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Quarantine: Teaching English From Home with Google Classroom, Classtime and Quizlet

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Abstract: Quarantine created the environment where educators and students have to teach and learn being socially isolated. The paper reports the results of distance learning realized by integration of Google Classroom, Classtime and Quizlet. The authors present the results of the survey based on a 10-item 5-point Likert scale which was proposed to the learners after one month of distance learning in quarantine conditions at National Technical University of Ukraine "Igor Sikorsky Kyiv Polytechnic Institute". A mixed method research design was used in the study: quantitative data was obtained on the basis of the survey, qualitative data was received through analyzing information of individual feedback and group discussions via Zoom sessions, Telegram and Viber chats. The survey was completed by 35 learners which is 44% of the total number of Classroom Google participants. Reflecting on their experience during quarantine students assess completing assignments in Google Classroom positively (72%), as well as feedback provided by the teacher (77%). The effectiveness of Quizlet learning English online is confirmed by 57% of students, Classtime by 77%. Interesting content (66%) and structure of the course (51%) are the most important in effective distance learning for students. Some recommendations are given for English teachers who work from home. The findings of the research may be used by educators in Ukraine and abroad.

Keywords: *Quarantine; Google Classroom; Classtime; Quizlet.*

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1. Introduction

The situation when practically all schools and universities in the world are closed is a challenge educators and students face. Because of quarantine, which puts restraint on human activities in order to prevent the spread of disease, another environment was created where educators and students have to teach and learn being socially isolated. Distance learning meets the need of society to adapt to this unpredictable situation. Blended learning which combines distance learning and traditional face-to-face learning has been studied from different perspectives: modes and types of instruction, content, platforms for communication (Ali & Sofa, 2018). The researchers focused on the most important features, benefits and drawbacks of Google Classroom (Iftakhar, 2016; Philipose & Rajagopal, 2018), using Google Classroom in Higher Education (Abazi-Bexheti et.al. 2018), in teaching economics (Stavytskyi & Urazgaliyeva, 2018), creating blogs in teaching English to philology students (Kovalchuk & Krasnokutska, 2017), just to name a few. However, the problem of using Google Classroom integrated with Classtime and Quizlet teaching English from home was not in the focus of the researchers.

To study the ways of doing an English course under quarantine, the **research questions** were posed: What do learners appreciate in a distance English course? Does Google Classroom ensure the effectiveness of teaching English to the diverse groups of learners at National Technical University of Ukraine "Igor Sikorsky Kyiv Polytechnic Institute"? Which is the most effective way of integrating Google Classroom with Classtime and Quizlet?

2. Materials and methods

Research design. A mixed method research design was used in the study: quantitative data was obtained on the basis of the questionnaire, qualitative data was received through analyzing information of individual feedback and group discussions via Zoom sessions, Telegram and Viber chats.

Participants. This study was conducted at National Technical University of Ukraine "Igor Sikorsky Kyiv Polytechnic Institute". The participants were the students who major in Information Technology, Mathematics or Physics, from the first to the fifth year of study (60 students); one group of PhD students (11 students), one group of foreign students from China (10 students) and a group of high school students who

prepare for External Independent Evaluation called ZNO in Ukraine (25 students). The survey was completed by 35 learners which is 44% of the total number of Classroom Google participants. Only some of them were familiar with Classroom Google before the quarantine. There used to be one-two face-to-face English classes per week, learners regularly practiced Classtime and Quizlet. In total 35 learners from different groups volunteered to complete the survey which was uploaded to Google Classroom.

Instruments and procedure. The survey was based on a 10-item 5-point Likert scale developed for the research, which was proposed to the learners after one month of distance learning in quarantine conditions. When the university was officially closed for the classes, teachers of English communicated with students via email, Telegram or Viber. In fact, checking the assignments which students completed and submitted was challenging. First of all, it was difficult to locate the files because students used different ways of communication (Telegram, emails, etc.). Another problem was to identify the materials because students used nicknames, did not name the files properly, missed deadlines. Therefore, the informative feedback was not effective enough.

A free service Google Classroom was suggested by university authorities and colleagues who successfully used it before the quarantine. However, it took some time to adapt the English course for online learning of different groups of learners. Google Classroom allowed learners to complete assignments, meet deadlines, read the announcements, receive invitations for video conferences, get feedback, watch videos, upload their own video and audio files, post their own comments and questions, do tests. Using "To-do" section which indicates the number of turned-in, assigned and graded works of students, teachers easily managed their own tasks and deadlines.

Google Classroom was also possible to incorporate with Quizlet and Classtime, which were used in face-to-face classes before the quarantine. Quizlet aimed at learning, revising and checking vocabulary in face-to-face classes. In distance learning it was different: students created their own quizlets based on the material from the books or videos and uploaded them to Google Classroom. As a result, students shared a library of quizlets open for all the participants who needed to learn or revise vocabulary. Receiving feedback from their peers, students were motivated to create and share other materials. Students were also engaged into revising grammar and vocabulary through Classtime sessions from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Classtime Tests were based on the material presented in Google Classroom. The number of participants

varied from 20 up to 60 depending on the topic of the test or the level of difficulty.

3. Results and discussion

The survey measured learners' attitude to online learning in general, Google Classroom Classtime and Quizlet in particular. Student survey indicated that about half of the respondents (54%) were not sure that distance learning is more effective than face-to-face learning, nearly quarter (23%) agree with that statement, others either disagree (14%) or strongly disagree (11%) which may be explained by the urgency of the situation, the necessity to do online learning because of quarantine. Miscommunication (34%), lack of information (34%) and the Internet connection (29%) were indicated as the biggest problems of online learning which is in line with the results of the research by Philipose and Rajagopal (2018), whose students had similar difficulties.

According to the survey, the learners think the English language course should focus on developing self-management (66%) and language skills (54%); they are especially interested in listening (54%), writing (54%) and reading (31%). Interesting content (66%) and structure of the course (51%) are the most important in effective distance learning for students.

Reflecting on their experience during quarantine students assess completing assignments in Google Classroom positively (72%), as well as feedback provided by the teacher (77%). The effectiveness of Quizlet learning English online was confirmed by 57% of students, Classtime by 77%. The popularity of Classtime (40%), Google Classroom (34%) and Quizlet (31%) was approximately equal, compared with 5% given to ZOOM or Skype. In the discussions and interviews students mentioned that they enjoyed the variety of ways used to study English. Some responses were related to stress caused by learning online, but most of the interviewees provided positive comments, being grateful for teacher structuring their day, replacing the face-to-face communication with the online one.

The positive experience of Google Classroom is in accordance with findings presented by Stavytskyi and Urazgaliyeva (2018), Sergeeva and Nikitina (2016), who investigated teaching students of economic specialities. Moreover, creating the routine in a situation which has changed unpredictably, shapes the lives of all the participants, provides structure and promotes understanding the intricacies of asynchronous communication. Likewise, Iftakhar (2016) highlights the main benefits of Google Classroom: creating a single space for discussions and assignments, storing students'

work, grading and tracking students, providing individual feedback and additional help if necessary. The educational environment becomes more student-centered having more opportunities for students to create materials and share them, provide feedback and monitor their progress. It is important for university authorities to have the evidence that learning takes place in spite of the fact that the university is closed, teachers do their job, students progress academically.

One disadvantage of incorporating Google Classroom, Classtime and Quizlet is possible pressure on English teachers who do not have enough technical skills. Another drawback is lack of direct communication between teachers and students which may be compensated by using Skype or Zoom.

The research provides data for giving some recommendations regarding teaching English from home:

1. It is important to inform students about the English course, use different channels of communication, create conditions for developing self-management of students.

2. Adapting the English course to teaching from home teachers should focus on the content interesting for students and structure of the course focusing on listening, writing and reading skills.

3. Google Classroom effectively integrates with Classtime and Quizlet providing a variety of ways for learning English.

4. Conclusions

Google Classroom allows teachers of English to implement effective distance learning to meet students' needs during the quarantine when face-to-face communication is not possible. This interactive multifunctional space may be enriched by using other tools like Classtime and Quizlet. The research was limited in time and the number of respondents. Further investigations should explore other tools for effective teaching from home and use control groups.

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