Discourse Analysis and its Implications for e- English language learning during Coronavirus (COVID-19) Quarantine

تحليل الخطاب و انعكاساته على تعلم اللغة الإنكليزية الكترونيا أثناء الحجر الصحي لفيروس كورونا

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Abstract

Covid-19 pandemic has influenced many domains of life including health, environment, economy, business, society, education, etc. As far as education is concerned, many articles have discussed the issue but they mostly dealt with it from a social perspective. The present paper aims to consider the problem from a linguistic perspective. It aims to assess and evaluate the e- language learning during the period of self-quarantine of corona virus (COVID-19) through applying discourse analysis strategies. The present paper studies the discourse of google classroom application that is used popularly and officially in e- learning which is available on the internet and used mostly by teachers in Iraq. Among the Iraqi educational institutions, Mustansiriyah University has adopted google classroom as an official platform for giving on line lectures. Many aspects of discourse analysis have been investigated to characterize and explore the points of strength and weakness in this type of learning especially in the period of quarantine. In

so doing, the study utilizes an experimental design with qualitative and mixed methods, in which a questionnaire has been conducted for non-native English language freshmen in Mustansiriyah University. This paper has come to some conclusions on the appropriate measurements that should be adopted to overcome the limitations observed in the analysis .

Keywords: DA (Discourse analysis), E- language learning, COVID-19,

google classroom application

الملخص

لقد أثرت جائحة كوفيد-١٩ على العديد من مجالات الحياة بما في ذلك الصحة والبيئة والاقتصاد والأعمال والمجتمع والتعليم وما إلى ذلك. وفيما يتعلق بالتعليم، فقد ناقشت العديد من المقالات القضية لكنها تناولت في الغالب المنظور الاجتماعي. تهدف هذه الورقة إلى النظر في المشــكلة من منظور لغوي وكذلك الى تقييم تعلم اللغة الإلكترونية خلال فترة الحجر الصــحي الذاتي لفيروس كورونا (COVID-19) من خلال تطبيق اســتراتيجيات تحليل الخطاب. يدرس هذا البحث تطبيق Google Classroom المستخدم شعبيا ورسميا في التعليم الإلكتروني والمتاح على شـبكة الإنترنت ويسـتخدمه المعلمون في العراق في الغالب. ومن بين المؤسسـات التعليمية العراقية، اعتمدت الجامعة المستنصرية برنامج Google Classroom كمنصة رسمية لإلقاء المحاضرات عبر الإنترنت. تمت دراسـة العديد من جوانب تحليل الخطاب لتوصيف واستكشـاف نقاط القوة والضـعف في هذا النوع من التعلم خاصـة في فترة الحجر الصحي. وللقيام بذلك، استخدمت الدراسة تصميماً تجريبياً بأساليب نوعية ومختلطة، حيث تم إجراء استبيان للطلاب الجدد غير الناطقين باللغة الانكليزية في الجامعة المستنصرية. وقد توصلت هذه الورقة إلى بعض الاستنتاجات حول القياسات المناسبة التي ينبغي اعتمادها للتغلب على القيود التي لوحظت في التحليل.

الكلمات المفتاحية: DAتطبيق ، كوفيد-١٩، تعلم اللغة الكترونيا، (تحليل الخطاب) Google Classroom

1.   Introduction

Before indulging into the process of analysis, it would be urgent to introduce a brief account on (Coronavirus (COVID-19), 2019) pandemic and on the quarantine imposed in Iraq in this period so as to contextualize this event. Firstly, it is important to note that "the first human cases of COVID-19, the disease caused by the novel coronavirus causing COVID-19, subsequently named SARS-CoV-2 were first reported by officials

in Wuhan City, China, in December 2019. Retrospective investigations by Chinese authorities have identified human cases with onset of symptoms in early December 2019. While some of the earliest known cases had a link to a wholesale food market in Wuhan, some did not" (Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). On line). The spread of COVID-19 pandemic in Iraq has come as part of the worldwide pandemic of coronavirus disease in 2019 (COVID-19). This is resulted from severe and acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus. Iraq has registered its first confirmed cases of COVID-19 infections on 22 February in Najaf. Later on, the number of confirmed cases has reached more than the hundred case in many governorates in April. The matter which has urged the Iraqi Government to impose a quarantine since March, 2020 to all educational institutions (COVID-19 Pandemic in Iraq: On line).

The imposition of the quarantine has forced the educational institution in Iraq to rely on the on line learning in a matter to solve the problem. Many on line applications have been adopted for this purpose including google classroom, zoom meeting, free conference call, telegram, etc. The present paper aims to analyze the e- English language learning through google classroom platform adopted in Mustansiriyah University. The analysis is conducted within the scope of discourse analysis strategies. Hence, the platform of google classroom is studied from a linguistic point of view. This paper seeks to analyze the discourse of this platform using some of DA components so as to identify and explore the points of strength and weakness that may impact learners' language practice. For the empirical data, a survey is proposed to be conducted with the use of quantitative method. The paper is structured into the following way: The first section is theoretical giving a skeletal account of discourse analysis, its main features and basic tenets. The second section is methodological. It sketches out a questionnaire examining the students' proficiency of English using google classroom as an on line educational platform. The third section introduces the main findings of the study .

2.   Related Literature

2.1   Some Issues in Discourse Analysis

Broadly speaking, discourse analysis, hence forth DA examines the connection between language and the context where it is applied. This approach to linguistics has its roots in many fields not only in linguistics, but also in anthropology, sociology, and psychology, especially in the period between the years 1960s and the early of 1970s. In 1980s, DA has witnessed a remarkable shift in that it becomes an academic field of study with the publication of Van Dijk's book "Handbook of Discourse Analysis 85" (Jiang, 2012). The main concern of DA is focusing upon the structure and the functions of a language whether spoken or written (Rashidi & Rafieerad, 2010). Thus, it is evident that discourse

has both structural and functional nature which explains how language is used in different social contexts. Similarly, (Tabrizi, Gupta, & Saxena, 2014) emphasize that DA studies "the correlation between the linguistic form and its functions". And that "spoken and written discourses have multiple social uses and as a result having different communicative functions". While doing DA, Number of discourse concepts should be raised. The most common among which are :

1-   Context: Number of scholars including (Peccei, 1999), and (Yule, 1996), affirm that DA and Pragmatics study the meaning of words, utterances, etc., in the context in which they occur. This requires an analysis to the parts of meaning being identified by "the physical and social world and the socio—psychological aspects assuming communication". This is in addition to other metalinguistic aspects such as time, place, situation, environment, participants, beliefs, religion, age, features and personality (Cutting, 2008, p. 2). These factors are all needed to be taken into consideration while analyzing any piece of language whether spoken or written. Context also involves four more aspects: Reference: (Cutting, 2008, p. 7) explains that "the act of using language to refer to entities in the context is known as reference: an act in which a speaker uses linguistic forms to enable the hearer to identify something". Presupposition refers to the assumptions made by the speaker concerning everything the receiver is likely to get without challenge (Reinecke, 2020). Inference is the process done by the receiver of the discourse to the speaker's intended meaning so as "to arrive at an interpretation of the utterance or for the connections between utterances" (Reinecke, 2020). Implicature is "something meant but not said, omitting the connection between the saying and the meaning" (Allott, 2018, p. 3) .

2-   Maxims/Cooperative Principle: These are set of conventions introduced by Grice (1975) who affirms that speakers tend to be cooperative while talking. He puts the cooperative principle that underlies conversation, as:

"Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged" (Grice, 1975, p. 45) .

According to him, this is what usually a human adopts while being engaged in conversations. They are called "Conversational Maxims" or "Cooperative Principle of Conversation". Four major measurements are involved within this principle: Relation: "The speakers are assumed to be saying something that is relevant to what has been said before". Quality: "The speakers are expected to be sincere, to be saying something related to reality, to not be saying something that they believe to be false or lack of adequate evidence". Quantity: "The speakers should be as informative as it required, do

not say more or less than the requirement". Manner: "The response should be brief and orderly, avoid obscurity of expression". (Cutting, 2008, pp. 34-35)

3-   Conversation Analysis: (Cutting, 2008, p. 22) emphasizes that any conversation must be composed of a number of utterances. These utterances are grouped together functionally in a way making the whole chunks of utterances related to the surroundings. To analyze conversations, there are three mechanisms that should be followed (Cutting, 2008, pp. 27-31):

a-   Turn-Taking: communication between persons cannot be achieved without turn-taking in a conversation. Mostly, only one participant talks at a time, then another speaker takes turn and so on. In every culture, it is important to determine the duration a participant should hold the floor, when and the moment in which he gives any pause, when a new participant takes turn, and if the new person overlaps or even interrupts. "A point in a conversation where a change of turn is possible called a Transition Relevance Place or TRP". "When a new speaker cannot wait till the TRP it is called an Interruption". "When a new speaker assumes that the TRP is about to be completed and interrupts then it is called an Overlap" (Cutting, 2008, p. 28).

b-   Adjacency Pairs: These are utterances that co-occur in conversations one after another. The followings are examples: "Question-answer, greetings to each other, offers-deny, etc". Two types of adjacency, usually occur in conversations with respect to response; Preferred Response and Dis preferred Response. The former is when the first part leads to an expectation of the second part. The latter is when the responses are somehow refusals or disagreement or something having different functions. These pairs could be endless, as in the following example: "A: How are you? B: I am fine, what about you? (Preferred response) B: I got hijacked yesterday! (Dispreferred response)" (Cutting, 2008, p. 28).

c-   Sequences: These are utterances of turns that usually co-occur during conversations. Three ways of sequences can be observed: Pre-sequences: it is "a first pair part of a particular pair type – an invitation, an offer, a request, an announcement" (Sacks, 1992a, pp. 685-92). Insertion sequences: These come within the adjacency pair being as macro-sequences. Opening & Closing structure: Open structures state the starting of a conversation for example, greetings. Closing introduces a pre-closing sequence and the ending of the turn .

4-   Politeness: It is among discourse strategies that focuses on considering the receiver's feelings and attitudes while conversing and acting. (Thomas, 1995, p. 158) argues that "politeness plays an effective role in interaction because it controls the cooperative behaviour in conversation". Hence, politeness strategies are adopted by

interlocutors to keep harmony between or among them. (Leech, 1983, p. 140) suggests that "politeness could be expressed verbally and non-verbally in actions" In non- verbal situations, it is possibly to express politeness, for example, by dressing well, or adopting proper "facial expressions, gestures or bodily postures" (Ashizuka, et al., 2015, p. 1). Verbally, politeness can be shown by choosing honorific language which might be observed through choosing particular linguistic forms .

(Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 92) identify four ways of politeness strategies: Off-Record: That is when interlocutors say something indirectly leaving an open area for the hearer's comments and reactions. For example: "Instead of saying "Shut-Up" one can say, "Why people can't keep silent?" (Sen, 2016, p. 17). On-Record: "This type of politeness occurs in two ways: Positive Politeness: Saying something in a polite way, boldly. As an example: Would you like to have some more coffee? Negative politeness: Disagreeing with someone in a polite manner that might be flouted in impoliteness in an extreme case but not be ending similarly always. As an example: You aren't deaf I guess. Will you mind to be quiet?" (Sen, 2016, p. 17) .

3.   Analyzing the Discourse of Google Classroom Platform:

Generally, the use of electronic networks may help to a great extent to raise the synchronous and asynchronous students 'learning capacity' (Golonka, et al., 2014). Due to the requirements of the status quo, as represented in the spread of Covid 19 pandemic in Iraq. The discourse of google classroom app among the many adopted in e- learning has been widely used in Iraq. Here comes the importance to study and evaluate the role of this app especially in language studies and Social analysis. The study will be limited to analyze the discourse of chatting, status of that platform. Examining the validity of that platform in enhancing one's English language learning will be the main concern of this study. In this paper, number of concepts related to the discourse analysis of google classroom platform will be referred to including Context, all aspects involved within this heading such as, situation, place, time, metalinguistic features, other factors such as implicature and inferences are also to be considered. This is in addition to special reference to the Maxims/Cooperative Principle to evaluate the extent the informants maintain or violate these principles, Conversational Analysis: processing a conversation will also be assessed and Politeness: how to maintain politeness strategies while sharing posts, chatroon, and conversations

Research Problem:

To the best of the researcher's knowledge, there is no single research targeting the task of analyzing the discourse of google classroom platform during quarantine of Covid 19 in Iraqi official institutions. The main principles of DA and the linguistic aspects

involved in the informants' performance will be assessed and evaluated. In general terms, the main problem of this paper is to study one of the electronic platforms available for e- learning namely google classroom and to find out the extent in which such platform contribute to enhance English language learning with respect to the main tenets of DA. It is worth mentioning that this platform has not received any linguistic analysis and that no previous study has conducted in this concern. It is possible to claim that this study is the first of its kind which attempts to highlight the salient linguistic features involved in google classroom platform. Therefore further studies are required either to confirm or refute the analysis.

Objectives:

The study tests the discourse of google classroom and its impact on English language learning during quarantine at the academic level in Mustansiriyah University\ Iraq. Many prominent articles have discussed the issue but mostly dealt with from development or social point of view. None of them have shed light on the discourse of this platform and on the role might be played by it in English language learning. This paper tries to examine the problem from a linguistic point of view. It examines the validity and reliability of this app through DA strategies. The paper also furnishes a related literature for more analysis and research on this issue at a later period of time.

Hypotheses:

It is hypothesized that:

1-   Applying discourse analysis strategies can evaluate the applicability of e- platforms (e.g. google classroom) in English language learning;

2-   google classroom is proven to be an appropriate choice to be adopted in Iraqi educational institutions in particular;

3-   E- learning during the quarantine in Iraq is a successful experience that can be applicable to other periods.

Research Methodology

The methodological framework adopted in this paper is based on Quantitative and mixed methods to investigate the discourse of google classroom as an official platform adopted in Mustansiriyah University\ Iraq. E- English language learning during the

period of self-quarantine of corona virus (COVID-19) is assessed and evaluated through applying discourse analysis strategies. This work is conducted through the use of a questionnaire, the tool of enquiring information. The sample population of the research is 54 first year university students. All of them are in the department of English, college of Arts, Al Mustansryia University\ Iraq. The informants have been randomly chosen to respond to the research instruments addressed to them. The students' responses are converted into percentages. These are then represented in pie charts made by Microsoft Excel 2007. The questionnaire, in this study, consists of 12 questions meant to probe students' opinions about learning English on line. The questions are in the form of MCQ (multiple choice questions) with multiple options such as: "Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly Disagree". These options are chosen to refer to the informants positive or negative attitudes. The informants are asked to fill-up the questionnaire through google form app sent to them on line. They answer by ticking the options they believed suitable for the question. They are also liberate to skip the questions they believed there were no right answers for them in the choices .

Analysis and Discussion :

Analysis of the Questionnaire

The questionnaire is composed of 12 questions. 54 participants from department of English, college of Arts, Mustansiriyah University\ Iraq participate to fill up the questionnaire. Participants filled-up the questions on basis of their virtual experience.

Discourse Analysis of Google Classroom:

1-Do you think google classroom is useful for enhancing any personal skill in learning English

Table (1):

Answer	No. of informants	Percentage
Sometimes	17	31.5%

Not particularly	6	11.1%
never	17	31.5%
always	14	25.9%

It is apparent from the table above that most of the participants (17+14) believe that google classroom is useful for enhancing a particular skill. Whereas (6+ 17) of them believe that it is not useful for learning English in general.
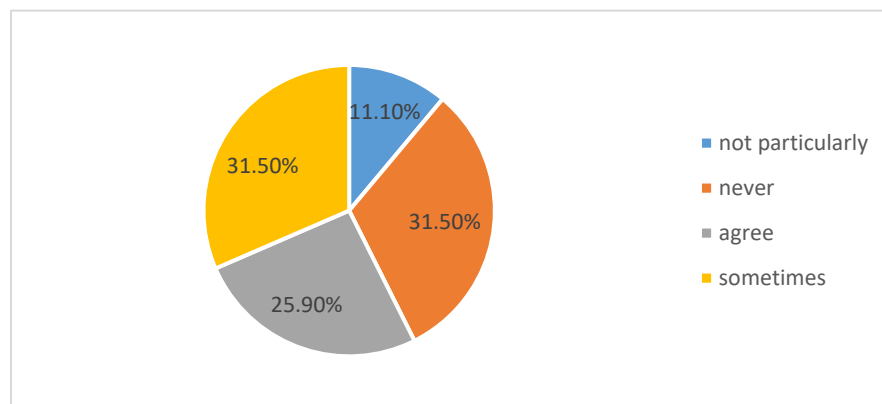

Figure (1): Google classroom role in personal skills

٢-What are the skills you think are mostly practiced through google classroom setting.

Table (2)

Answer	No. of informants	Percentage
listening	17	31.5%
Reading	19	35.2%

speaking	6	11.1%
writing	12	22.2%

Table (2) tells that (19) of the informants think that google classroom

develop their reading abilities. In nearly equal proportion, (17) of them say that listening skills are the most being developed through this platform. (12) participants state that writing skills are practiced whereas (6) of them think that only their speaking skill got developed.
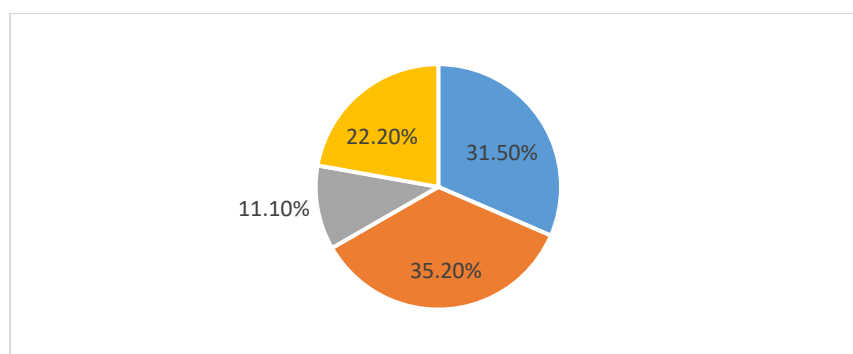

Figure (2): practicing skills through google classroom

٣-Do you agree with the statement "google classroom lacks the necessities of ideal classroom setting"

Table (3):

Answer	No. of informants	Percentage
Agree	18	33.3%
Disagree	16	29.6%
Strongly agree	13	24.1%
Strongly disagree	7	13%

The table above tells that more than half of the participants with percentages of (33.3% + 24.1%) think that google classroom is lacking the ideal environment of the classroom setting, the matter which affect its usefulness while the rest of (29.6% + 13%) percentages disagreed with the statement.
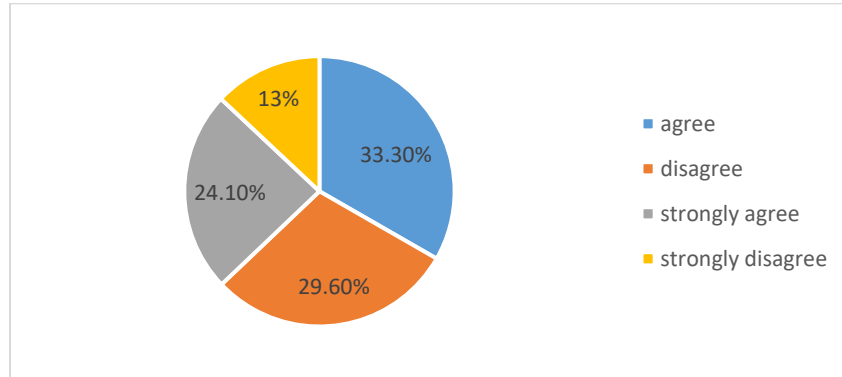

Figure (3)

٤-Have you ever practiced any online discussion, video conference for academic purposes?

Table (4):

Answer	No. of informants	Percentage
never	17	31.5%
always	15	27.8%
Only once	11	20.4%
rarely	11	20.4%

The percentages are almost approximate, in that 31.5 % of the participants state that they have never experienced electronic practices for learning English. 27.8% among them say that they have experienced such practices through internet. However, 20. 4% experienced this only once and at the same percentage, students experienced this

rarely. This finding signify the positivity of electronic learning as proposed in (Chung & Paredes, 2015)
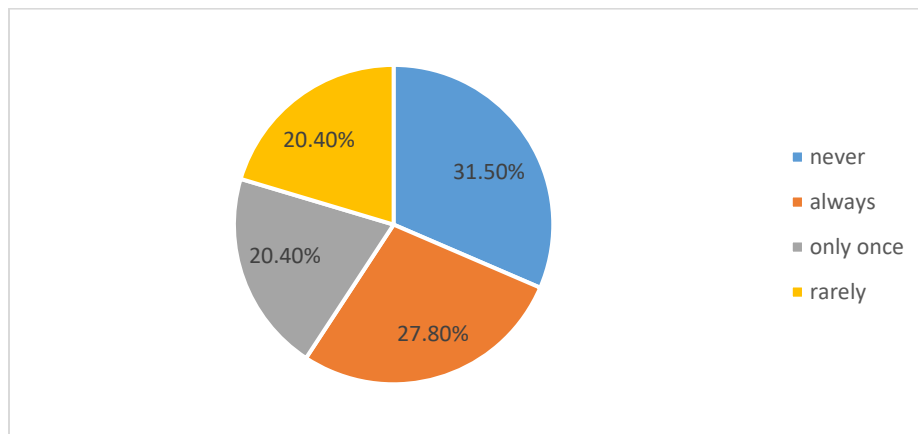

Figure (4): Use of internet of academic purposes

٥-How convenient are you with the regulations provided in google classroom platform?

Table (5):

Answer	No. of informants	Percentage
So convenient	23	42.6%
Inconvenient at all	14	25.9%
Having privacy problems	2	3.70%
Not so much	15	27.8%

The table above indicates that the majority of participants with a percentage of 42.6% are satisfy with the facilities and terms provided in google classroom, whereas 25.9% are not at all. Only 3.7 % among them are seriously worried about maintaining privacy. 27.8% of the participants are not so much satisfy.
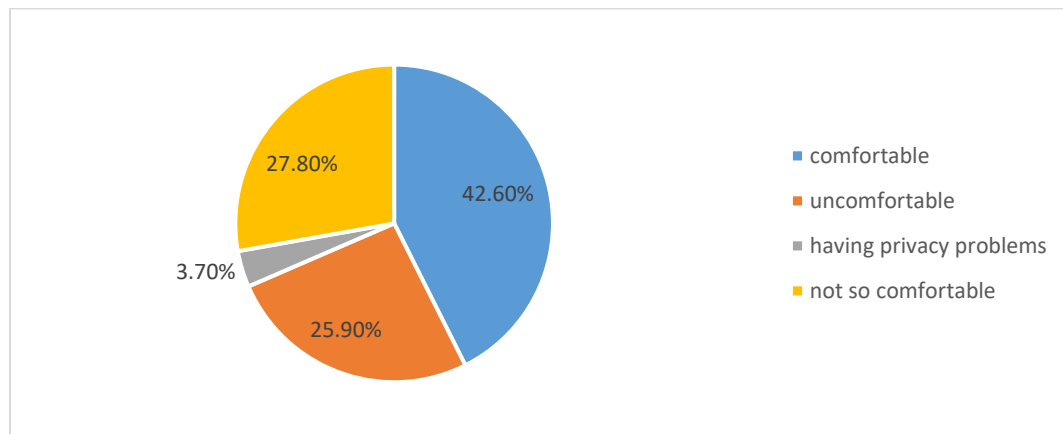
Figure (5): Participants' comfort with google classroom

٦-Have you ever made any comment or reference of some kind in a way hurting others (Politeness Strategy), or have you presupposed anything before other's responses?

Table (6):

Answer	No. of informants	Percentage
All the time	3	5.5%
sometimes	10	18.5%
never	9	16.7%
I prefer listening to others and accepting their comments	32	59.3%

Table (6) above suggests that only (5.5% + 18.5%) of the participants are well aware of adopting politeness strategies and using reference in the right way when communicating with other users through google classroom. 16.7% of total participants state that they have no idea about these strategies. Thus, they never use these discourse elements at all. The highest percentage of 59.3% goes for those who are not sure about what they should use.
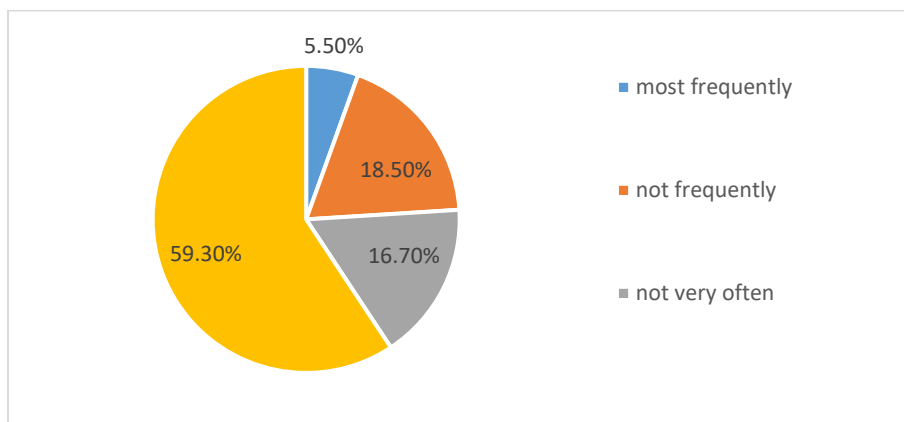
Figure (6): maintaining politeness strategies

٧-Have you ever use turn-taking (Cooperative principle of some kind), using fillers, hedges, expressive, directives, etc., or any adjacency pair?

Table (7):

Answer	No. of informants	Percentage
never	22	40.7%
always	8	14.8%
sometimes	14	25.9%
Never noticed	10	18.5%

Most of the informants with percentages of (40.7% +18.5%) agreed with the fact that they are unaware of utilizing various discourse elements when communicating through google classroom. Only 14.8% are well aware about it. 25.9% of them use these elements from some time to another. This may due to the use of informal language, off-topic conversations, and language shift among users (Sallabank:2010)
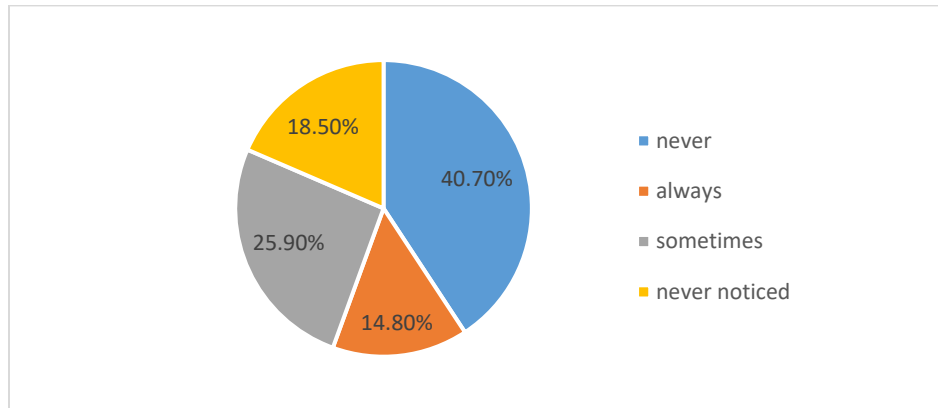
Figure (7): Discourse Elements in google classroom chatting

٨-"Chatting and discourse elements are good ways for sequencing previous conversations"– Do you support this statement?

Table (8):

Answer	No. of informants	Percentage
Agree	38	70.4%
Strongly agree	11	20.4%
disagree	4	7.4%
Strongly disagree	1	1.9%

Almost 70.4% and 20.4% of the total participants agree with the statement and show their preference to keep chatting flowing to maintain synchronous information of conversations. Only 7.4% of the participants disagree and 1.9% strongly disagree with the given statement.
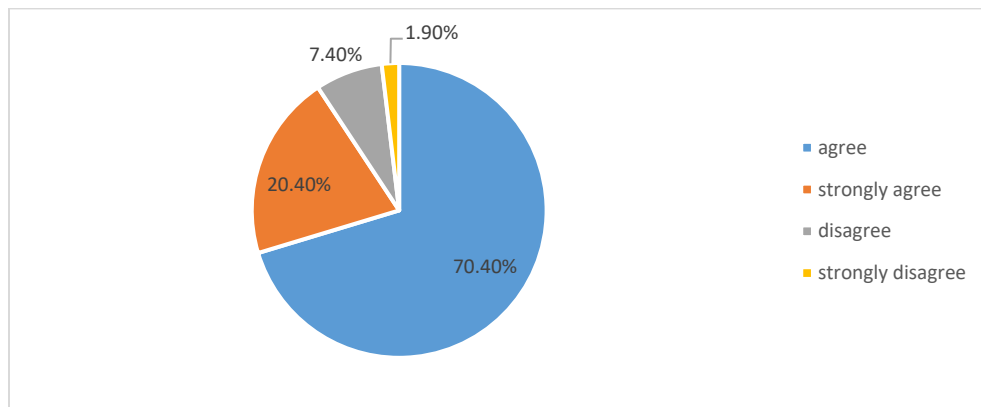
Figure (8): The importance of chatting in sequencing information

٩-what do you prefer google classroom or telegram platforms?

Table (9):

Answer	No. of informants	Percentage
Google classroom	**11**	**20.4%**
telegram	**18**	**33.3%**
Both of them	**22**	**40.7%**
Other applications	**3**	**5.6%**

According to the participants' responses, it is clear that the percentage of those who prefer the merge of google classroom and telegram is 40.7% which is higher than the one (20.4 %) of those who choose google classroom and the 33.3% of them who prefer following telegram. Whereas 5.6% choose other apps.
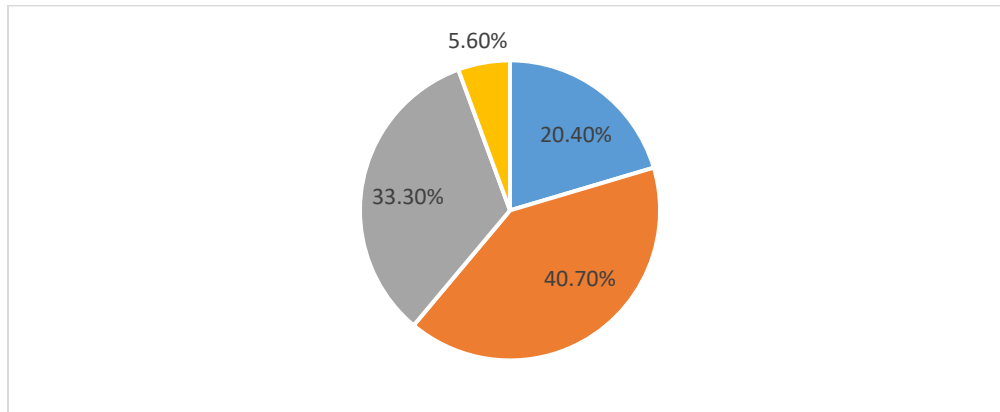
Figure (9): students' preference of applications

١٠-How many times do you exert in google classroom studying?

Table (10):

Answer	No. of informants	Percentage
Less than an hour	9	16.7%
2-3 times a week	11	20.4%
2-3 hours a day	13	24.1%
More than 3 hours a day	21	38.9%

Almost 38.9% of the total participants say that they spend more than 3 hours a day studying using electronic sites. Whereas 24.1% of them state that they spend between 2 to 3 hours a day. These high percentages reflect the students' well awareness of the role played by electronic sites in providing a suitable atmosphere for studying.
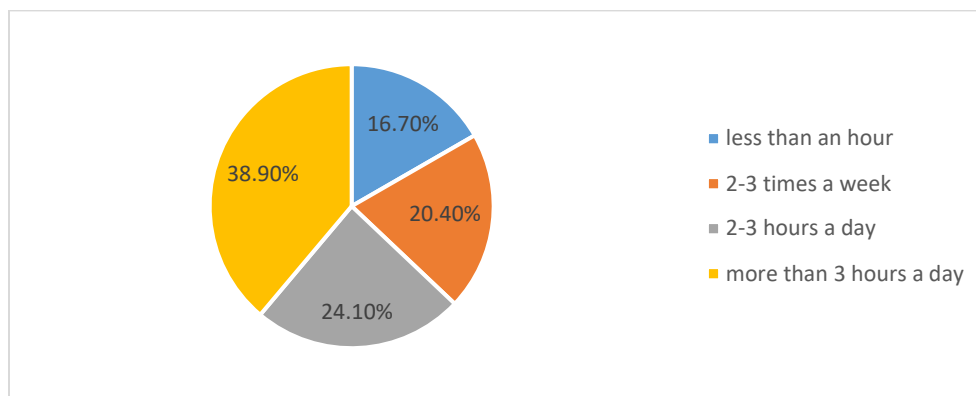
Figure (10): Time spent in surfing google classroom

١١-What is your preferable way of learning English through networking sites in general?

Table (11):

Answer	No. of informants	Percentage
chatting	28	51.9%
Video lectures	17	31.5%
Posting and commenting	6	11.1%
Pdf lectures	3	5.5%

According to the above table, the majority of the participants with a frequency rate of 51.9% choose chatting to be their preferable mean to enhance their performance in learning English. 31.5% of them prefer video lectures. A few percentage of 11.1% chooses posting and commenting. The lowest rate goes for pdf lectures with a percentage of 5.5%. The findings of this question suggest that the students are more interested in interactive method of teaching. They find it more effective than other ways and may help them to recover lectures lost.
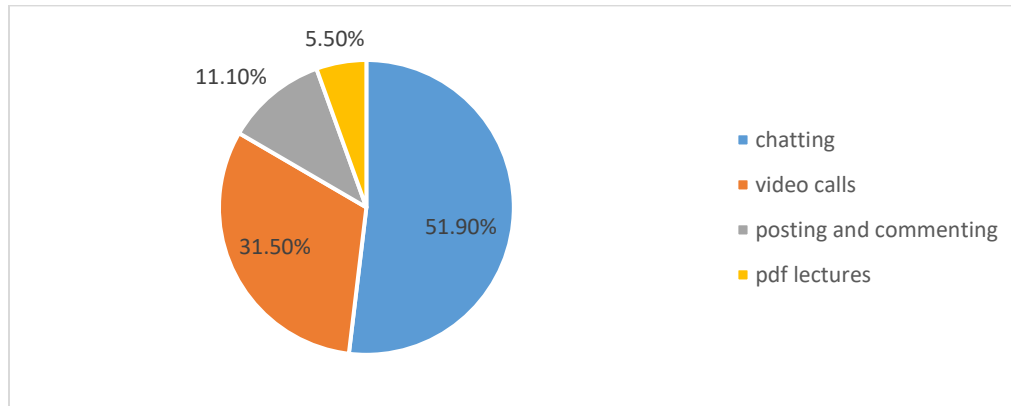
Figure (11): Ways of having lectures

١٢-Do you often comment or raise a question concerning the lecture given?

Table (12):

Answer	No. of informants	Percentage
always	0	0
No need	11	20.4%
never	32	59.2%
rarely	11	20.4%

The table above shows that the majority of the informants with a percentage of (59.2%) state that they have never raised any question of some kind. Other participants with similar portions equal to 40.4% mention that either there is no need to raise a question or they do so rarely. In all cases, the analysis reveals that there is no an ideal interaction between the teacher and his students.
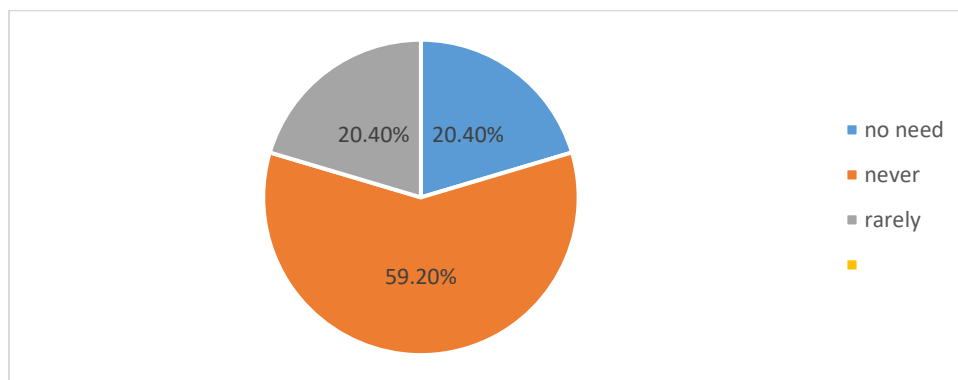
Figure (12): Students' interaction with their teacher

Concluding Remarks:

Throughout the analysis, the researcher has come to conclude that applying discourse analysis strategies to evaluate the e- English language learning helps to a great extent to highlight the points of strength and weakness in the performance of Iraqi second language learners. Not only this, but the study also shows that DA can be considered as a valuable classroom strategy for analyzing interaction among language learners not only in classroom setting but also in an on line interactional environment. This validates hypothesis number (1).

The analysis proofs that using google classroom as an official platform for e- English learning in the period of quarantine of covid 19 in Iraq creates development and at the same time distortion in English language practice. Starting from the very beginning, the majority of students with a percentage of 57.4% support using google clasroom in this critical situation. Yet similar ratio of 57.4% agree with the fact that it lacks the ideal environment of classroom

setting. This is why most of the students with percentage of 40.7% prefer to depend upon two platforms at the same time, i,e., google classroom and telegram. As far as, skills being developed, the students state that mostly reading, listening and writing

of English among other practices with percentages of 35.2%, 31.5% and 22.2% respectively are the ones being enhanced using this platform. Speaking on the other hand has got 11.1% of the total vote. 51.9% of the students prefer chatting as a way to have lectures more than taking them as videos or pdfs. It is also obvious from the analysis that the students are well aware of the importance of turn taking (discourse strategies) while learning English. In this respect 70.4% of them agree with the statetment that chatting and discourse elements are important to keep the sequence of conversation flowing which is one of the soft skills in English language learning, i.e., "listening, reading, writing and speaking". Unfortunately, most of the students with a percentage of 40% state that they have never experienced dealing with discourse elements such as turn taking while communicating in google classroom setting. In this respect, one may conclude that google classroom doesn't provide students with the appropriate setting to use reference or politeness strategies when communicating with others in the right way. This may be because most participants tend to outburst their emotions, feelings, rage when communicating or chatting with others through on line communication as is clearly shown in the analysis. For all the reasons above, it becomes vital for any teacher especially of English to use the option of google meet in the google classroom app to provide a suitable environment as much as possible for both the teacher and the learner to communicate orally. English language leaning cannot be mastered with the absence of oral practice. Hence using google meet can bridge this gap and overcome the problem. To give a final remark in this concern, the researcher has found that choosing the app despite its lack of normal classroom setting, i.e face to face interaction especially because many students don't agree to start camera on for many social obstacles. One can say that it fits the situation. This result comes as a verification to hypothesis (2).

Despite the fact that e- learning during the quarantine in Iraq can be considered a successful experience to some extent, but the researcher thinks it might be inappropriate

if being adopted in other periods. Generalization here is confusing and misleading. Virtual learning deals with students as being passive consumers. They are not given much space to practice the language orally. To confirm this result, the analysis shows that the majority of the informants with a percentage of (59.2%) state that they have never commented or raised any question of some kind while taking lectures. They just keep silent. Consequently their feedback is somehow limited. Furthermore, the students' communicative skills will be negatively affected as they are socially isolated.

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