

# Students' preferences and challenges in learning English fully online with Google Classroom

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## Students' preferences and challenges in learning English fully online with Google Classroom

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### ABSTRACT

The Coronavirus 2019 outbreak caused the world to experience a pandemic and paralyze human activities, including the education sector. Consequently, the teaching-learning system changed from face-to-face to online. This study aimed to determine how high school students' preferences and challenges in Pekanbaru city employing the Google Classroom to learn English. This descriptive study involved 30 high school and vocational high school students as the sample who obtained through purposive sample technique. Google Form and interviews with Zoom were employed to gather the data. This study found that Google Classroom was quite effective in helping students replace the learning process during a pandemic with an online learning system.

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

In early December 2019, a case of a disease affecting the respiratory system was discovered in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China that called the coronavirus diseases 2019 or COVID-19 [1]. The virus then rapidly spread throughout the world and also in Indonesia. Consequently, the disease has affected the mobility of human activities, including education [2]–[5]. In responding to this circumstance, the Indonesian government through The Indonesian Minister of Education and Culture stipulated that the policy changed the learning system from face-to-face to online learning [6].

Gradually but steadily, direct engagement and face-to-face learning are being phased out in favour of online or online learning technologies [7]. This systemic change was precipitated by the government's decision to close all schools to break the cycle of COVID-19 dissemination [8]. Various online learning platforms were launched to meet the need for learning and teaching activities from home instead of face-to-face meetings usually held daily before this epidemic hit. The following are examples of platforms that support online learning activities widely used by schools and universities in Indonesia, such as Google Classroom, Google Meet, Zoom, Edmodo, Kahoot!, and Discord. Social media platforms also help the online learning process, such as YouTube, Gmail, and Facebook [9].

Adjusting to the new learning process is certainly a new challenge for teachers who must find new ways to explain learning materials online. This circumstance also makes the subject matter received by students not as optimal as they receive when learning directly in the classroom. A learning management system (LMS) is a web-based or cloud-based software application that aids in the teaching-learning process and effectively facilitates education, training, and development programs. The LMS enables teachers, learners, and administrators to utilize and access services without time or location constraints in the teaching

and learning process [10], [11]. The learning process using Zoom or Google Meet is a substitute for face-to-face meetings that are usually carried out daily before the pandemic. At this time, the learning process is deemed ineffective, and the teacher is hard to monitor the students. This limitation is one of the ineffectiveness of online learning.

One of the online learning applications that has complete features and can be a temporary substitute for classroom activities is Google Classroom. Google Classroom is a software app provided by Google for instructors and students to assist in online teaching and learning. Consequently, this application's learning technique being entirely online significantly aids the paperless trend [12], [13]. Google designed this application by embedding features such as separate accounts for teachers and accounts for students, a particular page for uploading assignments, and notifications when assignments are submitted. The scoring system is integrated with other google programs such as Google Forms and Gmail.

By simply having a google account, the free virtual classes and services provided by Google Classroom can be enjoyed by schools worldwide. Google Classroom can work in one direction and be adapted to each teacher's teaching style and strategy without compromising student understanding and participation in classroom skills. Using this application as a connecting medium between teachers and students who can connect anytime, anywhere. Various educational communities have carried out this application in the context of a more comprehensive introduction to e-learning [14]. This application is considered very suitable for educational needs during a pandemic like this to carry out the distance education process. using Google Classroom, of course, has advantages and disadvantages. The advantages of Google Classroom are: i) Students noted that interacting through the private remark part of the Google Classroom app assisted them in overcoming shyness while receiving constructive comments from the teachers; ii) Students may see their grades and keep track of their assignments with this app and view the assignments submitted by other students; iii) App and materials are available for revision on a mobile device. The disadvantages are: i) There is no search function; ii) No automated update function; iii) New notifications are missed, and iv) The program consumes a large amount of data and storage space [13].

However, learning English consists of four skills that require feedback from the teacher, especially for productive skills. There are two distinct categories of talents recognized and examined within the educational process as reflected by teaching and learning. Reading and listening are receptive skills, often known as passive skills. The same procedure is used while writing, which, like speaking, falls under productive language skills, sometimes known as active skills. Energy is required to produce any of those outcomes. Both sorts of linguistic abilities are necessary components of the learning process at all stages of development [10]. The learning objective mentioned could be accomplished through the ease of use of Google Classroom.

Therefore, the purpose of this current study was to analyze how students think while using the Google Classroom as a learning management system during this pandemic and what challenges students face while using the Google Classroom as a learning management system. Besides, the findings could reference the online teaching-learning process in the pandemic era and the normal situation.

## 2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study was descriptive and provided quantitative and qualitative analysis. Qualitative research examines social phenomena from the participant's perspective to better understand a specific phenomenon, environment, process, or belief. In this pandemic, this analysis aims to examine students' experiences and challenge of using Google Classroom during online learning. To gather data, the researchers utilized a Google Forms questionnaire. The questionnaire was adapted from Al-Khatiri [15] and consisted of 26 statements divided into two categories (students' perceptions and students' challenges) with Google Classroom. This questionnaire used a five-point Likert scale with the following response options: strongly agree (5), agree (4), neutral (3), disagree (2), and strongly disagree (1). In analyzing the data, descriptive statistics were employed, while the qualitative data was analyzed through a word cloud generator from a google application. Likewise, an individual interview through the Zoom meeting application was conducted to confirm the quantitative data through a series of interviews. In avoiding misunderstanding, the interview used Bahasa Indonesia

The data collection was conducted from September, 2020 up to February, 2021. This study involved 30 students from Pekanbaru Senior High School and Vocational High School in Riau, Indonesia through purposive sampling technique. The primary criterias the students had learned through Google Classroom.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The statements in this questionnaire are organized into three sections: demographic questions and statements about students' preferences of using Google Classroom. The final section consisted of questions that described students' challenges when using Google Classroom.

#### 3.1. Respondents' demographic data

Several questions regarding the demographics of the respondents are summarized in Figure 1. From 9 of the 32 students who filled out this questionnaire were in grade 10, 8 were in grade 11, and 13 were in grade 12 as shown in Figure 1(a). Based on Figure 1(b), female students dominated the most significant number of respondents with 28 participants, and only two male students participated in this questionnaire. In terms of age, as can be seen in Figure 1(c), the students who participated in this questionnaire were 15 years old (four people), 16 years (eight people), 17 years (14 people), and 18 years (four people).

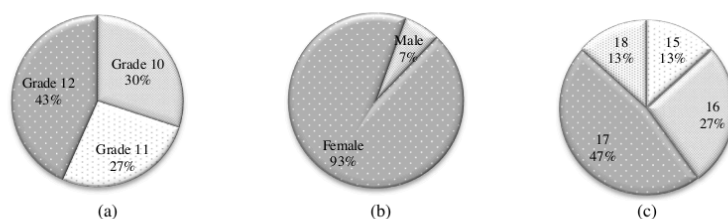


Figure 1. Respondents' percentage based on: (a) grade, (b) gender, and (c) age

#### 3.2. Students' perceptions of using Google Classroom

The author presents table containing several statements and presentations on answers from respondents about their perceptions while using Google Classroom as a tool for learning. Table 1 shows that 50% of students agree and strongly agree that Google Classroom saves their effort and time by doing and uploading assignments online. Students can do tasks anywhere and anytime without being bound by time to do homework online. There were 30% felt neutral with the work and uploading of assignments through Google Classroom, while 20% of students disagreed and strongly disagreed with this statement.

Table 1. By doing and uploading assignments online, Google Classroom saves effort and time

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
3.3	16.7	30	36.7	13.3

In Table 2, 53.4% of high school students in Pekanbaru City agree and strongly agree that Google Classroom provides an opportunity to share their writings with teachers and peers. While the other 40% said it was neutral, 6.7% of high school students in Pekanbaru City did not agree that Google Classroom could provide an opportunity to share their writings with teachers and peers.

Table 2. Google Classroom gives me an opportunity for my teacher and peers to share my writing

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
0	6.7	40	26.7	26.7

There were 56.6% of students in Table 3 agree and strongly agree through Google Classroom. Students who are reluctant about participating in the class feel much more comfortable interacting online at this point. For some students, performing in front of the class is problematic because it requires courage and high self-confidence. So, this online learning system helps students dare participate in class without having to feel awkward in class. While 26.7% of students chose neutral and another 16.6% disagreed and strongly

disagreed with Google Classroom, students who feel embarrassed about performing in front of the class typically feel much more comfortable interacting online.

Table 3. Via Google Classroom, students who are shy about participating in class typically feel much more comfortable interacting online

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
3.3	13.3	26.7	43.3	13.3

In Table 4, most students (83.3%) agree and strongly agree if Google Classroom gives them a running record of when tasks are due and a summary of what is planned (email, warnings, notes). The notification feature on Google Classroom is a superior feature that makes this application popular as a leading online learning medium and widely used worldwide. Only 16.7% of students disagree. For them, Google Classroom has not met their expectations with the existing features.

Table 4. Google Classroom gives me a running record of when tasks are due and a plan summary (email, warnings, and not

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
0	0	16.7	33.3	50

In Table 5, 53.3% of students stated neutral when posting vague terms and phrases. Google Classroom helps them to develop their spelling and grammar skills. Some students feel they have mastered the primary forms of spelling and grammar in English. Meanwhile, the remaining 36.7% agree and strongly agree that Google Classroom helps them develop their spelling and grammar skills. Furthermore, another 10% chose not to decide if Google Classroom helped improve their spelling and grammar skills.

Table 5. When posting in full terms and phrases, Google Classroom helps me develop my spelling and grammar (for instance: "you" not "u," "I" not i)

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
0	10	53.3	26.7	10

Table 6 describes that 46.6% of students agree and strongly agree that Google Classroom helps them to take part in online discussion. Hence, 36.7% of students feel comfortable with the influence of their participants during online discussions. Furthermore, 16.7% stated that they disagreed and felt that Google Classroom did not help them take a role during online discussions.

Table 6. Google Classroom helps me to take part in online discussions

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
6.7	10	36.7	43.3	3.3

Table 7 shows that 40% of students feel that Google Classroom does not always help them learn new English words. Several students are now familiar with terms or computer programming languages. Moreover, 36.7% of students agree and strongly agree that Google Classroom helps them learn new vocabulary in English. At the same time, 23.3% chose to disagree because Google Classroom did not allow them to learn a new language in English.

Table 7. Google Classroom helps me learn new words in English

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
0	23.3	40	26.7	10

Table 8 shows that 60% of students strongly agree to quickly access class materials and assignments via Google Classroom while absent. With online learning systems like Google Classroom, which can be

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accessed via smartphones, students can log in and do tasks anytime and anywhere. Hence, 40% of students chose neutral, given the type of task. Sometimes it cannot always be done using a smartphone. It is just a check on what assignments the teacher has passed and not of instructions for processing and delivery deadlines.

Table 8. I can easily access class materials and assignments via Google Classroom while absent

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
0	0	40	36.7	23.3

Table 9 shows that 56.7% of respondent agree that the presence of Google Classroom reduces spending on tasks that require additional costs, such as photocopying and designing posters, because the form of assignments has now been changed to online. Hence, 13.3% chose neutral and do not mind that. Another 30% disagreed and strongly disagreed because some schools still ask their students to submit school assignments and photocopy the necessary textbooks.

Table 9. Google Classroom reduces the cost of lessons (e.g., photocopying, designing posters)

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
6.7	23.3	13.3	30	26.7

Table 10 shows that 50% feel normal or neutral because each student's performance determine how their group works, how the students cooperate in doing their part of the task, and their responsibility. Hence, 33.3% of students also disagreed and strongly disagreed because the benchmark of cooperative work or learning in a group is the students themselves, and Google Classroom does not have a hand in this. Meanwhile, 16.3% of students agreed that group learning became more cooperative by using Google Classroom.

Table 10. By working in a group, Google Classroom promotes cooperative learning

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
10	23.3	50	13.3	3.3

To confirm the quantitative data, the results of interviews conducted with several students who contributed to filling out this survey showed their various responses to the use of Google Classroom, which became their learning base during the pandemic. Here are some excerpts from interviews with students that have been transcribed and translated into English:

"Maybe there are several students who are embarrassed to express their opinions with the existence of this Google Classroom, maybe they are more online to voice their opinions because they may not be upfront." (#Student 1)

"Yes, because that is also one of the advantages of Google Classroom itself. So, it's easy for us as students to know which assignments are not yet, which ones have a tight deadline like that. So, it makes students more structured and organized to manage their assignments." (#Student 2)

"I think maybe this Google Classroom can be a means of communication with teachers but for classmates, they use the WhatsApp application more often." (#Student 3)

"Yes, with the Google Classroom in the midst of a pandemic, and we have to study at home, study anywhere, because we also don't know when to start school again, if we can communicate with teachers, but with classmates it may not be as optimal as interaction we're in another learning app." (#Student 4)

"Yes, there is a notification so it really helps to remember assignments that are approaching deadlines." (#Student 5)

According to the data provided for students' expectations, the relationship between teachers and students runs smoothly while using the Google Classroom application, as well as the assignments are given to students by the instructor, and they feel helped by the reminder, which is one of the features in the Google Classroom application. Furthermore, the reminder features of the Google Classroom application helps students recall the deadlines for assignments that they must complete and apply. The results of the interview are visualized in Figure 2, several keywords are based on the results of the interview based on the frequency of words that appear the most, such as [classroom], [google], [assignments], [students], [classmates], [opinions], [study], [teachers], [advantages], and [app]. The frequent words appear to reveal students' tendency to use Google Classroom effectively and efficiently during the online learning process.



Figure 2. The word cloud generator of students' perceptions

### 3.2. Students' challenges in using Google Classroom

The following table contains many questions and presents of respondents' responses regarding the difficulties encountered when utilizing Google Classroom as a tool for learning. Table 11 shows that 36.6% of students agree and strongly agree that it takes a long time to learn the use of Google Classroom. Adapting from offline classes to online classes certainly takes time to adjust to attending classes and doing assignments online. There were 30% chose neutral because some of them found it easy to use Google Classroom, and also, some of them had used Google Classroom before the pandemic. Likewise, 23.3% of students disagreed and strongly disagreed because it did not take them long to learn how to use Google Classroom.

Table 11. It takes a long time to learn the use of Google Classroom

Strongly disagree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly agree
23.3	13.3	30	13.3	20

Table 12 shows that 50% of students choose neutral if students may use Google Classroom as more of a social media platform than a learning tool. Because Google Classroom does not yet have the same features like social media in general, but can still communicate with teachers and students' peers. Moreover, 40% of students stated that they disagreed and strongly disagreed if they considered using Google Classroom as a social media rather than a learning medium. Meanwhile, 10% of students strongly agree that students use Google Classroom as a social media rather than a learning medium.

Table 12. Students may use Google Classroom as more of a social networking platform than a learning tool

Strongly disagree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly agree
3.3	6.7	50	20	20

Table 13 reveals that 40% of students disagree and strongly disagree if the small screen size on their gadget is why they do not like using Google Classroom. The device's screen size is now not as small as it used to be and comes in much more sophisticated features. Hence, 33.3% chose neutral, regardless of the screen size on their smartphone. Meanwhile, 26.7% of students agreed and strongly agreed if they were



disturbed by the smartphone screen size that is too small in using Google Classroom. For instance, writing tasks become complicated if students do it on their smartphones.

Table 13. I hate using Google Classroom because the small-sized screen causes me

Strongly disagree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly agree
10	16.7	33.3	20	20

Table 14 reveals that 36.7% of students do not mind and use Google Classroom on their smartphones because the smartphone screen size is now not as small as it used to be, and they can comfortably type text on the Google Classroom application on their smartphone. Hence, 36.7% of students also feel neutral and do not mind it because apart from being able to do it on a smartphone, students can also do it using their computer or laptop. Meanwhile, the remaining 26.7% chose to agree and strongly agreed if small-sized screen navigation and typing problems were why they did not like the Google Classroom application.

Table 14. I hate using Google Classroom because I am caused by the small-sized screen navigation and typing problems

Strongly disagree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly agree
16.7	10	36.7	16.7	20

Table 15 presents that 40% of students disagree and strongly disagree if the slow internet connection is an obstacle during online schooling. Many parents decide to use wifi at home to support their children's school needs, which now have to be done at home. Another 30% of students are not bothered by their internet connection because the quality of the internet currently supported by sophisticated smartphones is not a big problem. Further, the remaining 30% of students agree and strongly agree if they are annoyed because of internet connection. They have on their smartphone feels slow and, of course, hinders them from attending class and doing assignments.

Table 15. When using Google Classroom, I get irritated because of the slow-speed internet on my smartphone

Strongly disagree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly agree
13.3	16.7	30	20	20

Likewise, to ensure the shortcoming faced by students while using Google Classroom, the interview was carried out. Here are some excerpts from interviews with students that have been transcribed and translated into English:

*"I don't think so because maybe I also use wifi at home but if for example it rains or the weather is bad that's an obstacle so if for example there is a task deadline or this or an assignment that must be submitted that day but is hampered by bad weather or it rained, for example, so it took a long time to collect it or missed the deadline."* (#Student 1)

*"It's also one of the challenges we really want to listen to the teacher, sometimes it's hard to break up like that, sis."* (#Student 2)

*"When I was in middle school, I was taught how to use Google Classroom, it was like being socialized, so it didn't take long to understand it."* (#Student 3)

*"On your cellphone you are not free to type a lot of tasks. But if you use a laptop, it's not a problem."* (#Student 4)

*"I quickly understood the use of Google Classroom, there were instructions for its use at the beginning when we entered the application, the first time."* (#Student 5)



Concerning the difficulties encountered by students when using the Google Classroom application during a pandemic, most of them reported issues such as poor internet networks caused by poor weather or a sudden interruption of their home wifi service. Then others expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of sufficient memory to store files such as videos and PowerPoint slides. Students become very objectionable as a result of these factors. Their fear of relying on this internet connection stems from deadlines varying through the subject, and restrictions such as weather and network failures are volatile, so they are concerned about sending assignments after the deadline has passed. The results of the interview are visualized in Figure 3, some keywords are based on the results of the interview based on the frequency of words that appear the most, such as [bad], [classroom], [deadline], [google], [long], [time], [weather], [application], and [assignments]. The frequent words reveal the tendency of students' obstacles in using Google Classroom during the online learning process, such as the unstable internet connection that is affected by the weather and likewise influences the academic performance.

In connection with the results of this study, most students have the same responses and challenges in using Google Classroom. The transition of the way of learning that switched from face-to-face to online learning also affects their activities in daily learning. Obstacles such as limited connectivity and possession of gadgets are also challenges felt by high school students today. This finding is also supported by several recent studies [16], [17] who agreed that there were some technical difficulties resulting from various factors, like students being unable to connect to the internet and some students submitting tasks using a friend's account. Although it is undeniable that the use is practical and easy to understand by students, Google Classroom still has shortcomings in some features and is often confusing to use [18], [19].



Figure 3. The word cloud generator of students' challenges

Furthermore, Google Classroom's application in education must be backed up by appropriate technology infrastructure. This requires a computer network and access to the internet in order for the Google Classroom to function correctly [20]–[22]. The teachers are responsible for preparing the materials and uploading them to Google Classroom in order for students to have unlimited access to them regardless of space or time constraints [23], [24]. The most important thing is that the online learning environment creates a favorable effect and helps EFL students enhance their writing abilities, self-confidence, and ability to compose written documents [25]–[27]. This e-learning platform is equipped with numerous features that help students feel engaged and enthusiastic about their EFL learning [16], [17], [28]. Consequently, the absorption of material by students can take place optimally because learning a foreign language requires a sense of comfort and fun. It can increase students' enthusiasm for understanding the material presented [29], [30].

#### 4. CONCLUSION





Since the objective of this study was to figure out the students' preferences and challenges faced using Google Classroom as a platform during online learning at the time of COVID-19, several benefits and shortcomings were found. Along with the benefit of Google Classroom is its ease of use, however, the most problematic issue was the internet connection. To ensure future learning, teachers can improve the use of existing features and add other features deemed necessary in using Google Classroom. Not only for Google, but the government must also support and optimize this online learning by improving the quality of internet services, evenly distributed networks throughout the country, and quota subsidies for students in need.

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