Painting Pictures With Words Via Google Classroom

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Abstract: An adjective is a part of speech that has its own significance in describing or modifying a noun or pronoun to make it specific as well as interesting. Using multiple adjectives to describe a noun, however, is confusing to ESL students as there is a certain order to be followed, which contradicts or does not even exist in their L1. At the same time, students nowadays are prone to technologies. In this era of technology advancement, the use of Google Classroom as an online tool plays an important role in education. The teaching and learning process could be enhanced as numerous features of Google are available on this blended learning platform. Therefore, the study aimed to examine the effectiveness of utilizing short videos and online games via Google Classroom in teaching the order of adjectives to the students. The participants of the study were 67 ESL students from an urban secondary school. Action research was carried out and the data was collected by the means of pre- and post-tests. It was highlighted that the results from post-tests showed an increase compared to pre-tests. The findings had proven that the integration of Google Classroom positively enhanced the teaching and learning process rather than being the conventional grammar lesson, and facilitated students to master the focused grammar rule. Therefore, Google Classroom should be seen as a viable learning tool to be implemented in ESL classrooms.

Index Terms: ESL students, ESL classroom, Google Classroom, grammar, order of adjectives, technology, urban school

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1. INTRODUCTION

English is a language spoken and written by people all over the world and it is already considered as one of the most vital languages used globally . The technology in the 21st century such as the Internet uses English language as its main language or medium of communication. The Ministry of Education (MOE) in Malaysia itself highlights the importance of English language as one of the most crucial subjects to be taught and applied in daily life [1]. Teachers have to put a really smart and hard effort to teach English as a second language (ESL) in Malaysia. All four macro language skills need to be covered by the end of the syllabus. There are four main skills to be learnt in order to master the language itself; listening, speaking, reading and writing. In the process of learning the skills mentioned, grammar is considered as a vital key to unlock the secrets of effective language improvement. However, according to Al-Mekhlafi and Nagaratnam [2], despite holding a pivotal role in linguistic, grammar is seen as appalling and dreadful in the English classroom. The current system may sound practical in the process of learning English language in Malaysian context. Unfortunately, the truth is revealed when most Malaysian citizens failed to grasp the language comprehensively as their grammar skills are blunt [3]. The skills may have not been practised enough due to unseen circumstances. Even though the grammar activities do exist in the syllabus and textbooks of the subject, questions still arise on why the end result after completing the 11 years of primary and secondary education shows that the students' mastery of grammar is still unsatisfactory [4]. In order to investigate the problems, it can be traced back to the activities that are supposed to be helping them at their grammar skills.

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Despite the students being aware of the importance of grammar instruction and knowing the fact that participation is encouraged, many teachers still experience a great deal of quietness in the ESL classroom. The students are said to remain non-participatory, quiet or behave passively. For ESL instructors, this is a kind of uncomfortable feeling as it reflects negatively on their instructional practice. Chambers and Yunus [5] asserted that it is important for teachers to apply different classroom activities and learning strategies to assist the learners with various needs. Due to the wide use of technology nowadays, the adoption of technology in the grammar lesson is seen as a viable option. Thus, the aims of the study were to (1) examine the effectiveness of using Google Classroom to teach the order of adjectives to the students and (2) identify the effects of employing Google Classroom on the students' attitudes towards grammar learning.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Grammar Teaching and Learning

English is known as a global language. A good command of English is deemed vital in this era of globalization. In order to compete worldwide, Malaysia also gives emphasis on the importance of English as evident in the education policies and reforms. Referring to the Malaysian Education Blueprint launched in 2013, one of the eleven fundamental shifts outlined in the blueprint is to produce students that are proficient in English, besides being competent in Malay which is the national language [6]. Nevertheless, the Cambridge Malaysia Baseline Project, which was conducted to benchmark students' English proficiency levels against the international standards known as CEFR, concluded that a large number of students in the country are left behind and never progress beyond a basic user level of English [7]. Yunus, Sulaiman, Kamarulzaman and Ishak [8] also claimed that there is a concern with regard to the low level of English attainment among Malaysian students and there are numerous cultural and linguistic challenges faced by them to acquire English language in Malaysia. Looking at this scenario, there are many contributing factors that should be considered and one of them is undeniably the students' low level of mastery in

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grammar. As reported by Singh et al [4], the analysis of the grammatical errors made by the tertiary students involved in their study revealed that the students' have a poor command of the English language. In Malaysian context, grammar or Language Awareness is compulsory to be taught as it is a skill that learners have to master by the end of the 11 schooling years. The grammar lessons are supplemented with textbooks and workbooks which present the key grammar rules [9]. However, Adeng and Shah [10] argued that students tend to lose their interest and motivation to learn grammar when the grammar teaching is overemphasized on rules. Moreover, there are ESL students that find it challenging to grasp the grammar rules [11] including the order of adjectives which can be complicated to them [12]. Knowing the correct order of adjectives is essential to enhance the students' writing skills particularly in descriptive writing. According to Schaeffer [13], good descriptive writing gives life to the picture one is trying to paint in the reader's mind by using precise language which includes the use of specific adjectives and nouns and strong action verbs. Therefore, there is a need to identify the effective grammar teaching method in ESL [14]. Since technology is indispensable in today's world, among the feasible initiatives that can be undertaken is by integrating technology in the classroom.

2.2 Technology in Education
The era of the Internet has arrived with the advancement of the technology. The Internet now has become an integral part of human's life as it helps us stay connected to other people and helps us to communicate. In this age, the time of teaching and learning over a whiteboard is long gone. Since the Internet has emerged as part of teaching tool, teachers have utilized this opportunity to adopt technology into education. As affirmed by Yunus [15], the ever-updated technology these days results in teachers shifting their pedagogy practices accordingly. In addition, according to Tamimi [16], Web 2.0 technology is a concept referring to a system of advancing technologies which are currently being used by lots of people around the world including in education system for the purpose of facilitating curriculum design, enriching pedagogical material, and enhancing collaborative work among teachers and students. Web technologies are available to their users in numerous forms comprising the following: web applications (e.g. Google Docs, Google Sheets, Google Slides); social networking sites (Facebook and Twitter); video sharing tools (e.g. Youtube); wiki engines (e.g. Wikipedia); and online blogs (e.g. Blogger.com and WordPress) McClanahan [17] stated that among the benefits of the employment of technology in the ESL classroom are assisting English language acquisition, increasing communication skills, supporting individuals' learning styles and enhancing ESL students' motivation as well as engagement. The use of technology has a positive outcome on teaching and learning as well [18].

2.3 Google Classroom
The latest addition of online learning platform is Google Classroom. Google Classroom is seen as one of the most viable tools to be used for virtual classroom. Google Classroom, according to Kaur and Erturk [19], is launched by Google in August 2014, with the "aims to creating, distributing and grading assignments, test and other class material in a paperless way" [19, p.1].There is a myriad of benefits that Google Classroom has to offer for the education community. Siemens and Weller [20] claimed that Google Classroom encourages collaboration between students, develop communication skills and boost sharing sources. The claim was supported by Janzen [21] who also asserted that this platform has eased the communication among the students and teachers via announcements, push notifications and email. On top of that, Google Classroom has empowered self-direction of learning through its interface [22]. Students can upload their documents, leave personal feedback and review their friends' works to get some idea about the tasks. Teachers on the other hand, can easily monitor the students' performance through tracking mechanisms linked with respective assignments to see and compare their students' level and make necessary improvements to it. This platform is user-friendly since the materials are well organized according to the respective classes [23] and time savvy where students do not need to go through various hurdles just to submit their work [24]. Apart from that, Google Classroom serves as one-stop centre [23]. Teachers can develop collaborative notes or assignments using Google apps such as Google Docs or online applications such as Youtube and Kahoot and integrate them in Google Classroom. Also, this platform is costless and can be assessed by anyone with Google Classroom account [23]. Another interesting advantage that this platform provides is it is accessible 24/7 and mobile friendly, which makes teaching and learning always on the go [25]. Besides, Mafa [25] also stated that with Google Classroom, parents or guardians can easily monitor their children's performance with teachers' associations.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Study design
The study employed action research which is based on Kemmis and McTaggart Action Research Model. This model comprises of four elements namely planning, acting and observing, reflecting and re-planning [26]. Since the researchers noticed the problem of grammar learning in the school, the researchers devised a plan of action to find the solution to the issue. In the second stage, the researchers carried out the planned action towards the participants. In the third stage, the researchers made the reflection on the action and monitored the effects. As for the last stage, the researchers did not revise the plan as there was an improvement of the results after the plan has been conducted. Quantitative methodology was used to collect the data in this research. The researchers used quantitative method because it is a suitable method to be used to collect the data. Furthermore, it provides an accuracy to test the hypothesis and established a cause-effect relationship for the purpose. The teaching was done in the target language and grammar was taught inductively.   Following the 21st century technology, Google classroom was utilized in the treatment process.

3.2 Participants
The participants of the study were 67 students from an urban secondary school in Putrajaya, Malaysia. They were form three students comprising both 30 males and 37 females and of mixed abilities. The form three English syllabus which includes the order of adjectives gives a priority to the grammar as it is viewed as one of the cores of achieving proficiency in English language. In addition, the study was conducted on the

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lower secondary level as the students might have interests in the treatment and make the study possible within the time limit given.

3.3 Instruments

The researchers designed two types of tests which were pre-test and post-test as the data collection instruments for the study. For pre-test, the researchers used an assessment model (grammar quiz) to gain the results before implementing the treatment. The researchers kept a record of the results of the participants after testing their prior knowledge on the order of adjectives. The treatment (an online grammar module consisting of short videos and digital games via Google Classroom) was administered on the participants as it acted as the medication to the group of the participants. A full procedure of the treatment was prepared beforehand to minimize any errors during the treatment. The last step was the post-test. It was carried out and administered at the end of the treatment to compare the results with the pre-test scores using the same assessment model earlier. The need to do it was to measure the difference in skills after the treatment was fully implemented. The researchers also used survey questionnaires to identify the students' attitudes towards grammar learning using Google Classroom. The questionnaires were distributed to each student after the post-test. Descriptive statistics was used to analyze the data for this study.

4 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of the study are discussed based on two research questions.

(1) To examine the effectiveness of using Google Classroom to teach the order of adjectives to the students
(2) To identify the effects of employing Google Classroom on the students' attitudes towards grammar learning

4.1 Effectiveness of using online module on Google Classroom to teach the order of adjectives

The scores of the participants in pre-test and post-test were recorded as the data for the study. Figure 1 shows the participant scores in the two tests.
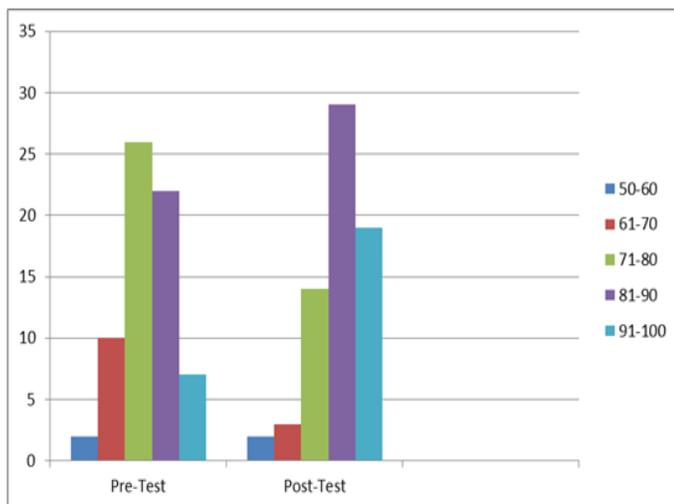

Figure 1 Pre- and post-tests scores of the participants

Based on the results, out of 67 participants, 62 participants scored the marks in the range of 71-100 in the post-test compared to only 55 participants in the pre-test. Participants that scored between 81-90% make up the biggest group which consisted of 29 of them all together. On the contrary, the number of participants that scored between 50-70% decreased from 12 to 5 in the post-test. Since there was an increase of scores from the pre-test, the findings proved that incorporating Google Classroom in teaching the order of adjective could help to improve the student performance. Similar analysis can also be seen when the data was analyzed using descriptive statistics in terms of frequency and median. Table 1 shows the comparison between the two tests in terms of frequency and mean.

Table 1 Mean of the pre- and post-test scores of the participants

TEST	N	MEAN
Pre-test	67	77.7
Post-test	67	83.4

From the results, there was a difference between the mean scores before and after utilizing Google Classroom in learning the order of adjectives. The mean of the post-test which was higher than the pre-test further proved that Google Classroom facilitated the participants to learn the order of adjectives more effectively. Overall, the findings indicated the differences in the scores whereby the participants performed better in the post-test after learning the order of adjectives via Google Classroom. Therefore, it is proven that using Google Classroom could be an effective pedagogical tool in teaching the order of adjectives.

4.2 Effects of employing Google Classrooms on students' attitudes towards grammar learning

In order to identify the effects of employing Google Classroom on students' attitudes towards grammar learning, descriptive statistics method was used to analyze the data from the questionnaire survey and the data were calculated in percentages. The results can be referred in Table 2 as follows:

Table 2 Participants' attitudes towards grammar learning using

NO	QUESTIONNAIRE ITEM	PARTICIPANTS' ANSWERS N (%)		
		DISAGREE	NOT SURE	AGREE
1	I enjoyed completing the grammar tasks using Google Classroom.	0 (0)	5 (7)	62 (93)
2	I felt comfortable completing the grammar tasks using Google Classroom.	0 (0)	8 (13)	59 (87)
3	I could keep track of my own progress in learning using Google Classroom.	0 (0)	14 (21)	53 (79)
4	The online materials were helpful to help me complete the grammar tasks.	0 (0)	8 (13)	59 (87)
5	It was easy to memorise the order of adjectives using Google Classroom.	1 (2)	14 (21)	52 (77)
6	I find it interesting to learn the order of adjectives using Google Classroom.	0 (0)	3 (5)	64 (95)
7	I feel satisfied when I understand the order of adjectives using Google Classroom.	0 (0)	7 (11)	60 (89)
8	I feel confident to use the order of adjectives after I learnt it using Google Classroom.	0 (0)	6 (8)	62 (92)
9	I would like to use Google Classroom to learn grammar in the future	0 (0)	13 (20)	54 (80)
10	Google Classroom is a useful tool to learn grammar.	0 (0)	10 (15)	67 (85)

The findings in the Table 2 showed that 8 out of 10 questionnaire items received a high percentage which is above 80%. As more than 50% of the participants agreed with all the items, the findings generally indicated that the majority of participants had positive attitudes towards grammar learning

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using Google Classroom. More than 90% of the participants enjoyed completing the grammar tasks using Google Classroom, found it interesting to learn the order of adjectives and felt confident to apply the knowledge about the order of adjectives learnt via Google Classroom. Also, most of them felt satisfied when they could understand the order of adjectives using Google Classroom. Meanwhile, the same number of students (N=59) felt comfortable completing the grammar tasks on Google Classroom and agreed that the online materials were helpful to complete the tasks. Their positive attitudes could also be inferred when about 80% of the students would like to use Google Classroom to learn grammar in the future and agreed that it is a useful tool to learn grammar. On the other hand, 14 students were not sure whether they could keep track of their own progress in learning grammar using Google Classroom or not, and the same number of students were also not sure whether it was easy for them to memorize the grammar rule using it. A very small percentage which was 2% disagreed with the latter questionnaire item as well. The indecisiveness felt by the minority of participants might be due to the fact that it was their first time employing Google Classroom in their grammar lesson, so they would need time to familiarize themselves with the tool in order to utili it optimally for learning grammar. In general, the participants viewed grammar learning that employs Google Classrooms positively, as they regarded it as an enjoyable as well as a helpful means to master the target grammar item. Based on the analyses of pre- and post-tests, incorporating Google Classroom could be regarded as effective in order to teach the order of adjectives. As highlighted by (Almekhlafi and Almeqdadin [18], the use of technology gives a positive impact on the teaching as well as learning process. Furthermore, Google Classroom which empowers self-direction of learning through its interface [27] might assist the students in the learning of the focused grammar item as their learning is more personalized. The findings are further substantiated by the data collected from the questionnaire survey, as most participants had positive attitudes towards learning grammar using Google Classrooms after experiencing it themselves. Among the reasons that could lead to the students' positive attitudes are the benefits offered by Google Classroom as it is user-friendly and could serve as one-stop centre [23] which in turn make the learning process convenient and enjoyable.

5 CONCLUSION

This study showed that integrating Google Classroom into English classroom particularly in grammar lessons resulted in an increase of the student grammar knowledge, as the findings demonstrated students' positive learning outcomes in the order of adjectives. Moreover, they also had positive attitudes towards learning grammar using this online platform. Therefore, Google Classroom should be taken into consideration as a feasible pedagogical tool in the classroom for the benefits of the teachers and students. Further research is needed to validate the findings, especially to expand the sample size across different settings with different student populations. Technology provides a way to support content instruction, as well as an opportunity for teachers to be creative in developing class activities to engage students.

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