Iraqi EFL teachers' perception towards Google Classroom

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
	Nowadays, information technology (IT) based educational applications (Moodle, Google Classroom, and Zoom) are available for both teachers and students. This study aimed to identify Iraqi English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers' perception towards using Google Classroom at the university level. A qualitative research design (case study) was employed in this study. The researcher asked six Iraqi EFL teachers as volunteers to participate in this study. Those participants are working at different Iraqi universities. A semi-structured interview was used to get the data from those participants. Six phases of analysis were adopted to analyze the elicited data. The results revealed that Google Classroom is very important in EFL teaching and learning at tertiary level. This application has many advantages in teaching EFL students such as it enables students to find the lectures whenever they need them, encourages students to participate, speak, and comment freely and effectively without hesitations especially those who have some psychological problems like shyness. On the other hand, it has many disadvantages too such as it focuses on listening, writing, and watching skills and ignores the direct interaction between teachers and students, which could take place in the normal classes.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, many educational applications (Moodle, Google Classroom and Zoom) are available for both teachers and students. Although these applications have some disadvantages, they have many advantages for both teachers and students. They make teachers and students more creative and active participants. "Tertiary institutions come to rely more heavily on digital platforms to structure the learning experiences of students" [1]. Recently, the integration of technology in teaching/ learning processes has had a great impact. Although this integration enables most teachers and students to become more effective than before, there are many challenges and difficulties involved. At university level, using technology in teaching could be considered as one of new challenges [2]. Some teachers are facing difficulty in dealing with technology [3]. Teachers should leave the traditional teaching style to the ones that enable them to deal with new technology. "Teachers will not be replaced by technology, but teachers who do not use technology will be replaced by those who do" [4]. As tertiary institutions come to rely more heavily on digital platforms to structure the learning experiences of students, it is important to carefully consider how pedagogical practices need to change in order to capitalize upon these changes.

Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) affected not only the lives of humans, but also all areas of life including Education. Most of universities around the world shifted to electronic learning (E-learning) and

more specifically to distance education. For some, it was very common but for others was not. In Iraq, all university instructors were instructed to use Google Classroom App (GCA) in their teaching. "Google Classroom may still be unfamiliar for some people" [2].

Before Covid-19 pandemic, GCA was not used in Iraq as a regular teaching method. All Iraqi university instructors were asked to enroll in workshops about GCA. Most of Iraqi learners and instructors were unfamiliar with this new teaching and learning situation. They used to depend on normal lectures that need the instructors and the students to attend a class and everything would be explained and discussed face to face. They were instructed to create their classes in order to enable them to communicate, share assignments, and give lectures from their home using this application. Therefore, the researcher tries to investigate the effectiveness of GCA in teaching English as a foreign language from the perspective of Iraqi English language instructors. And since there is no evidence of any study in Iraq on GCA use, he will also try to identify the benefits of using it and the kinds of challenges and difficulties, which may encounter Iraqi EFL instructors in the teaching process.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In 2004, Google introduced a new free educational application named Google Classroom. This new application was designed to meet the need of the virtual education. The web-based application was related to the educational Apps provided by Google. Prominently, the virtual classroom enables teachers and students to have a platform by which they can communicate easily and make collaborative group-based activities. According to previous research [2], "Google Classroom's design purposefully simplifies the instructional interface and options used for delivering and tracking assignments; communication with the entire course or individuals is also simplified through announcements, email, and push notifications." It helps teachers and students to facilitate their collaboration [5]. For teachers, it enables them to manage teaching materials, conduct classes, invite their students, and state assignment for them easily. It is not restricted for creating teaching materials but also enables teachers to test their students by conducting electronic exams and quizzes. "Google Classroom is meant to help teachers manage the creation and collection of student assignments in a paperless environment, basically leveraging the framework of Google Docs, Drive and other apps. Google Classroom allows teachers to spend more time with their students and less time on the paperwork, and it is now even better" [6]. Interestingly, previous researchers [6], [7] identified a number of benefits of using GCA in learning process. These benefits could mention as: i) Google Classroom has the potential to streamline communication and workflow for students by providing a single access point to discussion threads and assigned work; ii) Google Classroom can help students to keep their files more organized because all their work can be stored paperlessly in a single program; iii) Faculty can quickly identify which students may be struggling with their assignments due to the tracking mechanisms associated with assigned tasks; iv) Grading processes can be simplified because of the grading features associated with student submissions [5].

In addition, there are a lot of benefits of using GCA in the teaching and learning process, which were stated in previous study [8]. These benefits are classroom management, flexibility, safety and security, and promote collaboration. As it is explained in the literature, this application provides more facilities for both teachers and students. It creates a sense of collaboration among them and provides a wide platform by which teachers can lead a discussion with their students. It allows free participation of students in a virtual atmosphere to have discussions with their teachers or even their colleagues.

According to Liu, Theodore, and Lavelle [9], successful technology integration could be influenced by teachers' attitudes about technology. Making teachers comfortable with technology and have positive attitudes towards integration of technology in teaching may lead to improving their students' achievements [10]. Before using information communication technology (ICT), teachers should be knowledgeable with ICT by receiving training on how to use it [11]. This means that teachers should be enrolled in some kinds of training programs on how to use GCA in teaching to get the best out of it. Providing teachers with training programs could be beneficial for teachers to deal with computers, technology, and have positive attitudes towards technology [12]–[20].

2.1. Diffusion of innovation theory

According to Valente, "A technology is a design for instrumental action that reduces the uncertainty in the cause-effect relationships involved in achieving a desired outcome" [21]. This theory is focusing on the spread of new ideas and technology by identifying the way, the reason behind, and the rate to which they spread. He provided a definition of innovation as being "an idea, practice, or object that is perceived to be new by the individual." On the other hand, he defines diffusion as the means by which innovation is communicated among the members of a social system during a certain period of time by using specific channels. This means that this theory has four oppositions, which are innovation, members of social system,

period of time, and communication channels. According to previous researchers [22], [23], Rogers' diffusion of innovations theory is more suitable for studying the integration of technology in higher education.

2.2. Previous studies of integrating technology in teaching and learning

There are a number of studies on the teachers' perceptions towards Google Classroom in teaching and learning. A study conducted by Machado and Chung [24] showed that the importance of technology training for teachers lies in integrating technology into the classroom. And since teachers do not get enough technical training in this regard and at the same time lack technical competency, this eventually prevents the integration of technology in the classroom.

Another study by Öznacar and Dericioğlu [25] to identify the role of administrators in the integration of technology in the classroom, reveals that those administrators have positive beliefs of this integration in the classroom. For many reasons, the integration of technology in the classroom has failed. One of these reasons is that teachers were not able to use technology in an effective way.

There is also a study conducted by Azhar and Iqbal [26] who investigates the teachers' perceptions towards Google effectiveness in teaching. The findings of this study revealed that Google classroom does not have a great benefit for teaching methodologies. It could be used only to upload some assignments for students, manage classroom, and to enable teachers to communicate with their students. As it is shown in this study, it neglected or ignored many other features of this application.

The teaching process could not be accomplished without considering the teachers' central role. Students also cannot learn without teachers. Hence, the integration of technology in teaching and learning should take into consideration the teachers' acceptance of this new integration in teaching methodologies. And on the basis of aforementioned literature, this study focuses on the teachers' perceptions to identify the integration of Google Classroom in Iraqi EFL universities as a new instructional media at tertiary level.

3.   RESEARCH METHOD

This qualitative study was conducted in the academic year 2019/2020. In this study, the six participants volunteered for this study that work as EFL instructors at three different universities in Iraq. Table 1 shows the background information of each participant.

This study is qualitative in nature. A semi-structured interview was used to elicit data from the interviewees. The researcher uses this method in collecting the data because it enables him to get more in-depth information about the way EFL instructors perceive GCA primarily as a teaching method. The interview consisted of four parts and each part has a number of questions. The first part is about the benefits of using GCA, the second part is about its usability, the third part is about ease of learning how to use it, and finally, the fourth part is about the instructors' contentment of using it. Most of the questions were adopted from the study of Harjanto and Sumarni [3].

Table 1. The participants' background information

Participants	Gender	Working experience	Place of work	Qualification
1. A.A.	Male	More than three years	Al-Yarmouk University College	M.A. in English Literature
2. D.H.	Female	More than three years	Al-Yarmouk University College	M.A. in Linguistics
3. S.Z.	Female	More than three years	Al-Yarmouk University College	M.A. in Linguistics
4. I.A.	Female	More than five years	University of Baghdad	M.A. in Linguistics
5. M.G.	Female	More than 11 years	University of Baghdad	Ph.D. in Linguistics
6. N.M.	Female	More than 15 years	University of Diyala	Ph.D. in TESOL

4.   RESULTS

A semi-structured interview is used to get a great deal of information regarding the use of GCA by Iraqi EFL instructors. During the interview, the researcher has explained the purpose of the study to the interviewees. They have been asked to answer sixteen open-ended questions about GCA. Their answers were audio-recorded using a recorder. To analyze the data, the six phases of analysis were adopted from [27]. These steps could be summarized as: i) Phase 1: familiarizing yourself with your data; ii) Phase 2: generating initial codes; iii) Phase 3: searching for themes; iv) Phase 4: reviewing themes; v) Phase 5: defining and naming themes; vi) Phase 6: producing the report.

4.1. The benefits of using GCA

The researcher asked the interviewees to answer the following five questions regarding the benefits of GCA in teaching English. Their responses could be identified as presented in subsection.

4.1.1. Do you think that this application may help you to become more effective? Why?

In terms of Google Classroom effectiveness, four of the interviewees agreed on its effectiveness in teaching and learning process, while two of them disagreed. The following direct quotes from interview show their responses:

"I think this application can make the teacher more effective by using different methods in delivering the lectures" (M.G.)
"Yes, I usually use students' questions on G classroom as an indicator of the effectiveness of my teaching" (I.A.)
"Yes, it may actually be beneficial for the instructor. It may improve his/her technical skills as well as their academic level. The instructor will try to improve his/her skills in delivering the lecture" (D.H.)
"Yes, this application helps me to become more effective because I can communicate with all my students and know how each student thinks and works and I can answer the individual questions" (N.M.)
"I think it does not help me to become more effective" (S.Z.)
"No, because it keeps my teaching options limited with EFL learning" (A.A.)

4.1.2. Do you think that this application may help you to become more productive? Why?

When the interviewees were asked, whether GCA makes them more productive in teaching process, they were divided into two groups: one group showed how it helps them to be more productive while the second group did not. Their responses could be explained in these quotes:

"Google classroom helps to increase the productivity of the lectures by making sure that students understand" (M.G)
"Yes, it helps me keep track of how much I achieved of the syllabus" (I.A.)
"Yes, it makes me more productive by streaming assignments and sending feedback to each student" (N.M.)
"It does not make me more productive because each lecture needs many preparations to be done and delivered to the students. I have to follow the time-table of each class and cannot be late" (S.Z.)
"No, because it has a narrow scope in communicating with the students" (A.A.)
"No, it is not a matter of productivity. A productive instructor will be productive regardless of the way of teaching and vice versa" (D.H.)

4.1.3. Do you consider this application useful to you? Why?

In regard to GCA usefulness, all interviewees agreed on its usefulness except two who disagreed. They justified their disagreement by not being accustomed to teaching English using the Internet, and it needs more training in order to use it productively. The following quotes show their responses regarding GCA usefulness:

"This application is very beneficial because it helps me to store all files, I use on Google drive" (N.M.)
"It is useful in many ways by saving the lectures, bank of questions, and easier in grading" (M.G.)
"Yes, I cannot check each student's homework due the large number of students in my physical classroom; Google classroom helps me make sure that students are doing their homework via Google assignment" (I.A.)
"Yes, it is. The instructor may need to stay connected with his students. So, having any sort of an online platform to achieve that connection is definitely useful" (D.H.)
"It is useful if I have the proper training to make use of all its benefits and features. (Now I have followed and signed in many webinars to get the suitable training on using it)" (S.Z.)
"No, because I am limited to the Internet options in teaching EFL." (A.A.)

4.1.4. Do you consider this application useful to your students? Why?

In terms of its usefulness for students, the interviewees' responses were varied regarding this issue. Three of them insisted on its benefits for the EFL students, while another two interviewees did not. Only one of them mentioned that it is beneficial mainly for hard working students more than others.

"It is designed to be of a great benefit for students. They can find the lectures in the class at any time. This helps them to overcome the problem of missing the lectures. As far as the assignments are concerned, they have much more time than in the physical class. And the most important, it helps students, especially those who feel shy or embarrassed to speak in the class, to write a comment or to ask me questions on the topics they have a problem with." (S.Z.)

"This application is very useful to my students when I ask them to respond to an assignment with a comment that shows their own thinking" (N.M.)

"Yes, they get to send me questions, check the types of examination questions, and watch useful short videos" (I.A)

"It might be useful for a certain type of students. The hard-working type will definitely find it beneficial" (D.H.)

"No, because they are basically bound to writing, listening and seeing skills while other learning skills are kept passive in EFL" (A.A)

"I do not think it is useful to the students because they did not practice it before, they were supposed to have training, besides other problems of the poor connectivity of the net most of the times" (M.G.)

4.1.5 Do you consider this application timesaving? Why?

Time is something precious. In everyday life, most people consider it extremely important. In teaching and in any other works, time deserves much more consideration. The interviewees did not agree on GCA as timesaving. Two of them agreed and the other four interviewees did not. Their responses could be identified in the following direct quotations:

"Google classroom is a massive time saver. Both teachers and students can find all documents, resources, assignments and quizzes whenever they want" (N.M.)

Actually, it saves my time grading questions and tests (it has the auto-grading feature) and less paper exams to be graded manually. But my actual problem is that it consumes a lot of my time to prepare the lecture and post it as a PDF/video and then responding to the students' comments or questions. (S.Z.)

"No, it is time consuming. There are many limitations: The comments section is horrible; they could have added features to make it effective; Most of the time student cannot check the attached Google forms, sheets and slides. For different reasons; The types of applications we use to create content are not always compatible with Google; Google classroom does not live up to our expectations at all. They did not even make an effort to make things better in their platform during the COVID-19 crisis." (I.A.)

"Not exactly saving time, but rather takes less time than the real study halls" (D.H.)

"No, because it takes time for me when arranging the teaching material whether written – audio and video then it also consumes much time to share it with the students/learners through Internet channels" (A.A.)

"It is not time-saving at all, on the contrary it is wasting time because of the network problems, and most of the time is spent on uploading or downloading" (M.G.)

4.2. The usability of using GCA

Some electronic applications are difficult to use in teaching. In this part of the interview, the researcher tries to come up with real facts if there are any complications in using GCA in teaching. The interviewees were asked four different questions in this regard to get more in-depth information about its usability.

4.2.1. Do you think that this application is easy to be used in teaching the English language? Why?

On one hand, in terms of its ease of use in teaching English language, most interviewees agreed that this application is easy to be used in teaching English and they provided some justifications for that. On the other hand, one interviewee said that GCA ease of use depends on the teacher himself and how he can deal with it. The following quotations represent their answers to the mentioned question:

"I think this application is easy to be used in teaching English because the students will be able to review, translate and listen to the lectures" (N.M.)

"It is easy in teaching English language because it enables the teacher to uploads video, films and YouTube." (M.G.)

"Yes, it is easy to post links, videos, and useful websites in an organized way via Google classwork. However, Google classroom does not provide effective interactive environment" (I.A.)
"Yes, it is easy to be used in language teaching because it has all the tools to facilitate the use of language skills" (D.H.)
"Yes, because it needs only a learner and a teaching material with little dependence on the teacher" (A.A.)
"Actually, it depends on the teacher himself/ herself and how she/he manages the different available resources to teach EFL by using this application" (S.Z.)

4.2.2. Is this application simple or difficult? Why?

Regarding this question, the interviewees did not differ among themselves about the simplicity of GCA and two of them mentioned that it requires some practice. These responses are stated in the following:

"I think it is simple because the setup process is axiomatic. In addition, most universities offer many tutorials about how to use Google classroom" (N.M.)
"It is simple. For me, watching one video on YouTube is enough to learn the basic steps to create a class and to share the lectures with the students" (S.Z.)
"It is simple. It has a user-friendly interface. However, we have to integrate other applications to compensate for the missing features" (I.A.)
"Yes, because it mimics the up-to-date EFL mechanism" (A.A.)
"It is easy as a technique, but it requires training" (M.G.)
"It is neither easy nor difficult. It just needs a bit of practicing" (D.H.)

4.2.3. Do you use this application with/ without written instructions? Why?

Teachers always use some instructions in their teaching. When the interviewees were asked about the needs for instructions to be used with GCA, four of them found it is very important to use written instructions while the two other interviewees mentioned that there is no need for such instructions with GCA. One of them mentioned that there is need for them in quizzes. The following quotations summaries their responses:

"I use this application with written instructions because instructions for assignments or quizzes are very essential to be clear for all students" (N.M.)
"I have to give instructions to avoid confusing students" (I.A.)
"I use it with written instruction because not all students can efficiently use it without instructing them" (D.H.)
"Yes, because I am bound to use the written instructions in the application itself in presenting the teaching material for the students as well" (A.A.)
"I use it without instructions in lectures, but in quizzes I use instructions because of the Google form used for the test" (M.G.)
"No, there is no need to use it with written instructions. I think videos are the best way to learn how to use it" (S.Z.)

4.2.4. Could you recover and keep going after making mistakes? How?

Making mistakes is inevitable in any sort of action. When using GCA, mistakes could occur. The researcher asked the interviewees about the possibility of restoring and continuing in such a situation, their responses are varied. Some of them showed the possibility of recovery, while others found difficulty in dealing with such mistakes.

"It is very easy to correct any mistake in any lecture or any assignment. It has edit option for both teacher and student. A teacher can delete the lecture and re-post it with the correct version" (S.Z.)
"I could recover if I make a mistake by deleting the material or editing the information and so on" (M.G.)
"Yes, there is always a place for editing mistakes and re-doing the actions" (D.H.)
"No, because when the teacher sends something written it will be sent to the students on their own screens and Internet pages; and he cannot correct the mistakes on all their own screens on one time. Yet, the teacher can go on teaching but with a kind of embarrassment and confusion." (A.A.)
"I have to be careful because every mistake will be in students' email. This is one of the things that put me off" (I.A.)

"I do not think I can recover documents after deleting them. However, I can create and edit a word document easily. I do not want to waste time answering students' questions about the requirements. I prefer to take advantage of time to answer the questions related to the materials." (N.M.)

4.3. The ease of learning how to use GCA

The electronic applications used in education vary between being difficult and easy in regard with learning the procedures of using them. Some questions were directed to the interviewers to find out how difficult or easy it is to learn the procedures and the steps of using GCA. Two questions were asked; the first question concerns the possibility of remembering the procedures and the second about the possibility of using it smoothly and quickly.

4.3.1. Could you remember how to use it? Why?

All interviewees show the ease of remembering how to use this app except one interviewee. Their responses are represented in the following direct quotations, which elicited from the interviewees as:

"I can remember how to use it because it is an intuitive web and I use it daily" (N.M.)
"It is easy to remember how to use it in making tests on Google forms and to auto-grade them. Also, I can easily remember how to respond to students and post lectures by using Docs or videos or by using YouTube Videos, or by using a voice record clip stored in the Drive or on other devices." (S.Z.)
"I could remember how to use it as I had enough training and the continuous practice helps in that as well" (M.G.)
"Yes, I can remember. I have used it because a colleague of mine recommended it; I used it to check student's understanding and post useful resources" (I.A.)
"Yes, as I said it needs practicing and once you master the tools, you will memorize the process" (D.H.)
"No, because sometimes the user may forget his passwords." (A.A.)

4.3.2. Do you have the ability to use it fast? How?

When the interviewees were asked about the ability to use GCA faster, four of them explained that they could use it very fast, while two of them cannot. The following quotations explain their responses regarding the mentioned question as:

"I can use it fast because I used to use a similar web during my Ph.D. journey" (N.M.)
"After a month and a half of using this application, I can use it very fast" (S.Z.)
"Sometimes I am fast in making class, making a lecture, and sometimes I am slow in forming the test" (M.G.)
"Yes, the application on iPhones and androids are faster to sign in and out than the website on laptops" (D.H.)
"No, because it is linked with the main Internet channel and there are always network problems due the multiple Internet users" (A.A.)
"No, it takes me a long time to do anything there: I need a PC; the IOS system is not very compatible with Google class. Some features are missing on cell phone; Some students have issues filling Google forms and sheets. Others could not even load Google docs and goggle slides. By the way, I usually set the sharing to anyone with the link but it is useless. The quizzes and assignments are the worst part. Many students say it is almost impossible to answer the quizzes in the forms so they send it via private comments, which takes me forever to check." (I.A.)

4.4. The instructors' satisfaction of using GCA

Being satisfied is a vital goal for most teachers. Dissatisfaction with any educational tool creates a kind of frustration for teachers and learners. A set of questions were formulated to identify the extent to which teachers are satisfied or dissatisfied with the use of the GCA in teaching Iraqi EFL university students.

4.4.1. Are you satisfied with Google Classroom application? Why?

The interviewees were divided into the two groups, the first group was satisfied with GCA while the second group was unsatisfied with it. Their responses and justifications are stated in the following direct quotations as:

"Yes, I am satisfied with this application because it helps to share files and documents between teachers and students" (N.M.)

"I can say I am satisfied with it. But it needs some features to be added, like Timing on the questions" (S.Z.)

"I am satisfied, it is very good but not that good with the poor networks" (M.G.)

"No, it is time consuming as it lacks many necessary features" (I.A.)

"No, I am not satisfied because it is new to our students and it is difficult for them to be accustomed to its tools and features" (D.H.)

"No, because it limits in my EFL teaching options." (A.A.)

4.4.2. Do you think that this application is fun to be used in teaching the English language? Why?

The interviewees did not agree on GCA whether it is fun to be used in teaching or not. Three of them mentioned that it is fun while the other three did not. The following quotations represent their responses in this regard:

"I think it is fun because teachers can use and create digital activities for their students" (N.M.)

"Probably yes. I have found it useful and fun in teaching pronunciation" (S.Z.)

"It could be fun in teaching according to the subject" (M.G.)

"No, it does not provide interactive environment" (I.A.)

"No, the class can actually be fun mainly through immediate interaction and group work." (D.H.)

"No, it doesn't have direct and multiple communications skills in EFL" (A.A.)

4.4.3. Do you think that this application is workable with our situation as it is expected? Why?

In terms of GCA suitability to be applied in Iraqi EFL context, all interviewees agreed on the unsuitability of GCA and they mentioned that it is unworkable due to many problems and difficulties. Their responses could identify in the following quotations:

"I do not think it will work 100% because of the bad Internet service. In addition, not all students have internet and smart phones" (N.M.)

"In our country, this application is not workable because many students do not have an Internet connection or it is very weak, if it is available. Some students do not have smart phones and cannot have the opportunity to participate in the class. Some do not know how to use it; they have lack of technical knowledge. And, many of them do not have the motivation to use it and complete the topics." (S.Z.)

"No, it is not working with our situation 100% because of social, financial, and technical problems" (M.G.)

"No, students are suffering from Google classroom, and they prefer telegram because it does not need fast Internet connection. However, things get messy when we use telegram. Thus, I am stuck with Google classroom" (I.A.)

"No, Google classroom is not very much the best option in our situation. Based on my experience, using other social media platforms is easier and more beneficial in some aspects" (D.H.)

"No, because we are subject to a very critical healthy situation which is also up to change on daily bases from good to bad and vice versa" (A.A.)

4.4.4. Is this application great? Why?

In regard with this question, the responses were varied among the interviewees. Some of them mentioned that it is great while others did not. These responses are represented in the following quotations:

"It is great" (N.M.)

"It is great because it helps teachers to save course work so that students can review it whenever they want. Students can also complete projects or assignments and quizzes as well as interact with teachers by using this application." (S.Z.)

"It is good in improving the educational process and motivating the students to study" (M.G.)

"No, it lacks many features because it's free. It is an okay platform for integrated learning, not distance learning" (I.A.)

"It is great when used efficiently" (D.H.)

"No, because it has no credibility in regard to assessment of the students' achievements in learning the teaching material and their EFL skills. So, it is fake" (A.A.)

4.4.5. Is GCA convenient to be used in teaching English? Why?

There were four of the interviewees agreed that GCA is convenient, while the other two interviewees did not agree. The following direct quotations show their response in this regard as:

"Yes, it is convenient to use" (N.M.)
"It is convenient in one case, if the students get training on how to use it successfully. I have a lot of students who cannot use it properly and this makes a huge problem in managing the class" (S.Z.)
"It is convenient to some extent" (M.G.)
"Yes, it is" (D.H.)
"No, it is tiresome" (I.A.)
"No, although it has some advantages, this application has many disadvantages and shortcomings when used in teaching English." (A.A.)

5. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal that GCA has great benefits in teaching and learning English. Most of the responses show that this application makes teaching process more effective. This in line with the previous study [28] which found that teachers believed strongly in the importance of technology in language learning. On the contrary, some participants of the study did not agree with GCA role in making teaching more effective since it constricts teachers' teaching options. These findings in line with research [26] stated that Google Classroom does not have a great benefit for teaching methodologies. It could be used only to upload some assignments for students, manage classroom, and to enable teachers to communicate with their students. It could be act as a learning management system (LMS). Used together with other communication tools such as Google meet is helpful. Using this tool with GCA may provide a virtual space of interaction between teachers and their students.

As explained by most of the participants, GCA enables teachers to use many materials such as (video, films, or YouTube) in their teaching, which eventually leads to the EFL students' understanding of the target language. Teachers can answer most of the students' questions that may be sent by them and this way is unworkable in the normal classes due to the great number of students and time limitations. Additionally, it builds up, develops, and improves the technical skills of the EFL teachers.

In terms of GCA productivity, the study reveals two groups; the first totally agrees with its productivity, while the second does not agree with this opinion. Some justifications were provided concerning GCA productivity. The participants showed that it helps teachers to give more than one lecture for each subject until they make sure that the objectives are achieved which are not applicable in the normal lectures due to time constraints. It enables teachers to keep track of their lectures to be sure that the whole materials are covered. Finally, teachers can assign some assignments for their students and provide them with feedback in this regard. Valente [21] stated that, "a technology is a design for instrumental action that reduces the uncertainty in the cause-effect relationships involved in achieving a desired outcome."

Conversely, the second group mentioned that this application decreases the productivity of teaching. This is contrary with the previous research [29], which stated that teachers believe that language-learning outcomes could be achieved more effectively by using technology. Teachers need much more time to prepare their lectures following a fixed schedule that cannot be delayed. They stated that it has very narrow scope of communication. As explained by one of them, productivity does not belong to GCA since teachers could be productive without depending on a certain type of teaching method or tool.

Generally, most data elicited from the participants, show that GCA is useful for teachers. It enables them to: i) Save all files using Google Drive; ii) Avoid missing their lectures; iii) Make a bank of questions; iv) Do grading easily; v) Assign homework or assignments for a large number of students; and vi) Keep in touch with their students continuously.

On the contrary, some data elicited from two participants show that without training, teachers might not use GCA efficiently. This means that teachers need to be involved in training programs to be able to use GCA effectively. This is consistent with previous studies [24], [30] which emphasized the importance of teachers' technology training to integrate technology in the classroom. Chamorro and Rey [29] stated that there is a difference between teachers' belief and the implementation of technology in terms of matching the teaching practice. This means that those instructors do not have technical skills in using the Internet applications and they need training programs to do the best. This in line with a number of studies such as [12]–[19] who stated that providing teachers with training programs could be beneficial for them to deal with computers, technology, and have positive attitudes towards technology. A study of Budiman, Rahmawati,

and Ulfa [30] suggested that before using ICT, teachers should be knowledgeable with ICT by receiving training on how to use it.

Furthermore, regarding the benefits of this application for the EFL students, the findings reveal that GCA has some advantages and disadvantages for them. In terms of its advantages, it enables students to find the lectures whenever they need them. It also encourages students to participate, speak, and comment freely and effectively without hesitations especially those who have some psychological problems like shyness. In the normal class, those students cannot participate, ask questions, ask for clarification or clarity and so on while with GCA they can without fear or hesitate. Additionally, students can easily give their opinions about certain topics, participate in discussions, and express their view of points accurately. They can also enlarge and build up their knowledge since they can be provided with much more information and learning videos.

As for the disadvantages of GCA, it is believed that it focuses on listening, writing, and watching skills and ignores the direct interaction between teachers and students, which could take place in the normal classes. Rabbi, Zakaria, and Tonmoy [31] concluded that "...Google Classroom can be used as a learning tool to enhance learners' listening skill." The study also reveals that GCA might not be beneficial due to the fact that EFL students in Iraq need much more training to be able to use this application since they did not use it before. There was another reason that makes this application less effective that the Internet service in Iraq is very bad. This application as identified by the participants, suitable only for skillful and high proficient students and this means that low proficient students could not benefit from it. Consequently, this study reveals that GCA is time consuming since the Internet service is very bad in Iraq. This means that its status of being time consuming is related to the technical problems.

Furthermore, regardless of the bad internet service, the findings reveal that GCA could be used easily in teaching EFL students. It enables students to review, translate, and listen to the lectures easily. Additionally, it helps teachers to upload some learning videos, which decreases the students' dependence on their teachers. The ease of use may depend on whether the teachers are skilled enough to use this application or not. This means that skillful teachers could use this application perfectly and effectively. It will not be hard for teachers who get good training.

Regarding the need for written instructions with GCA, the findings show that there is a need to do so. Actually, these instructions eliminate the vagueness, which may occur when teachers ask their student to make some assignments. They are also beneficial in quizzes and exams because not all students have the same ability to understand what they should do without instructions and this also helps to avoid confusion if any.

The findings of this study reveal that GCA has "Edit" option. This option helps teachers to recover when mistakes occur. It was used sufficiently by skillful teachers, while unskillful teachers did not benefit from this option. This means that those teachers have not received enough training to do so. This application provides teachers and students with some easy remembered steps and faster use in conditions when the Internet service is good and is used with computers or laptops rather than cell-phones.

Additionally, this study reveals that not all users are satisfied with GCA. For those who are satisfied, they mentioned that it provides them with an enjoyable atmosphere by using some technical activities in teaching some subjects such as English pronunciation. Making your lecture fun depends on the subject you teach, as explained by one participant. Accordingly, to get full satisfaction regarding GCA, Google should provide this application with question-timing, characteristic of using it with low efficiency internet service, some pre-steps for beginners, atmosphere of interaction, group working, and direct and multiple communication feature.

Since GCA are using for the first time in Iraq, this study tried to shed some lights on its suitability for Iraqi EFL context. The results of this study reveal that this application is not suitable for our context for many reasons as: i) The internet service is very bad; ii) Iraqi EFL students are not provided or equipped with electronic devices such as computers, laptops, and cell-phones. Additionally, not all students have internet accessibility; iii) Teachers and students are suffering of many technical, social, and financial problems and difficulties; iv) Some users prefer using other applications such as Telegram because it could be used with low service internet; v) Nowadays most people have unstable psychological situation because of COVID19.

Finally, the findings showed that there is no agreement on GCA greatness because of many variations among the participants of this study. They also did not show agreement on its convenient use in teaching English. The results show that some teachers facing difficulties in using GCA with EFL students and it is tiring for them because of its aforementioned weaknesses and negative points. This leads to the importance of encouraging Iraqi EFL instructors to be skillful in using GCA otherwise they have to give chance for skillful instructors. Hence, this is what previous researchers [4] emphasized on, when she stated that "teachers will not be replaced by technology, but teachers who do not use technology will be replaced by those who do."

6.   CONCLUSION

This study aimed to find out the advantages and disadvantages that accompany the use of GCA by capturing the perceptions of Iraqi EFL teachers who use this application for the first time in teaching. This study concludes that the importance of this application lies in the possibility of using it optimally, which comes through by enrolling in training courses to achieve this goal. Despite its importance in education, this application needs to add some features that make it easy to use. For example, it should be developed or updated to be more effective with a slow internet service. It should be provided with options and features that enable the users who use a smartphone with the same effectiveness when using it in computer, as well as activating some of the features that enable the users to choose their own field of study, since each field of study has requirements that differs from one to other.

In sum, this study confirmed that this application is suitable not only for teachers but also for students. This suitability will be achieved if teachers and students get better training courses. Google Classroom does not limit teachers to use a specific method of teaching, which makes teaching more influential since it provides a wide space for teachers to choose many ways, methods, and means of teaching. Iraqi universities are in their early stages in terms of using digital teaching platforms such as GCA to develop the structure of teachers' and students' learning experiences and since they may be more dependent on these platforms in the near future, it is important to think carefully about how teaching processes need to be changed in order to take advantage of using these platforms.

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