

Using Online Tools in English L2 Lessons – Learning Challenges and Opportunities

Douglas PARKIN

1. Abstract

This study used mixed methods to examine how online tools affect English L2 learners' performance, how they are perceived by students, and what challenges and opportunities they provide. The study consisted of a quantitative grade comparison between different school years and courses and a quantitative and qualitative questionnaire given only in 2021 to various courses. The English L2 learners for the grade comparison consisted of 443 students from Yamaguchi College of Arts (YCA) and Yamaguchi Gakugei University (YGU). The students ranged from first-year to the third-year and were from various education and arts courses. The results of the comparison revealed that courses not using online tools that were conducted before the COVID-19 Pandemic, usually had higher grades than those using them during the Pandemic. The English L2 learners for the questionnaire consisted of 54 students from YCA and YGU, ranging again from first to third-year, but were only in education courses. The questionnaire utilized for this study, was created by the author to measure students' perceptions of tools used in courses and to allow them to express if they felt changes were needed. The results of the quantitative portion of the questionnaire revealed that most students felt online tools were beneficial in many ways but were lacking when used for communicating with the course instructor. The qualitative portion of the questionnaire revealed that students felt online tools provided learning opportunities, but they also had several challenges associated with them. Based on the results of the study, recommendations have been given regarding the need for changes when using online tools, along with possible future studies that are needed to improve learning outcomes.

2. Introduction

In Japan, there is an initiative called Society 5.0, where the government wishes to utilize various technologies in all walks of society to improve social and economic situations for all generations, including its aging society (Minevich, 2019). Other terms relating to Society 5.0 include ICT and active learning, where teachers are encouraged to use the latest technologies to motivate and engage learners in the learning process. The use of online resources in education, can be seen as a key to supporting Society 5.0, for they relate closely to how students function in their daily lives. Social Media (SoMe) is an example of this, for most students engage daily in using online tools such as Line, Facebook, and Twitter, to socialize with others and keep up with daily events. Many educators believe that the skills used by students with SoMe should also be used for educational purposes in the classroom. Since the

start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the need for using online tools in schools has become an issue for almost every educator, and it has often been a belief that students' SoMe skills should naturally transfer to using software applications in classes. Unfortunately, this belief has proven to be misguided in many cases and will be discussed further in the literature review that follows.

In the spring of 2020, when the pandemic first started, countless students and educators, were faced with having to do classes online, which led to the use of various learning management systems (LMS) such as Microsoft Office Teams, which was used by the students in this study. The use of LMSs created many learning opportunities as well as several challenges, such as Internet connectivity and hardware deficiencies. Classes in this study were conducted both synchronously and asynchronously with lessons done fully online, partially online, and fully face-to-face. However, each situation was similar in that they all used Teams as the LMS, and they used several other online tools as well. Various online tools used in the classes in this study included Teams with chat, video, and various other functions, Google Docs, Google Forms, YouTube, and Jamboard. Each of these tools will be discussed later in this paper.

In 2021, most of the classes in this study were conducted face-to-face, except for one YCA class, which was taught half online and half face-to-face. The students answering the questionnaire in the fall of 2021 took all lessons face-to-face. However, as a policy by the author to keep all interactions paperless, every file given to and received by students was done online through Teams. Such files included PowerPoint, Word, images, etc. The purpose of this study was to examine the use of various online learning tools in English L2 lessons, to understand the challenges and opportunities they present to both teachers and students.

3. Literature Review

In this section, we will look at literature that provides a perspective relating to the need for using online tools, especially during the COVID-19 Pandemic, myths relating to their use, and the realities they have for both teachers and students.

3. 1 COVID – 19 and the Need for Online Learning

In 2020, when COVID – 19 started to spread throughout the World, educators everywhere took their classes online, using various online tools such as LMS packages. This was a natural response, for face-to-face classes were no longer considered safe. Soon after online lessons began, there was a tendency for many people to start comparing the new style of lessons to face-to-face lessons, which was termed by some as the “Grand experiment” (Hodges et al., 2020, p. 3). Online learning for many, carried with it the stigma of offering lower quality education, where it would be difficult to develop or learn certain skills (Drago et al., 2005; Hodges et al., 2020). Many people believed that using the new online tools exclusively for lessons clearly showed that online learning could only result in lower educational outcomes. The problem with such thinking, is that the new online teaching conducted under forced circumstances could not be considered “Normal” rather it should have been termed as “Emergency remote teaching” (Hodges et al., 2020, p. 3). High-quality teaching can only happen when proper training,

equipment, and preparations exist. A proper comparison between the effectiveness of online learning using various tools and face-to-face learning, can only be made when both are conducted under optimal circumstances (Hodges et al., 2020). The reality is that studies have found that online learning can create disciplined and motivated students that are capable of working independently while producing academic achievements equal to those in face-to-face classes (Drago et al., 2005). Although there is still a myth that online learning simply does not work, 10 years' worth of research indicates it is effective in secondary and tertiary education (Bailey et al., 2015).

3. 2 Today's Youth as Digital Natives

There is a myth that today's youth are digital natives, given that they have grown up with technology and will have naturally developed online skills superior to that of older people (White, 2014). This can be equated in terms of learning a second language, in that younger people must have picked up strong digital skills given they have been immersed in digital technology since birth (White, 2014). This statement may appear to be even truer lately, given the volume of new online apps that are available on students' smart devices, compared to just a few years ago. Many educators, at least in some ways, probably believe in the digital native myth and are often surprised when students do not understand apps such as Microsoft Office, various social media platforms, and tools like Google Docs. The reality is that students often need time and help in developing their digital literacies, for they are frequently not literate when using technology in educational settings (De Bruyckere et al., 2015).

Another myth concerning youth today as digital natives is that they can multitask with digital technology (De Bruyckere et al., 2015; Gallardo-Echenique et al., 2015). Along with this ability, digital natives also are said to be collaborative and team-oriented (De Bruyckere et al., 2015). Belief in these myths put added pressure on students, to be able to work together doing several tasks, with only minimal guidance given by teachers. Educators often find that youth today are lacking in their "Digital Native" abilities, so students have finally started to step forward and tell their teachers that they are not as tech-savvy as they are assumed to be (Abamu, 2017). Even though students may be very skilled at using online tools such as Facebook and Twitter for enjoyment, they often do not know how to use such skills for academics (Abamu, 2017). One recommendation to help this is to create workshops for online tools like Google Docs, to be given to students before courses start, especially for first-year university students (Abamu, 2017).

3. 3 Social Media in Education

Many people believe that SoMe tools are used mainly for uploading photos and keeping in contact with friends (Henderson et al., 2013). However, SoMe tools also have great potential for education, for they provide various learning opportunities that include better tracking of student work, full-time access, easier submission of assignments, and better ways for students to organize themselves using tools like blogs (Poore, 2016). SoMe are also of great value for student collaboration, peer learning, and formative assessment (Poore, 2016). Some educators may disagree with using SoMe tools for they appear to be limited in what they can do, even though they are easy to use, powerful, and help students build specific task skills like photo

sharing or animations (Poore, 2016). Using an LMS like Teams seems to be in stark contrast to SoMe, given the variety of functions they have. Like most online technology, SoMe tools should not be used as substitutes or add-ons to learning practises, for they have transformative potential that should be used to redefine lessons (Common Sense Education, 2016; Henderson et al., 2013; Poore, 2016). The key to effectively using SoMe tools is to not simply try to fit them into current teaching practises, rather lessons should be carefully designed to focus on purpose and learning outcomes, which are appropriately supported by the abilities of the tools being used (Poore, 2016; Henderson et al., 2013).

3. 4 The Effects of Using Online Tools

Using online tools in lessons has proven to have several different effects on student achievement. One such online tool is Google Docs, and it is very popular with educators and students throughout the World. In a study conducted in a Midwest university in the U.S., L2 learners using Google Docs successfully collaborated in groups while creating texts that were more accurate than inaccurate (Kessler et al., 2012). The students indicated they felt each member was valued for their input and were essential to the work created (Kessler et al., 2012). In another study, EFL students in a Saudia Arabia university also used Google Docs, and it was found that the online tool helped to enhance writing performance, for a post-study test showed higher scores than the pre-tests scores achieved at the start of the course (Alsubaie & Ashuraidah, 2017). The study also found, that students had a positive attitude towards using Google Docs inside and outside of lessons (Alsubaie & Ashuraidah, 2017). EFL university students in Bethlehem participated in a study that sought to find how Google Docs and Google Classroom were perceived by learners, as collaborative online tools (Khalil, 2018). The study found that the online tools helped promote collaborative teacher-student and student-student exchanges (Khalil, 2018). Most students indicated the desire to use the Google online tools in future classes to benefit from easy access to teacher feedback and course materials (Khalil, 2018).

In a study conducted in a university in Indonesia, it was found that EFL students felt that each of the online platforms of Google Classroom, Cisco WebEx Meeting, and WhatsApp had positive learning attributes (Amin & Sundari, 2020). WebEx was found to be the best by students for meaning focus and authenticity of information, Google Classroom and WhatsApp were the best for language learning potential, and WhatsApp was the best for positive impact and practicality (Amin & Sundari, 2020). Although the students found merits in each online tool, they still felt face-to-face interactions were better than using online digital platforms for learning (Amin & Sundari, 2020).

In a study conducted at various UK higher education institutions, it was found that students were better off not using digital technologies for academic achievements (Lacka et al., 2021). The study found that although virtual learning environments could help students obtain academic achievements comparable to face-to-face classes, they also required additional inputs like time and resources, making them much less efficient than traditional learning methods (Lacka et al., 2021). SoMe was found to be the least efficient in academic achievement of all the online tools studied (Lacka et al., 2021).

4. Method

4. 1 Participants

The data obtained for this study was acquired from a quantitative grade comparison between different school years and courses, and a quantitative and qualitative questionnaire given only in 2021 to various courses. The participants for each data collection method will now be discussed.

4. 1. 1 Quantitative Grade Comparison Participants

There were 443 participants used for the quantitative grade comparison from both YCA and YGU. The YCA students consisted of first-year Day Care course and Arts Expression course students taking English Expression I. The English course taken by the Day Care course students differed in that it focused on preparing learners to teach English to students, while the Arts Expression course students were taught how to improve their skills in using the language themselves. The YGU students ranged from first to third-year and consisted of Elementary and English Secondary course education students who took Creative English I & II and Applied English I & II courses. The purpose of these courses was to provide learners with the necessary skills to teach communicative English to their future students. One additional course, was taught to the same YGU students, called Methods of English Language Instruction for Elementary School, which focused on teaching students how to teach English to elementary school students. The data for this study was gathered from students' final grades, ranging from the spring of 2018 to the spring of 2021, given that the final grades for the second term of 2021 had not been finished during the writing of this paper. The data was collected from consecutive years, with the only exception being the Arts Expression course students in 2019, for the course was not taught by the author that year. The purpose of the grade comparison was to see if there were any changes to students' grades after online tools had been introduced to courses, which were conducted synchronously, asynchronously, or a mixture of both. The only fully online synchronous course given was in the spring of 2020 to the Day Care course students.

4. 1. 2 Online Tools - Quantitative and Qualitative Questionnaire Participants

The participants for the quantitative and qualitative questionnaire were similar to the quantitative grade comparison participants, with the exception being that they were students that the author was still teaching at the time of the writing of this paper in the second term of 2021. The courses taught in the second term of 2021 were Creative English II, Methods of English Language Instruction for Elementary School, English Communication I for Day Care Course students, and a new YGU third-year course called Advanced English Expression. The Advanced English Expression course students also took another precursor course in the spring of 2021, called Upper Intermediate Expression. This is of great importance to this study, given that the two courses utilized all of the online tools used in the other courses, plus various other tools.

4. 2 Online Tools Used

Given that the focus of this study is on L2 learners using online tools, we will now discuss

the various tools used by the author in the courses taught to the participants. It should be noted that Google Docs, MakeBeliefsComix, and Jamboard were used mainly for the third-year courses of Upper Intermediate Expression and Advanced English Expression. It must also be noted that the use of these tools for the students completing the questionnaire were done asynchronously, for all of the classes were taught face-to-face, unlike many of the other students in previous terms, that were taught synchronously or a combination of both.

4. 2. 1 Microsoft Teams

Figure 1

Microsoft Teams Screenshot from the Advanced English Expression Course

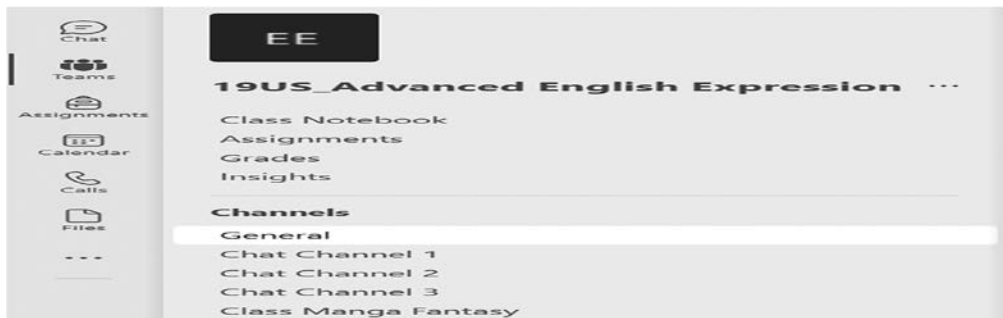
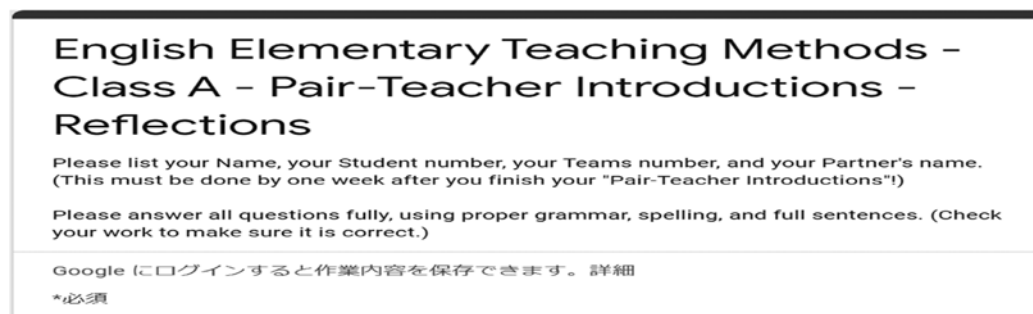


Figure 1 is a screenshot of the LMS Microsoft Office Teams, taken from the Advanced English Expression Course. This picture is almost identical in many ways to the layout used by other courses in this study. All courses since the spring of 2020 used Teams in the author's lessons as the main tool to gain access to course information and to submit assignments. Teams was used in various capacities synchronously and asynchronously. Teams was used for some students to conduct live 90-minute classes, similar to those given face-to-face. The interface most commonly used by students to access Teams was their smartphones. This in itself created a difficult challenge for the students, given that the size of the devices is so much smaller than PCs. Some students were fortunate to have PCs at home, and some even brought them to class like the third-year students in the Upper Intermediate Expression course. Teams was used to provide all course documents in Word, PDF, PowerPoint, and JPEG file formats. Students were responsible for doing assignments by creating Word and PowerPoint files, then where to upload them to the assignment sections for marking. Students also used the "General Channel" to upload files and links for presentations and lessons, which they did synchronously face-to-face or online using the meeting function in Teams. Communications during online synchronous classes were conducted with video and audio using the "Meeting" function, where everyone would meet as a class in one virtual room or smaller groups in "Chat Channel" virtual rooms. These functions were mainly used when students were at home.

4. 2. 2 Google Forms

Figure 2

Google Forms – Used in the English Elementary Teaching Methods Course - Class A



**English Elementary Teaching Methods -
Class A - Pair-Teacher Introductions -
Reflections**

Please list your Name, your Student number, your Teams number, and your Partner's name.
(This must be done by one week after you finish your "Pair-Teacher Introductions"!)

Please answer all questions fully, using proper grammar, spelling, and full sentences. (Check
your work to make sure it is correct.)

Google にログインすると作業内容を保存できます。詳細
*必須

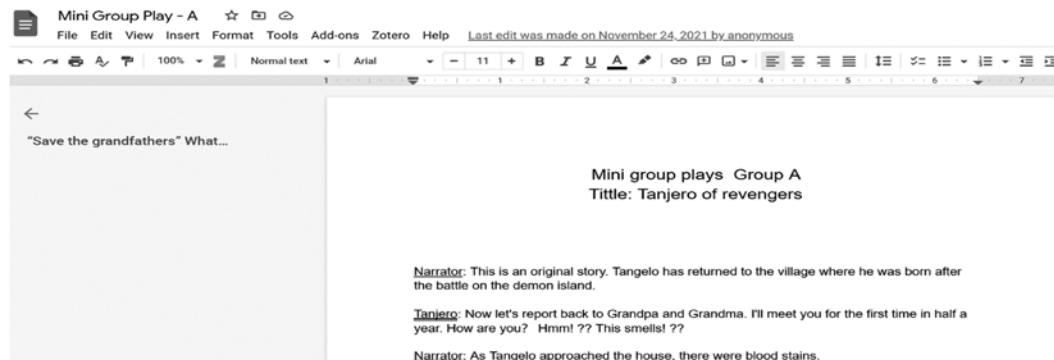
Note. The image is a screenshot taken from a Google Form created for the English Elementary Teaching Methods Course - Class A. From Parkin, D. (2021, August). *English Elementary Teaching Methods - class A - pair-teacher introductions - reflections*. Google. https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScyFfSZF10UfVY9MEKPIgyoecgPoV7CZd_Z4oplWJoFakJI8A/viewform?usp=sf_link

Figure 2 is a screenshot of a Google Form used in the English Elementary Teaching Methods Course, to provide students with a paperless way to write their reflections for their Pair Teacher Introductions. Reflections for a pre-service teacher are an invaluable tool for learners to grow as students and as future teachers. Google Forms allow educators to create such documents online where a link is the only thing a student needs to access the document created. The link was provided within the “Reflections” assignments section of Teams, and as the students for this study clicked on the link, a form opened within the LMS. The students were then free to fill in the form according to the directions given. Unlike paper, Google Forms allows students to write as much information as they wish when essay type questions are given. After students finish answering all the questions, then they simply click the send button and they are done. Teachers are then able to go online, pull up their class, click on the specific form, and see the results. Google provides the option to create a spreadsheet in various forms including Excel, which can be downloaded and analyzed later. Google Forms was used not only by the author of this paper, it was also used by the students in the study, to create tests to give to the rest of their class during mock-lessons. Google Forms was also used for students to register their groups for tests and for providing the points they had accumulated for a task called “Question Crazy Card”, where they were to ask English questions throughout their course to various faculty members for points.

4. 2. 3 Google Docs

Figure 3

Google Docs from the Advanced English Expression Course



Note. The image is a screenshot taken from a Google Docs file created for the Advanced English Expression Course. From Parkin, D. (2021, September). *Mini group play - A*. Google Docs. https://docs.google.com/document/d/1gTAF2_hZsHrZx0G1ur5YeFnSYT04pinw5pCw1Mr-cFo/edit

Figure 3 is a screenshot taken from Google Docs of a play that was created by students in the Advanced English Expression Course. Google Docs is a great collaborative online tool, that students and teachers can use to create written work synchronously or asynchronously. The Google Doc created by the author of this paper was made so that students could work on a "Mini Group Play" that they were to create in small groups of three people. Google Docs allowed students to write their script sections individually, then collectively post them online when they were ready. Edits using Google Docs can be made in real-time, utilizing the chat function of the online tool, or can be done asynchronously by group members at any time. The link to the Google Doc was posted in Teams to a channel labelled "Mini Group Plays". In addition to communicating using Google Docs, group members also had the freedom to use the Teams channel for the assignment, or various other communication mediums they may have wanted to use. One of the great features of Google Docs, is that members can always know who has done what to the documents so that they can discuss edits amongst the members of the group. After the final drafts of the scripts were completed, the plays were performed live during face-to-face lessons in the school.

4. 2. 4 Make-Beliefs-Comix

Figure 4

MakeBeliefsComix Strip Created by Students for the Advanced English Expression Course



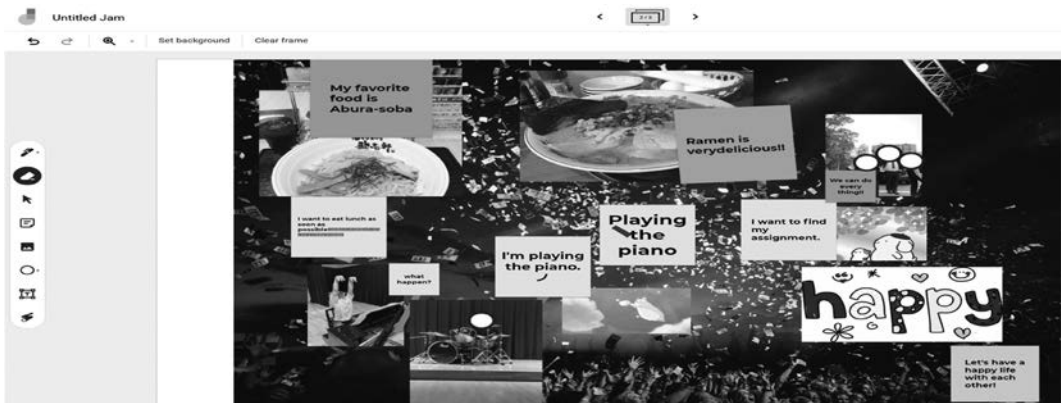
Note. The image was made by using the Make Beliefs Comix website, created by students in the Advanced English Expression course. From Zimmerman, B. (2006). *Create comics online, it's fun & free at MakeBeliefsComix!* MakeBeliefsComix. <https://makebeliefscomix.com>

Figure 4 is a screenshot of a Make Beliefs Comix strip created by students in the Advanced English Expression course. The class was divided into groups and were to use the website MakeBeliefsComix, to create an original comic strip containing three boxes for each strip. One strip needed to be produced every week, by each group, over the 15 weeks of the course. The content of the strips was purely open to the discretion of the students. However, given that the course is a third-year advanced creative writing course, content is of great importance. The MakeBeliefsComix website is free for use by educators, students, or anyone. The website provides a variety of backgrounds, characters, and various objects. The freedom provided by the online tool, is only limited by the imagination of the users. The students in the course created several impressive strips over the weeks, up to the writing of this paper, that were linked together by comedy, mystery, fantasy, and fun!

4. 2. 5 Jamboard

Figure 5

Jamboard Collage Created by Students for the Advanced English Expression Course



Note. The image is a screenshot of a collage made using the Jamboard website by Google, and

was created by students in the Advanced English Expression Course. From Google. (2016, October). *Jamboard*. Google accounts. <https://jamboard.google.com>

Figure 5 is a screenshot of a collage created by students in the Advanced English Expression Course, using the online tool called Jamboard, which was created by Google. The site is free to everyone who has a Google account and can be used powerfully and creatively by educators and students. Figure 5 demonstrates the creativity and freedom that was exercised by the YGU students, as they posted personal pictures and comments about themselves, including their feelings, favourite food, and favourite pastimes. Jamboard can be left open to allow students to freely express themselves or can be teacher-guided by themes and assignment goals. Jamboard was used only briefly in the course, but Figure 5 demonstrates how it can be used for various projects at every academic level.

4. 2. 6 YouTube

YouTube was often used in each of the courses mentioned in this study, by the course instructor and by the students. Instructional links were posted within Teams to help instruct students on how to use some of the features of the LMS. During classes, links were also provided to the students to allow them access to songs and videos that related to their courses. Students often used YouTube to help introduce various topics, both personal and educational. The links to the videos were usually posted within PowerPoint slideshows that were uploaded to Teams, either in the assignment sections or to the General Channel of the class. Although many people believe that YouTube is mainly used for students to pass time by watching their favourite YouTubers, cooking shows, or music videos, it also provides endless educational resources for teachers and learners.

4. 3 Data Collection

Data collection will now be discussed in two sections, with the first section looking at the methods used to obtain quantitative data of grades from YGU and YCA courses over different school years. The second section will look at the quantitative/qualitative questionnaire used to obtain data from YGU and YCA courses instructed in the fall of 2021.

4. 3. 1 Grade Comparison Between Courses

To see if online tools used in courses may have affected student achievement, grades from YCA and YGU courses were taken from classes conducted before the COVID-19 Pandemic, when online tools were mainly not used in lessons, and then after when they were. Two sets of data were used for YCA Day Care course students from all four classes A-D from 2019 and 2020. The four classes taught in 2020 were all conducted synchronously online, so this was the greatest difference between all courses surveyed for the Day Care course students were the only ones to receive 100% of their lessons online. Given the great potential difficulty and resulting stress, students were given an additional 5% to their final grades to help compensate for any losses they may have had compared to other courses. All of the courses used in the grade comparison included one year before the pandemic, when almost no online tools were used, up to at least one year it started, when online tools were used to instruct all students in

varying capacities.

4. 3. 2 Online Tools - Questionnaire

Figure 6 below is a copy of the Google Forms questionnaire given to each of the students in the author's fall 2021 classes, in YCA and YGU. The purpose of the questionnaire was to assess the value and level of difficulty students gave to using the online tools incorporated in lessons, which were used both synchronously and asynchronously inside and outside of class time. The questionnaire was divided into two sections, with Section A being the quantitative portion, which used a 7-point Likert Scale for each of the five statements listed. The scale used 1 to represent a strongly disagree response, 4 to represent a neutral response, and 7 to represent a strongly agree response to the statements given. One of the statements listed was worded in a negative sense, given it said: "Communicating with the teacher using Teams and email, are more difficult than other ways such as face-to-face, and using paper". When looking at the results of the questionnaire it is important to note this possible confusion. Section B is the qualitative portion of the questionnaire, where students were asked their opinions on the various online tools used in their course. Students were free to write as short or as long as they wished, to answer the five questions given.

Figure 6

Online Tools - Questionnaire

Section A

Please choose from 1-7 where 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Slightly Disagree, 4 = Neutral, 5 = Slightly Agree, 6 = Agree, 7 = Strongly Agree.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Choose One	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please do this for the following five statements:

1. Using Microsoft Teams to access all course materials is much easier than in other classes that do not use Teams.
2. Using Microsoft Teams to hand in assignments is easier than using paper in other classes.
3. Communicating with the teacher using Teams and email, is more difficult than other ways such as face-to-face, and using paper.
4. Using Teams to access files like Word and PowerPoint better than using USB flash media.
5. Using Teams and Google Forms to do assignments such as "Reflections" is better than using paper.

Section B

Please answer the following questions the best you can using sentences.

6. What online software did you enjoy using the most in this course? (Examples: Teams, Google Forms, YouTube, etc.)
 7. What online tools were most difficult to use in this course? (Same as question “6” Teams, Google Forms, YouTube, etc.)
 8. What online tools would you change in this course for future students? (Stop using, use more, new online software, etc.)
 9. Do online tools help or make things more difficult, compared to other courses you have taken that do not use them?
 10. Are there any other comments you would like to make about using online tools for learning?
-

5. Results and Discussion

5. 1 Grade Comparison Between Courses

Table 1 is a chart showing the course grades achieved by 443 YCA and YGU students from 2018 – 2019, in various courses instructed by the author of this paper. The data shows that Day Care students in 2020 who took lesson fully synchronously online averaged only 2.5% less in their grades than their seniors in 2019, who took classes fully face-to-face and used almost no online tools. However, as mentioned earlier, the Day Care course students in 2020 received a 5% bonus to compensate for the loss of grades that probably resulted from the additional stresses created by being forced to go completely online due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. This means that the 2020 students only scored 7.5% less on average while using only online tools to take their classes. Similarly, the YCA Arts Expression course students scored 6% less on average in 2020 and 2021 than their seniors in 2018. The YGU students taking the Creative English I course in 2020 and 2021, scored 4% and 6% lower than their seniors in 2019 who used minimal online tools. The YGU students taking the Creative English II course in 2020, actually scored 1% higher than their seniors in 2019 who used minimal online tools. The YGU students taking the Applied English I course in 2021 and 2020 scored 6% and 7% lower than their seniors in 2019. However, when the 2020 students took the Applied English II course in the fall, they scored the same as their seniors in 2019 who used minimal online tools. The YGU students taking the Methods of English Language Instruction for Elementary School course in 2020 scored only 1% lower than their seniors the year before. Overall, the results do indicate that in most cases, students who used many more online tools mostly due to the pandemic situation, scored on average from 1%-7.5% lower than their seniors who used minimal online tools. However, we must be careful to not use these findings as a clear indicator that online tools produce lower grades. Other factors must also be considered such as students having improper online equipment to access the tools, the time it takes for students to get used to the online tools especially when collaborative work is required, and if the tools are used synchronously or asynchronously, etc.

Table 1*Grade Comparison Chart – For Students from YGU and YCA (n = 443)*

Course + Year	Final Grade Avg	# of Students
YCA - 2019 - Day Care A	92	22
YCA - 2019 - Day Care B	88	21
YCA - 2019 - Day Care C	88	22
YCA - 2019 - Day Care D	88	21
Average for 4 Classes	89	
YCA - 2020 - Day Care A - 5% bon	82	21
YCA - 2020 - Day Care B - 5% bon	89	21
YCA - 2020 - Day Care C - 5% bon	90	21
YCA - 2020 - Day Care D - 5% bon	85	21
Average for 4 Classes	86.5	
YCA - 2018 - Arts Exp	88	29
YCA - 2020 - Arts Exp	82	29
YCA - 2021 - Arts Exp	82	24
YGU - 2019 - Creative Eng I	91	29
YGU - 2020 - Creative Eng I	87	15
YGU - 2021 - Creative Eng I	85	12
YGU - 2019 - Creative Eng II	89	21
YGU - 2020 - Creative Eng II	90	14
YGU - 2019 - Applied Eng I	92	15
YGU - 2020 - Applied Eng I	85	19
YGU - 2021 - Applied Eng I	86	13
YGU - 2019 - Applied Eng II	86	17
YGU - 2020 - Applied Eng II	86	18
YGU - 2019 - Methods Of Eng Inst	92	9
YGU - 2020 - Methods Of Eng Inst	91	9

5. 2 Online Tools - Questionnaire

Table 2 shows the results from Section A of the Online Tools Questionnaire, which 54 students gave responses to. This information is the quantitative portion of the questionnaire that used a Likert Scale to let students express how they felt about using online tools in their classes during the fall of 2021. The results indicate that both the YGU students and the YCA students felt that Teams made it easier to access course materials. The results out of a maximum of 7 were 5.3, which means that students did not strongly agree with the statement, rather they were between slightly and fully agreeing with the statement. Similar results occurred with the statements that assignment handling is easier with Teams, accessing files is easier, and that the LMS plus Google Forms make assignments easier to do than with paper. Each of the four positively worded statements scored between 5.06 and 5.89 on the 7-point Likert Scale, indicating students did see value in using the Teams LMS online tool and other possible tools, like those that Google offers. The one negatively worded statement that said: "Talking to the teacher is more difficult with Teams" scored a 4.63, indicating the students did not strongly agree with the statement, but they did tend to feel it was more difficult than

speaking face-to-face. The one problem with the results from this question was that students may have misunderstood its meaning, given it was worded in a negative way. The standard deviation (SD) was calculated for each result, with only one set of data from the Creative English II students being 2.1, which is slightly outside an acceptable range. The rest of the data were found to be within acceptable distributions.

Table 2

Online Tools – Questionnaire for YGU and YCA Courses– (n = 54) (Quantitative Section)

Course	n	1. Accessing Materials is easier with Teams (Mean Value)	SD	2. Handing in assignments is easier with Teams (Mean Value)	SD	3. Talking to the teacher is more difficult with Teams (Mean Value)	SD	4. Accessing files with Teams is easier than using USB media (Mean Value)	SD	5. Assignments with Teams and Google Forms are better than with paper (Mean Value)	SD
Advanced Eng Exp	4	6.26	0.96	7	0.0	5.25	1.5	6.75	0.5	7	0.0
Creative Eng II	2	5.5	2.1	6	1.4	5.5	0.7	4	0.0	7	0.0
Methods A + B	25	4.28	1.34	3.84	1.68	4.24	1.56	4.4	1.22	4.68	1.44
Day Care A, B, C, D	23	5.17	1.19	5.13	1.39	3.52	1.41	5.09	1.7	4.87	1.39
Averages		5.3		5.49		4.63		5.06		5.89	

Table 3 shows the qualitative results from Section B of the Online Tools Questionnaire, where students from YCA and YGU answered questions 6 – 7 in word form. The results of question 1, indicated that students did enjoy using Teams in many cases but enjoyed using YouTube the most, especially for the dancing video shown to the Methods and Day Care courses. The results of question 2, indicated that Teams was the most difficult online tool to learn how to use, followed by Google Forms, where one student cited the loss of data, which resulted in making them angry and sad. The results of question 3, indicated that several students would not change the tools used in their courses, while others would make changes such as using more online tools like Zoom. Students also indicated they would like to have responses from the teachers, indicating their assignments had been received. The results of question 4, indicated that most students felt that online tools made things easier, while some students felt they made things more difficult. Five students in the methods course indicated that it depended on the situation as to how difficult or easy the online tools were. It would have been very helpful had the students indicated what those circumstances were. The results of question 4, indicated that online tools became easier as they were used, more Japanese explanations would be helpful, they would be very useful when the students became teachers, and classes should not use online tools only.

Table 3

Online Tools – Questionnaire for YGU and YCA Courses– (n = 54) (Qualitative Section)

6. What online software did you enjoy using the most in this course?	7. What online tools were most difficult to use in this course?	8. What online tools would you change in this course for future students?	9. Do online tools help or make things more difficult?	10. Are there any other comments you would like to make?
<i>Advanced</i>	<i>English Exp</i>	<i>And</i>	<i>Creative English I</i>	<i>Courses</i>
Teams x 4	Teams x 2	Teams x 1	More difficult x 1-convenient but difficult	Easier than using paper
Google Forms x 2	Google Forms x 2 -Due to data loss making student sad and angry	No Change x 4	Easier x 4 – Easier to understand, more comfortable, helpful	No comments x 5
YouTube x 2	PowerPoint x			
<i>Methods of</i>	<i>English Language</i>	<i>Education for</i>	<i>Elementary School</i>	<i>Course</i>
Teams x 9	Teams x 16 - Couldn't understand how to use assignments - Too many files - did not know where to look or which to use	Use own USB – Too difficult to upload files like PowerPoint to Teams	Easier x 7 – allows you to review many times, Google Forms is useful, easy to submit work	Very convenient but should not use only online methods
Google Forms x 3	Difficult to upload files to Teams	Stop Using x 2 – Paper is better	More difficult x3 – too many files	No Comments x 12
YouTube x 10 Example: Dance Video	Google Forms x 1	OK now but need response from teacher when submitting assignments	Depends on situation x5 – convenient but difficult when trouble occurs	Will help greatly when they become a teacher
Digital Textbook Song x 1	YouTube x 1	Use More x 7 - Such as Zoom	Useful but difficult	Easier using paper
<i>Day Care</i>				<i>Course</i>
Teams x 7	Teams x 4 – It takes time to get used to it	Create tool to ask questions directly	More difficult x 4	No comments x 12
Google Forms x 2	Google Forms x 5	Use Teams more x1 Change Word x1	Easier x 6 – Can ask questions in spare time, able to teach more smoothly, useful	Difficult at first -became much easier, Explain more in Japanese
YouTube x 9 For showing the class various videos and for dancing – Easy to understand by watching and doing	YouTube x1	No Change x 5 - easy enough to use - Easier than paper - Don't need new tools Google Forms x1 - difficult to use	Useful but can be difficult x 2 – Things can be changed to be more helpful, easier if explained in Japanese, easier if explained more	Various ideas were given- resistance to English is less than before - Need work submissions explained more
PowerPoint x 2	Word x 1, One student mentioned that all tools are easy to use	PowerPoint x 1 – useful for future so need more use		Sometimes Teams app did not work, Want to learn more online tools

6. Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to examine the use of various online learning tools in English L2 lessons, to understand the challenges and opportunities they present to both teachers and students. Quantitative and qualitative results relating to the use of online tools in lessons, were obtained from a grade comparison of students from YGU and YCA from 2018-2021 and from an online tools questionnaire given to YGU and YCA students during the fall term of 2021. The results of the grade comparison indicated that overall, students scored 1-7.5% lower when using online tools in response to the COVID-19 Pandemic, than students who used minimal if any online tools in classes before the pandemic. The tendency for many people would be to assume that the results indicate online tools result in lower grades for students, but this assumption should not be made until further studies have been conducted, taking into account all factors. Factors that need to be considered are proper student and teacher training, proper online equipment for students with reliable Internet connections, and various other pedagogical considerations, such as course design and learning outcomes. The results of the online tools questionnaire indicated that students did see value in using Teams, but they desired better training with the LMS so they could use it more effectively. The students also indicated that various other online tools helped to improve lessons, but more support and training should be given by instructors. Another item mentioned was that there was too much information provided for the students to read in Teams, and given it was written in English while the students were English L2 learners, better care needed to be taken to limit the amount of information given.

The main item learned in this study is that educators wishing to use online tools in lessons, should not assume that students are digital natives that can easily use such technology without support or training provided to them. The COVID-19 Pandemic forced educators in 2020 to take classes online and use various online tools such as LMSs, Google Docs, and Zoom. However, those measures as mentioned by Hodges et al. (2020), could only be considered emergency remote teaching, and it is now time that we start to do real online teaching. Whether such teaching is done synchronously fully online, or if it is done using a combination of synchronous and asynchronous measures face-to-face and online, we must take care to properly train educators and students on how to use online tools more effectively.

One limitation of this study is that the grade comparison conducted between YCA and YGU needed to consider other factors such as student accessibility to proper equipment, proper training of instructors for using online tools, and proper educating of students to use the tools. These items point to the need for future longitudinal studies that are not conducted while using emergency measure teaching, as they take into account various factors that can influence the successful use of online tools. Another limitation to this study is that a standard set of online tools needs to be examined, where participants in each class uniformly use the same tools so that pre- and post-course analyses can be conducted, factoring the same variables for each course studied. This study included several online tools, but one course used far more tools than the others, putting into question some of the results found. This points again to the need for longitudinal studies that create conditions that are uniform for all participants. Studies have found that the use of online tools can greatly help student academic achievement, and this study points towards the need for future research to be conducted by the author, to support

their continued use in future courses.

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