors to send assessments to Google Sheets for easy editing and revising of the learners' remarks and scores. Likewise, in an online context, this learning application is open to both the learner and the teacher, but it is not accessible or available to learners who are not enrolled in the mentioned Google class (Ajjan Hartshorne, 2008).

Furthermore, Mafa and Govender (2017) emphasize the app's accessibility, stating that it can be downloaded for free and installed on a mobile device, allowing for quick learning on the go. In other words, this program may be accessible from any mobile device at any time, making it useful for both teachers and students. Thus, it is a program that can let teachers set up an online classroom where students can speak freely with their teachers and peers.

In support, Charlie Calimlim, Chief of the Commission on Higher Education's (CHED) Information and Publication Division, even asserted that the Google Apps deployment procedure was uncomplicated, and that with the high quality of technology available at no cost, it was only logical to go Google. Lastly, Google Apps for Education was also suggested by the University of the Philippines' IT Director for the following reasons: (1) it is free; (2) it provides greatly increased storage capacity; (3) it provides enhanced security; and (4) it has a user-friendly interface (https://edu.google.com/case-studies/philippines-education-commission/).

2.2 | Integrating Technology in Language Classroom

The strategy that teachers employ in their lectures to enhance language learning is one of the most significant aspects of learning (Ahmadi, 2017). According to Patel (2013), the use of technology has significantly altered traditional English teaching methods, providing a variety of options for making training more engaging and productive in terms of advancement. For instance, the use of multimedia texts in the English language classroom enables learners to familiarize vocabulary and language structures. In support, Arifah (2014) even claimed that the use of print, video, and the internet allows learners to gather knowledge and provides them with a variety of materials for analyzing and interpreting language and settings. He even suggested that using the internet boosts students' motivation. Furthermore, according to Susikaran (2013), fundamental changes have occurred in classrooms in addition to teaching approaches because the chalk-and-talk method is insufficient for efficiently teaching English. This claim is supported by Eaton (2010) who argued that computer-assisted discussion has more equal involvement than face-to-face discussion, making it a valuable characteristic for language learning. Finally, Zhao (2013) recommended that successful language acquisition requires access to authentic materials in the target language.

In line with this, it can then be argued that the use of technology can help establish a learning environment in which a transfer in teaching approach from teachers to learners is seamless. Using computer technology, according to Drayton, Falk, Stroud, Hobbs, and Hammerman (2010), demonstrates meaningful learning that increases learners' responsibility. Likewise, increased student involvement is facilitated by technology, which encourages students to learn independently and to develop responsible and effective learning behaviors. Similarly, Ahmadi (2017) found that using technology to teach students helps them build higher-order thinking skills. In short, to draw learners' attention to English language acquisition, a real blend of multimedia and teaching approaches is necessary.

However, despite the numerous benefits forwarded as regards the use of technology in the learning and teaching process, developing countries still struggle to integrate technology into their education system. This observation is particularly true in the Philippines where the 'digital divide' is glaring and more apparent than the global North (the USA, European countries, Japan, etc.) or developed societies. For instance, in a country where the concern of the majority is to address their basic needs, the use of ICT is often considered as an expensive form of teaching, hence not a priority, and often take the backseat. This dilemma led to certain serious considerations in the Philippines educational system from basic education to higher education levels. In response, Bandalaria (2007) argued several points in relation to the impact of ICTs on the Philippine setting, these include: first, the technology used must be both pedagogically sound and socially driven; second, the cost will always be a consideration, which will cover the cost of purchasing the technology, the cost of training staff, or securing funds to hire additional staff with the necessary skills and knowledge; and third, the cost will always be a consideration, which will cover the cost of purchasing the technology, the cost of training staff, or the cost of securing funds to hire additional staff with the necessary skills and knowledge; third, students' access to information and the cost of that information must be reachable and affordable. Fourth, implementing new teaching and learning strategies necessitates changes in organizational structures, such as the creation of new units or the integration of existing units dedicated to the production of distance education learning materials; and fifth, research and assessment are necessary for setting goals and determining the means to achieve those goals, which must be monitored to verify their efficacy and efficiency.

To sum it up, integration of technology in any education levels provides learners with numerous chances as well as problems, and the same is true to teachers, administrators, and curriculum planners. The Philippines cannot afford to implement changes that could not guarantee success for a sheer fact that the country has finite and dwindling resources. Hence, the transformation of educational practices must be carefully done in a way that certain changes must be the implications of the studies conducted along this line.

2.3 | Related Studies

Several researchers have looked into the link between using online learning tools and improved language skills (Costley, 2014; Eaton, 2010; Mouza, 2008). These studies discovered a strong link between the use of technology in language classes and improved language skills. In addition, Dawley (2007) claimed that e-learning allows students to uncover, analyze, and communicate their own material before submitting it. This claim is supported by the results of the study conducted by Tanveer (2011). In this particular study, it was shown that e-learning teachers and students regard it as self-contained, providing greater knowledge and individual accountability. E-learning, according to Poon (2013), assists teachers in promoting student-centered learning. Soliman (2014) conducted an e-learning study in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) for the development of language skills and self-learning for EFL students, which demonstrated that e-learning is an efficient technique to link to classroom lessons in the EFL. It further showed that e-learning helps students improve their language abilities while also allowing them to study independently. Similarly, Costley's (2014) study listed some benefits of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) for learning and teaching and these include the following: (a) learners take an active role, which can help them retain more information; (b) follow-up discussions include more information, allowing learners to become more independent; and (c) learners can process new learner-based educational materials, allowing them to improve their language learning skills.

In addition, Peregoy and Boyle (2012) conducted a study on the purpose of technology to help students improve their reading and writing skills. Their study also showed that students learn more through technology than the traditional instructional methods. In addition, the study found that the internet created a pleasant learning environment for students and permitted the creation of a new platform that is user-friendly for students to have easy access to learning classes.

Meanwhile, Shaharanee, Jamil, and Rodzi (2016) studied the efficiency of Google Classroom's active learning activities and found that Google Classroom performed considerably better in communication, interaction, perceived utility, the convenience of use, and overall student satisfaction. Further, Espinosa, Estira, and Ventayen (2017) showed that cost was the key reason for Google Classroom uptake, and collective learning through assignments was considered an exceptionally successful technique for increasing student involvement.

With particular reference to Philippines, Carbonilla and Bhati (2016) conducted a study involving students from different colleges and universities in the CARAGA region as regards their perception on the use of technology in the classroom at higher education institutions in the Philippines. Students' positive attitudes toward the use of technology in terms of instant messaging via chatting, lesson inquiry about assignments, sending and receiving e-mails, research via the internet, including data gathering by downloading files, and sharing cultural experiences were revealed in the study. This study however does

not address a particular online learning platform, but it could still be useful since the study dealt with technology and higher education institutions.

Another study on Philippine education by Gamboa (2008) examines the internet's growing importance in the global community, as well as the usage of internet-based courses for advanced study where the student already has a solid understanding of the subject. He added that e-learning is only appropriate for students in the Philippines who know little English but are embarrassed to study in a traditional classroom. Because of its anonymity, e-learning or online classes are becoming increasingly popular. Students can also fit their education into their schedules and avoid having to travel to locate people who speak English fluently. Although this study is exclusive to the Philippines and does not address the issue of technology usage in Philippine language schools, it has proven to be a useful resource for unintended implications of technology use in teaching and learning.

Finally, Esber's (2019) study on the attitude of high school students in using GoC as LMS adapting the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) found that high school students in Tacloban were enthusiastic about using GoC as LMS. Furthermore, Perceived Usefulness (PU) and Perceived Ease of Utilization (PEU) have a considerable impact on students' attitudes toward Google Classroom use. Their research, however, is limited to high school students.

3 | CONCEPTUAL/THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This investigation will be guided by two theoretical frameworks. First, Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) developed by Davis (1986) where perceived usefulness (PU), perceived ease of use (PEOU), enabling condition, and mental health are four major indicators of how consumers embrace and employ technology. TAM is a sound theoretical model whose applicability can be extended to e-learning. In support, it is considered as one of the main approaches for assessing the adoption and acceptance of information systems in the context of mobile learning (Dwivedi et al., 2019; Hansen, Saridakis Benson, 2018; King He, 2006).

In the context of the proposed study, the use of the Google Classroom application among GEC 5 (Purposive Communication) students was explored, guided with the dimensions of TAM. It is imperative to initially identify the users' (teachers or students) perception as to the usefulness of Google Classroom in terms of language learning and teaching process, along with its accessibility, so teachers or students will consider using it when the need arises. Likewise, exploring the potentials of Google Classroom as a learning tool can provide additional guidelines as to how blended learning should be used more effectively in language classes, which in turn can promote diversity in the learning experiences of students. It will also give language educators relevant interventions on how to appropriately integrate the use of the stated application in language blended learning so that students' engagement is maximized. In support, Sulaiman and Almuhannad (2018) even explained that higher education institutions must conduct an analysis of the proper use of technological learning tools or systems in order to determine the factors that will facilitate its implementation and use for the benefit of students' growth. As a result, universities must use empirical evidence to determine what factors influence students' technological acceptability and literacy before applying technological system adjustments.

Second, social constructivism theory also serves as one of the theoretical frameworks which states that individuals learn more effectively as a result of their surroundings and experiences. Liu and Chen (2010) even argued that human learning and encounters are indistinguishable, and they are integrated and mutually supportive. In short, social constructivism theory implies that students construct their own knowledge and are in charge of their own education. Thus, students who engage in online platforms are encouraged to be self-reliant and self-motivated. In the context of the proposed study, when learners use GoC as a tool of support for blended learning, they will be given the opportunity to acquire knowledge at their own pace and learning style without time constraints, whenever and wherever given that they are connected online. Hence, Mafa and Desmond (2018) claimed that building language abilities and knowledge would be limited not just by contact classroom hours, but also by using an e-learning platform in collaboration with others.

4 | METHODOLOGY

4.1 | Research Design

To answer the research questions, a survey questionnaire was employed in this study as part of both a quantitative and qualitative method. The researcher used a quantitative research design to provide the results from the questionnaire, which included

tabulation and presentation of results in frequency and mean. The quantitative data was then described and interpreted, and raw textual material was condensed into a succinct summary style using qualitative discussion.

4.2 | Units of analysis/source of data/sampling

The sample for this study comprised of forty-four (44) students enrolled in GEC 5 – Purposive Communication during the 2nd semester of Academic Year 2020-2021. There were 22 male and 22 female respondents. Purposive sampling was used in selecting the participants. Crossman (2020) defined purposive sample as a non-probability sample chosen depending on demographic characteristics and the study's goal. In this study, purposive sampling was done in light of the fact that the aim of the study is to identify the potentials and acceptability of Google Classroom, thus the sample include students who had used Google classroom in their learning for one semester. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and inductive approach.

Data collection/Instrumentation Survey questionnaire from Shaharanee, Jamil, and Rodzi (2018) was utilized as reference, however certain modifications on the statements were made by the researcher to locally contextualize the instrument. Hence, pilot testing was done and reliability test of the survey form was identified using Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients which earned a result greater than 0.80 before actual data gathering proceeds. Pilot testing and actual data gathering were conducted using Google Classroom and were submitted in a separate classroom folder that only the researcher can access. Lastly, in accordance to data privacy requirements, the questionnaires submitted via Google Classroom were disposed and deleted from the web-application after a week or right after raw data were tabulated and significant themes were identified. The survey questionnaire is broken into three parts and contains a total of 30 questions. Part I of the survey asked respondents to submit personal information such as gender, age, and course. Meanwhile, Part II includes 28 question statements divided into five tiers: Tier 1 includes items two to seven (6 questions) which explored the ease of access of Google Classroom application; Tier 2 is made up of items eight to 13 (7 questions) that sought the opinion of the respondents as to the level of usefulness of Google Classroom; Tier III includes items 14 to 19 (6 questions) which answered questions on communication and interaction capacity of the application; Tier IV is items 20 to 25 (6 questions) to address perceived instruction delivery; and Tier V is made up of items 26 to 29 to identify the students' satisfaction (four questions). As for the final part, Part III asks only one open-ended question. This item required respondents to list down benefits and challenges of using Google Classroom as a support tool for their flexible teaching and learning. Moreover, items 2-29 were scored on a five-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), while item 1 was measured using a Likert type question using the scale, several times a day; once a day; 3-5 times a week; 1-2 times a week; and once every few weeks

4.3 | Data Processing

In order to answer research question 1, frequency count, average, and percentile were employed. Results were then presented using bar graphs and charts from Microsoft Excel for ease of interpretation and discussion. Moreover, research question 2 was answered using frequency count, mean, and rank. Tables were utilized for the presentation of collected data. Finally, for research question 3, inferential statistics were employed. Lastly, inductive process was conducted to answer research question 3. Data were analyzed manually to identify significant themes that were generated from the raw data (Thomas, 2006). Hence, all data were reviewed repetitively to identify the potential meanings of the raw data before relevant themes were developed.

5 | RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 | Frequency of Internet Usage

Figure 1 shows the frequency of internet usage of the university students. There are five Likert type options provided as shown in the figure. The results show that 90.9% of the male and female respondents use the internet several times a day, while only 9.09% of the male respondents or 4.54% of the entire population use the internet once a day. Meanwhile, 4.54% of the female respondents, that is 2.27% of the population reported that they use the internet 3-5 times and 1-2 times a week. The results suggest that the respondents, both male and female university students are acquainted with the internet and other online media applications. It also revealed that 40 out of 44 of the respondents had at least several times a day usage of the information and communication technology (ICT). This result is expected since flexible learning approach in higher education institutions is being implemented, when both digital and non-digital tools are maximized. The educational shift from traditional face-to-face
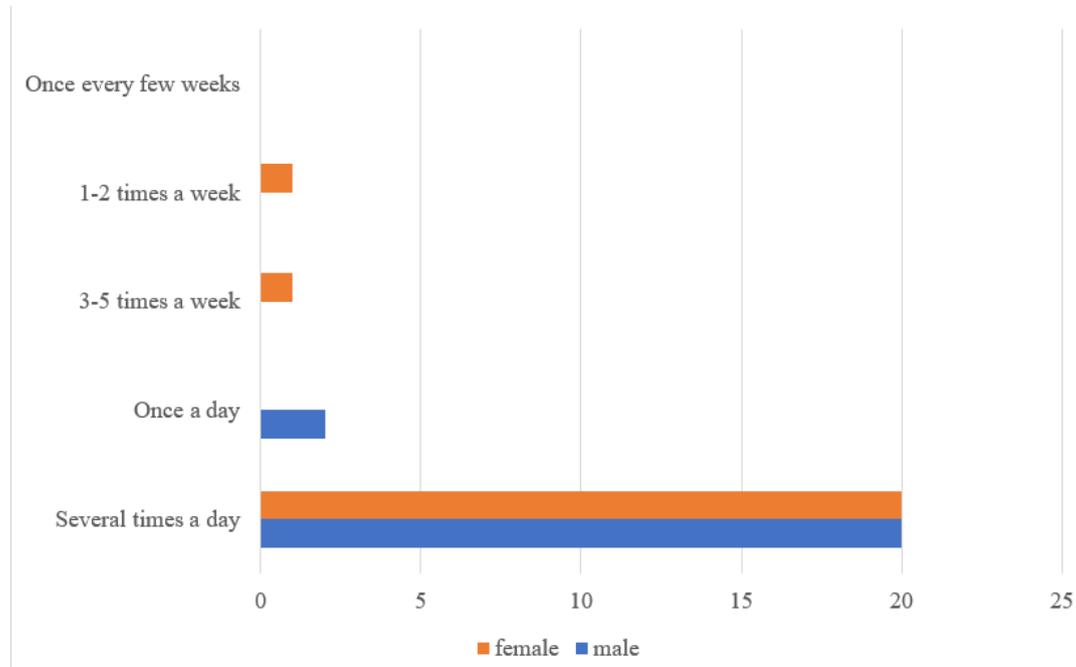
FIGURE 1 Frequency of internet usage

learning to online and blended learning modalities gave rise to higher use of online resources and platforms than before. Online communication becomes the vital link in teaching and learning interaction between the professor and students.

5.2 | University students' views about Google Classroom (GoC)

TABLE 1 Evaluating Google Classroom according to ease of access

Component	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean	DE
There is ease of access in terms of signing on to the Google Classroom.	11	23	10	0	0	4.02	A
There is ease of access in course materials.	10	20	13	1	0	3.89	A
There is ease of access in information, announcements, notifications, and updates relevant to the subject.	12	19	13	0	0	3.98	A
There is ease of access in submitting/uploading assignments.	12	18	11	3	0	3.89	A
There is ease of access in navigating the system	11	18	12	3	0	3.84	A
There is ease of access in quizzes and learning activities.	12	22	8	1	1	3.98	A

Legend:
SA – Strongly Agree
A – Agree
N – Neutral
D – Disagree
SD – Strongly Disagree

As shown in Table 1 , majority of the university students rated the different components under ease of access of Google Classroom as agreeable, with the highest mean score of 4.02 for ease of access in signing on the application. Students generally find the application as user-friendly, especially for first time users and for those who are not familiar or have limited exposure to web-based learning application. However, it was also found that the lowest mean value of 3.84 is attributed to component of navigating the system. Students responses varied in this component due to differing level of exposure and experience in using web-based applications, particularly online learning applications. Likewise, respondents reported that the level of internet connectivity contributes to the level of ease of access of GoC. Hence, faculty members must be readily available to extend technical assistance or to provide online walk through to learners, should need arises. They should also carefully consider the availability of stable net connectivity in the area. Although this factor cannot be fully ascribed to the navigational system design of GoC, nonetheless the learning app is web-based so it is dependent to the internet connectivity of its user.

TABLE 2 Evaluating Google Classroom according to perceived usefulness

Component	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean	DE
Google Classroom makes quality of learning activity excellent.	7	17	17	3	0	3.64	A
Google classroom is an excellent medium for social interaction (lecturer vs students and student vs student).	9	16	16	3	0	3.70	A
Google classroom helps me submit my assignment on time.	13	23	8	0	0	4.11	A
Google classroom allows me to download class notes, slides, references, and review materials.	18	26	0	0	0	4.41	SA
The feedback provided by the professor is useful.	15	23	4	2	0	4.16	A
The grading system in Google classroom helps in monitoring my performance.	10	25	9	0	0	4.02	A
The subject's objective, assessment, and content become clear with the aid of Google Classroom.	8	26	9	1	0	3.93	A

Legend:
SA – Strongly Agree
A – Agree
N – Neutral
D – Disagree
SD – Strongly Disagree

Table 2   presents the university students' evaluation of Google Classroom as to its perceived usefulness. The highest mean of 4.41 is provided to GoC's aspect that allows downloads of class notes, slides, references, and review materials. Students strongly agreed that GoC is indeed useful in storing and organizing lesson outputs and materials. Also, GoC's feature to allow open access on posted subject materials greatly help students in the new normal setting, provided that they can download materials at their own convenience. In contrast, the lowest mean value of 3.64 is attributed to GoC's component of making quality of learning activity excellent. This finding suggests that students disagreed to the merit of GoC in making quality of learning activity excellent as compared to other GoC's components under perceived usefulness, however on average the students still perceive this component as useful. Therefore, it appears that making quality learning using GoC resides not entirely on the learning app, but most importantly on the quality of learning materials and resources used and the faculty's ingenuity in preparing these digital materials.

Based on the data in Table 3 , along communication and interaction, university students generally agreed with 4.14 mean value that GoC is useful in allowing their subject professor to post announcements, quizzes, and messages without time constraints. The same is true with other GoC communication and interaction components like allowing the professor to facilitate course participants' engagement and participation in productive discussion and professor's accessibility regardless of his/her

TABLE 3 Evaluating Google Classroom according to communication and interaction

Component	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean	DE
I feel comfortable conversing through Google Classroom	4	12	22	5	1	3.30	N
The professor facilitates course participants' engagement and participation in productive discussion.	8	21	13	2	0	3.80	A
I feel at ease using Google Classroom to engage with other students.	5	11	22	6	0	3.34	N
Other participants acknowledge my point of view while using Google Classroom.	5	11	24	4	0	3.39	N

Legend:

SA – Strongly Agree

A – Agree

N – Neutral

D – Disagree

SD – Strongly Disagree

consultation hours. However, it should be noted as well that students rated the other three remaining components as neutral. This result indicates that use of GoC appears to be impersonal in terms of communication and interaction. Students neither agreed nor disagreed in GoC's merit in providing comfort in conversing; comfort in interacting with other participants; and appreciation of one's point of view. These results suggest that the potential of GoC along communication and interaction as a digital platform can be best maximized through faculty intervention. Communication and interaction initiated by the professors in the GoC appear to be agreeable to students, while interaction opportunities initiated by the students on their own imply low participation level and appear to be less interactive among university students. Hence, it is safe to assume that the professor is still the focal point even in an online learning platform like GoC. Also, the lack of live chat or real-time online discussion feature in the GoC can be amended by the professor's guidance, questioning, and manner of providing responses. That is, while using GoC, professors and instructors should continuously create meaningful interaction opportunities with the students to safeguard them from feeling disconnected and demotivated. This is in line with Swan's (2001) claim that when compared to students who thought they had less engagement with the teacher, those who thought they had more interaction had higher levels of satisfaction with the course and reported better levels of learning.

Table 4 shows the perceived instruction delivery in GoC. As reflected in the table, all the components of GoC generated a weighted mean of greater than 4.21 or a descriptive equivalent of 'Strongly Agree.' According to the data, university students regard GoC to be an excellent learning assistance tool in terms of instruction delivery. As such, students are greatly benefitted by the following GoC components arranged from highest to lowest mean value: (1) providing important course materials, (2) providing clear instructions on grading system, (3) keeping students on task, (4) providing clear instructions on how to course learning activities will be done, (5) communicating important due dates/time frames for learning activities, and (6) providing feedback for better understanding of course content. As a result, it is reasonable to believe that Google Classroom, as an online platform, has the potential to improve language classroom productivity in remote and distant learning environments.

These results correlate to Shaharanee et al. (2018) findings showing positive agreement in all the components mentioned, and found that the lowest mean score was also attributed to offering feedback to help students better understand the course material. In this regard, students find instructional support to be lagging behind in terms of concept development when using GoC primarily due to GoC's limited or lack of live-chat or instant messaging, voice and video communications feature as compared to other messaging apps available online like Facebook Messenger. Thus, this implies application of other supplementary messaging platform to compensate for GoC limitation of it.

Table 5 displays the evaluation of GoC along students' satisfaction. As shown in the table, all the components under this criterion earned a mean score which ranges from 3.93 to 3.50 or a descriptive equivalent of 'Agree.' The highest mean score of 3.93 belongs to the component I would suggest GoC as a technique of learning that could be used to any subject, while the component GoC is my first pick for active learning in comparison to other media like Facebook messenger and WhatsApp, got the lowest mean value of 3.50. These findings imply that compared to other online messaging applications, GoC had been adopted

TABLE 4 Evaluating Google Classroom according to perceived instruction delivery

Component	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean	DE
The professor explains how the course learning activities will be rated in detail.	19	22	3	0	0	4.36	SA
The professor clearly communicates important due dates/-time frames for learning exercises.	19	22	2	0	0	4.30	SA
The professor readily provides important course materials.	22	23	0	0	0	4.59	SA
The professor assists in keeping the class on track.	19	22	3	0	0	4.36	SA

Legend:
SA – Strongly Agree
A – Agree
N – Neutral
D – Disagree
SD – Strongly Disagree

TABLE 5 Evaluating Google Classroom according to students' satisfaction

Component	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean	DE
Google Classroom allows me to meet my personal goal and subject expectations.	10	19	14	1	0	3.86	A
I would suggest Google Classroom as a technique of learning that could be used to any subject.	10	22	11	1	0	3.93	A
Google Classroom is my first pick for active learning in comparison to other mediums like Facebook messenger and WhatsApp.	20	14	11	6	3	3.50	A
Google Classroom appeals to me as a learning tool and motivation booster.	7	19	14	3	1	3.64	A

Legend:
SA – Strongly Agree
A – Agree
N – Neutral
D – Disagree
SD – Strongly Disagree

recently in the online teaching and learning. Students are relatively unaccustomed with this web-based learning app compared to other popular major chat platforms (Facebook Messenger, WhatsApp, Instagram). Further, Facebook Messenger as one of most popular messaging apps has the free data or Facebook zero feature which allows its user to read and send messages (stripped-down text-only version) without data subscription, except that photos and videos are not loaded. For students who have limited financial support, this feature can be taken advantage of. Lastly, since GoC is a task-oriented online app, active participation between educator and learners is compromised as shown in the preceding discussions. Therefore, faculty members are expected to apply eclectic modes of delivery and learning interventions to address learners' varying needs in order for flexible language teaching and learning to be successful.

5.3 | Google Classroom as a Tool of Support for Flexible Language Learning and Teaching

TABLE 6 Benefits identified by university students according to gender with regards use of Google Classroom in support to flexible learning and teaching

Benefit	Respondent		f	%
	Male	Female		
Exposure to online learning platform	16	10	26	7.67
Secure and organized submission of outputs	15	19	34	10.03
Easy access of lesson materials	12	16	28	8.26
Motivates students to manage time	18	20	38	11.21
Motivates students to perform well	19	18	37	10.91
Accessible storage of learning materials (ex. backup files)	21	17	38	11.21
Excellent for remote submission	10	6	16	4.72
Easy monitoring of tasks, assignments, projects and announcements	22	18	40	11.80
Feedback on submitted outputs is personal	17	15	32	9.44
Option to resubmit/revise outputs before deadline	0	10	10	2.95
Free	10	12	22	6.49
Paperless	18	0	18	5.31

Table 6 summarizes the benefits identified by university students with regards application of GoC as a tool of support to flexible learning and teaching. There are a total of 12 benefits listed in the table. The three most common benefits cited, in order of importance, are: first, easy monitoring of tasks, assignments, projects and announcements with 11.80%; second, motivates students to manage time and accessible storage of learning materials (ex. backup files) both items with 11.21%; and third, motivates students to perform well with 10.91%.

Based on the following results, it appears that students regarded GoC as an integral support for monitoring numerous class requirements in a language subject. The following excerpts below support this claim:

1. Serves as a reminder of pending assignments. [F8]

2. For me, google classroom is a guiding tool and also a checklist of my activities and quizzes. Compared to messenger, all announcements that are posted in google classroom are immediately visible. [M11]

3. I embrace the changes in online learning amidst the pandemic, as what I've experienced, Google Classroom is helpful in accessing information, announcements, and requirements. [F1]

With the implementation of flexible learning in all higher education institutions in the country, it is not surprising that tertiary students will encounter queuing of module activities, quizzes, and exams from the beginning until end of the semester. Flexible learning is learner-centered and complements the outcome-based education approach in higher education, hence achievement of certain set of learning outcomes for the course is in place. As such, Google classroom is an excellent digital tool that could assist both teacher and students in streamlining the process of sharing information, learning materials, and outputs. This initial benefit identified by the students is also related to the succeeding benefits reported. The fact that Google Classroom could help students in monitoring classroom activities and requirements, students could most likely manage their time well and prepare their timetable to meet submission deadlines. Students could effortlessly check pending and complied class activities, with the exact date and time of the submission recorded on the GoC. The following statements provide basis for this claim:

1. Time and schedule of tasks were given early so we can plan and provide time to prepare and to answer. [M20]

2. Google classroom helps me accomplish my tasks before the deadline and I was able to manage my time properly. [F6]

3. (6) Google Classroom allows you to know and check the time and date of the deadline of the task given without even asking your professor or your classmates, in case you forgot. [M5]

4. There is time and date about the submission and also it sends me a reminder through Gmail that the activity, quiz, or exam will be due on specific time so I can plan ahead. [F8]

Moreover, GoC could function as a secure document storage for teachers and students. Access to posted learning materials, resources, and submitted documents remains available even after the end of the semester. Likewise, GoC safeguards its users from missing or lost outputs, exams, and other submissions. once these documents were uploaded and stored in the system. The following excerpts prove its value in a flexible learning:

1. For me, Google Classroom is a convenient tool for online learning since it is a perfect storage of learning materials given by the professor. [M20]

2. Based on my experience, Google Classroom is better enough to use than any other online learning platform like FB messenger, etc. since it can be used as a vessel and reservoir of lessons and tasks. [F11]

3. Google Classroom allows students to view content from anywhere. Gone are the days of misplaced worksheets and late submissions. [M15]

Finally, students reported that the use GoC in flexible learning set-up motivates them to perform well. For instance, "It is bothersome to see that my activities are done late, and I do not want it to happen again." [F13] and " …aside from this, I became motivated to answer other sets of tasks every time I see my scores in my previous tasks." [F6] This finding suggests that GoC as a tool of support for flexible learning can implicitly affect student's enthusiasm to perform well. Since GoC allows each assignment its own page, the instructor can leave feedback and post student's score on the submitted document, thus students may consider it as an external motivation to perform better than before. In addition, posting students' scores can assure students that their submitted outputs are reviewed, checked, and scored by the teachers in flexible learning approach. Similarly, relevant feedback from the professor on students' submitted output could guide them improve their work. As noted by Tonio (2019), English language teachers in the country must aim to increase the language proficiency level of their students, for higher proficiency could also lead to higher productivity.

6 | CONCLUSION

The following conclusions were drawn based on the findings of this study: To begin with, the majority of university students, both male and female, utilize the internet several times daily. The use of internet becomes vital in the educational process in the new normal. Second, majority of the university students strongly agreed that Google Classroom could support instruction delivery. Likewise, they agreed that Google Classroom could provide accessibility, utility, and students' satisfaction. However, it was also found that GoC poses certain limitations to support communication and interaction in flexible learning. Lastly, students identified several benefits from Google Classroom as a tool of support for flexible language learning and teaching such as (a) easy monitoring of tasks, assignments, projects and announcements; (b) accessible storage of learning materials (ex. backup files); (c) motivates students to manage time; and (d) motivates students to perform well. Overall, undergraduate students using flexible learning approach agreed that the application of Google Classroom as a tool of support in their learning and teaching is beneficial rather than detrimental.

7 | RECOMMENDATION

The following recommendations are made in light of the conclusions: First, HEIs must address the requirement for excellent internet access in the area in order to enable uninterrupted teaching and learning for students. Second, significant findings of this study suggest that higher education institutions implementing the flexible learning approach should integrate the use of GoC in the plan of their online and/or blended learning modality. ICT-enabled and ICT-mediated instructional materials must also be identified and prepared to maximize the potential of any online learning application. Third, professional development programs and capacity-building programs should be aligned to the current teaching and learning situation. Capacity-building programs

for faculty members in higher education institutions must include training in ICT integration like the use of Google Classroom in distant learning in a most effective and efficient manner. Fourth, teachers must provide varying types of resources – images, videos, and links to websites in the application of Google Classroom to create a more dynamic and interactive digital class. Use of other messaging applications, together with GoC could also help improve teaching delivery and learning process in a flexible learning environment. Further, educators' ingenuity, active presence, and meaningful interaction are necessary in using web-based learning application such as GoC to create a learning-oriented rather than task-oriented flexible learning experience. Fifth, undergraduate students should be exposed to free web-based learning applications like Google Classroom to help them transition into other learning management systems used in higher education. Finally, more study should be done on a bigger scale and with a variety of research techniques, including but not limited to experimental, interviewing, and observation.

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