

## **Using ClassDojo to Enhance Online Interaction in English Learning at Lower Secondary Schools**



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**ABSTRACT:** The purpose of the study is to use the ClassDojo application supplemented to conventional English class to enhance interaction in English learning at a lower secondary school in a northern city of Vietnam. Forty 7th graders in the academic year 2021-2022 were involved in the study as the participants and survey respondents. Two questionnaires were distributed to the students before and after the implementation of such a blended class to collect data on their interaction practices in their virtual classroom as well as their feedback on this mode of learning. The study results revealed that ClassDojo significantly enhances online interaction in English learning in terms of the learner-instructor, learner-learner, and learner-content interaction. The findings also indicated that students generally appreciate the integration of this classroom management application in English learning. Finally, some recommendations were provided upon the use of ClassDojo to improve interaction in English virtual classrooms.

**KEYWORDS:** ClassDojo, online interaction, virtual classroom, learner-instructor interaction, learner-learner interaction, learner-content interaction

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Like elsewhere in the world, English as the global language has become an important subject in school curriculum in Vietnam. Under a more critical foreign language policy in the national curriculum, schools across Vietnam have launched a wide range of initiatives to arouse students' motivation and interest in English learning as well as to encourage English language teaching and learning for students' better achievement. However, Vietnamese learners of English witness a lot of challenges and obstacles in improving their proficiency in the context of non-native community. One of the difficulties is to establish and develop the English environment beyond the classroom.

The development of technology and the implementation of digital transformation in education and training have remarkably facilitated students' learning experiences via the extension of the learning environment in that it no longer limits within the physical settings but extends to out-of-class environments where language learners can arrange their learning at their convenience. In addition, they can choose to learn from the teachers, cooperate with their partners, or direct their own studying. Therefore, creating an online environment for students to improve their English knowledge and soft skills, such as teamwork and presentation skills, is vital. In this virtual environment students have more chances to interact with their teacher, friends, and materials, and the distances from teacher to student, student to student, and students with materials are shortened.

Dickinson (1995) states that virtual classrooms are "a teaching and learning environment within a computer-mediated communication system." These classrooms provide various tools that increase teachers' teaching and students' learning effectiveness. Virtual classrooms are regarded as "spaces" where students can attend classes synchronically, enabling any number of students irrespective of age, geographical location, and time. Another benefit of such classrooms is that they provide easy ways to upload and share materials, for collecting and reviewing students' assignments, for making online chats and debates, for given exercises, for conducting surveys, and for recording grades (Cole, 2005).

Virtual classrooms are divided into two types: synchronous and asynchronous virtual classrooms. Synchronous virtual classrooms are those in which the teacher and students can communicate online simultaneously from different locations (Hrastinski, 2008). Synchronous virtual classrooms are supported by software that could facilitate the learning processes and help students learn more effectively. Asynchronous virtual classrooms allow students to review the instructional material at their own pace without waiting in line or sitting in class. They can do this using internet-based tools to access the course content at the appropriate time and place.

ClassDojo is a platform that "builds particular good habits in and out of the classroom," according to Chaudhary (2012). ClassDojo is a communication site that helps teachers encourage students in class and engage parents and other teachers. ClassDojo, according to MacLean-Blevins (2013), is a "free online behavior monitoring system" that allows teachers to track students' behavior

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using positive or negative feedback. Teachers use ClassDojo to give students encouragement (or "Feedback Points") for showing critical skills or strengths like persistence, critical thinking, teamwork, and leadership. Teachers may also use ClassDojo to discover desired behaviors, encourage pupils to practice them more inside and outside class, and track undesirable ones. The most excellent part of ClassDojo is that it is entirely free and straightforward to set up and use.

Chaudhary (2012) discusses three core values of ClassDojo that distinguish it from other forms of behavioral management, including its positive effects on students' behaviors, real-time feedback, and involvement of parents in children's education. According to Doug Sandler (2019), students at ClassDojo are encouraged to develop socially, emotionally, and academically. The app gives teachers access to information and content to help kids study more effectively for the school year. Moreover, ClassDojo encourages pupils to express themselves through digital portfolios. Students can submit pictures, videos, and text to their ClassDojo digital portfolios, exchange files with teachers and parents, annotate images, and more. Students may take photographs or videos of themselves and upload them to their student tales when the tasks are finished, which other classmates can view on the app. ClassDojo encourages students to communicate by posing open-ended questions, which keeps them thinking and talking. Thus, the research aimed to investigate the role of the ClassDojo application, what worked, and the areas that needed modification during the next cycle in the first stage.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

The study has answered the following research questions:

- (i). To what extent does ClassDojo enhance online interaction in English learning?
- (ii). How do the students feel about online interaction in ClassDojo?

Forty 7th graders in a lower secondary school in Thai Nguyen City in the academic year 2021-2022 were involved in the study. The participants included twenty-one girls and nineteen boys, who have been learning English for more than four years. The study adopted action research design which comprises 4 basic stages in the cyclic process as proposed by (Dickens & Watkins, 1999): reflect, plan, act, observe, and then reflect to continue through the cycle. To start with, the situation of English learning and the learning interaction in the mentioned school was examined and analyzed through the questionnaire to point out the necessities of set-up of a virtual classroom. ClassDojo was chosen as a supportive tool to supplement formal English study and to enhance English class interaction. To begin with, a new virtual class on ClassDojo was created, and the students were added to the class in which they were assigned language tasks and invited to give comments, feedback or raise questions to peers and teachers. After 14 weeks, participants were distributed the post-questionnaires about the general aspects of learner-instructor, learner-learner, and learner-content interaction on ClassDojo and students' opinions on ClassDojo.

Questionnaires were used in this study as a primary instrument to evaluate the students' attitudes on three types of interaction, the advantages and disadvantages of using ClassDojo, and some future recommendations for improving online interaction on ClassDojo. The pre-questionnaire contained seventeen questions in two main parts to get students' opinions about general aspects of the three types of online interaction. The post-survey questionnaire was adopted by Tryanti's questionnaire (2016) with three main parts. It investigated how ClassDojo enhances online interaction in English learning in the aforementioned lower secondary school and the role of ClassDojo in helping to increase online interaction when learning English. Interpretation of level of agreement and frequency was based from Atef and Munir's (2009) and Oxford's (1990).

## 3. RESULTS

### 3.1. ClassDojo enhances online interaction in English learning

	N	Min	Max	Mean (pre-questionnaire)	Level of agreement
1. Having good interaction with your teacher is essential.	40	4	5	4.85	Strongly agree
2. Having good interaction with your classmates is essential.	40	3	5	4.15	Agree
3. Self-studying in learning English is essential.	40	3	5	3.925	Agree

**Table 1. Student's opinion about the importance of learner-instructor, learner-learner, and learner-content interaction**

The table gives students' perceptions of three types of interaction in their English class: learner-instructor, learner-learner, and learner-content interaction. Overall, all the students knew the importance of self-study skills and good interaction with their teacher and classmates when studying English. As can be seen from the table, the mean score of 4.85 indicated that the students strongly agree with the statement that it is essential to have a good interaction with the teacher, followed by the importance of learner-learner interaction, with the figure being lower at the mean score 4.15. While the mean score to show agreement with the statement that self-studying in English is essential is the lowest, which was only about 3.93.

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**Table 2. Learner-instructor interaction before and after using ClassDojo in English learning**

	Having small talk		Raising questions		Answering teachers' questions	
	Before	After	Before	After	Before	After
N (students)	40	40	40	40	40	40
Min	1	2	1	1	1	2
Max	3	4	3	4	2	4
Mean (pre-questionnaire)	1.425	2.725	1.675	2.5	1.1	2.7
Level of frequency	Low	Medium	Low	Medium	Low	Medium

The table compares three ways of student-teacher online interaction before and after applying ClassDojo to learning English. Overall, the frequency level of having small talk with the teacher, raising questions, and answering teachers' questions outside the classroom increased from low to medium.

To specify, before using ClassDojo, raising the question to the teacher outside the classroom is the highest figure, about 1.675. The data saw a significant rise to 2.5 after using ClassDojo. The mean score of having small talk or conversation with the teacher outside the classroom increased from 1.425 to 2.725 after applying the application.

Meanwhile, the interaction turns of having small talk and answering teachers' questions were growth. The mean score was exactly 1.1 at first. However, after 14 weeks, it had the most significant change, with 2.7, which was over twice as high as before.

Relating to learner-instructor interaction before the application of ClassDojo, it is worth mentioning students' answers to Question 10 about how they felt when they communicated with their teachers and the reason why they had those feelings. It is withdrawn from the open-ended questionnaire that the familiar feelings of the students were shyness, embarrassment, uncomfortable, worry, or uninterest.

Few students were comfortable starting and maintaining conversations with their English teachers. The students were those who had questions related to their English learning or wanted to seek the teacher's advice for some learning matters.

**Table 3. Learner-learner interaction before and after using ClassDojo in English learning**

		Having small talk	Raising questions	Answering questions	Working in groups	Encouraging
<b>Before applying ClassDojo</b>	N (students)	40	40	40	40	40
	Min	2	2	1	1	1
	Max	4	4	3	3	3
	Mean (pre-questionnaire)	2.975	2.925	2.275	1.825	1.45
	Level of frequency	Medium	Medium	Medium	Low	Low
<b>After applying ClassDojo</b>	N (students)	40	40	40	40	40
	Min	2	2	1	2	2
	Max	5	4	5	4	4
	Mean (post-questionnaire)	3.525	3.15	3.0	3.55	2.95
	Level of frequency	High	Medium	Medium	High	Medium

The table illustrates the enhancement of learner-learner interaction through the number of turns they communicate with their classmates outside the classroom. Overall, the mean score presents the interaction between students and their classmates. Regarding

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Learner-learner online interaction, the mean score shows an upward trend in having small talk, working in groups, and encouraging while raising and answering questions while still keeping in the medium. In detail, the mean score of encouragement has the most remarkable change after using ClassDojo, about 2.95, which is over twice as high as before applying ClassDojo in learning. Working in groups peaked at 3.55, almost twice as high as 14 weeks before. In other ways of interaction with classmates, the mean score of answering questions remained stable with a slight rise before and after using ClassDojo, with 2.275 and 3.0, respectively. Interestingly, students' emotions in talks with their classmates were reported in contrast to their feelings towards their English teacher. Basically, they felt comfortable, relaxed, and pleasant when they talked with their fellows. There were no students who said they had uneasy feelings toward their friends.

**Table 4. Learner-content interaction before and after using ClassDojo in English learning**

		Watching English video	Reading English materials	Making English video	Doing English exercise	Writing in English
<b>Before applying ClassDojo</b>	N (students)	40	40	40	40	40
	Min	1	1	1	2	1
	Max	3	3	3	4	3
	Mean (pre-questionnaire)	1.75	1.85	1.45	2.95	1.3
	Level of frequency	Low	Low	Low	Medium	Low
<b>After applying ClassDojo</b>	N(students)	40	40	40	40	40
	Min	2	2	1	2	2
	Max	5	4	5	4	4
	Mean (post-questionnaire)	3.325	3.025	2.75	3.35	3.125
	Level of frequency	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium

The table demonstrates the changing frequency level in learner-content online interaction after 14 weeks of using ClassDojo. Overall, in each method of studying English outside the classroom, the mean score is far higher than before applying the experiment. As shown in the table, doing exercise accounted for the highest mean score in all five methods that students could do their self-study both before and after applying ClassDojo. There was significant growth from 2.95 to 3.35. Nevertheless, the frequency of watching English videos, reading English materials, making English videos, and writing in English had increased from low to medium. Remarkably, the mean English writing score is 3.125, which is over double that 14 weeks before. The mean score for watching English videos, reading English materials, and making English videos are followed by 3.325, 3.025, and 2.75, respectively.

### 3.2. Students' opinions of interaction on ClassDojo

**Table 5. Student's opinion on how ClassDojo work**

	N	Min	Max	Mean (pre-questionnaire)	Level of agreement
1. ClassDojo allows me to interact/participate with my teacher and classmates about assignments, group tasks, and other activities.	40	4	5	4.75	Strongly agree
2. ClassDojo allows me to get feedback from my teacher and classmates.	40	4	5	4.7	Strongly agree

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	N	Min	Max	Mean (pre-questionnaire)	Level of agreement
3. ClassDojo allows me to easily access reference materials provided by the teacher.	40	4	5	4.8	Strongly agree
4. Online activities and discussions in ClassDojo motivate me to learn more.	40	3	5	4.5	Strongly agree
5. ClassDojo can be used to enhance the online interaction among learner-instructor, learner-learner, and learner-content.	40	3	5	4.6	Strongly agree
6. The reference materials such as articles and videos posted by the instructor via ClassDojo are helpful.	40	4	5	4.7	Strongly agree
7. Quizzes and tasks in ClassDojo assist me in improving my learning and comprehension skills.	40	3	5	4.25	Agree
8. Using ClassDojo can make an effort to get the information.	40	3	5	4.3	Agree
9. ClassDojo is an application that students can follow easily.	40	4	5	4.825	Strongly agree
10. I prefer to open and use ClassDojo on my computer/laptop than on my smartphone.	40	4	5	4.7	Strongly agree

The table shows the students' level of agreement with the opinions about ClassDojo after 14 weeks and presents the student's evaluation of the materials and activities that the teacher had provided on ClassDojo. Overall, students strongly agreed about ClassDojo and activities created on ClassDojo in the post-survey questionnaire.

In detail, most students took the assessment ClassDojo was an application that students could easily track and follow, with a mean score of 4.825. Students also claimed that ClassDojo allowed them easy access to the materials provided by the teacher. The statement rated as strongly in agreement but with a significantly lower score is that through ClassDojo, students could have interacted with teachers and classmates about assignments and assigned tasks. In addition, thanks to ClassDojo, students could have received feedback and comments from teachers and classmates, with a mean score of 4.75 and 4.7, respectively. Teacher-provided materials and activities created on ClassDojo were greatly appreciated. 4.7 is a significant number where students agreed that the resources provided by the teacher were helpful. Besides, there were online and discussion activities on ClassDojo to encourage learners to be more active in learning. 4.25 is a significant number that shows students' agreement on exercises and questions in helping them to have reading comprehension and listening comprehension skills. Most students claimed that there were a wide range of advantages when using ClassDojo, including classroom interaction enhancement, learning activities expansion, a more comfortable environment, and better management of students' learning progress. However, it still had some drawbacks when using it. In short, although it still had some negative points when using ClassDojo, it is evident that the participants have enjoyed the comfortable atmosphere of ClassDojo in terms of strengthening their interactions with their teachers and peers.

#### 4. DISCUSSION

Based on the results obtained from the survey, it was found that students recognized the importance of building and maintaining interactions with teachers and classmates and self-study when staying home. However, the interaction between students and students and teachers only occurs mainly in the classroom and outside the school, and the level of interaction is not high. Students also do not spend much time self-study materials and books in English and practicing writing and speaking in English. Before applying ClassDojo, students' self-study at home was mainly only through the form of homework assigned by the teacher.

After 14 weeks, the data collected illustrates the changes in the frequency and the students' feelings when interacting with their instructor. From rarely has changed to interacting frequently. The improvement was evident in the active interaction, and the topics of the conversation were expanded instead of focusing mainly on assignments. All of these interactions took place on ClassDojo.

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Besides that, the survey results showed that students primarily talked to each other about daily activities, interests, and learning difficulties and asked questions to get help and support to complete their homework. Students felt comfortable sharing these things. However, the time and the frequency of group work were not much; students only worked in groups at the teacher's request. In addition, there was almost no encouragement between students and students. Thus, the interaction between students and classmates was significantly increased when applied to ClassDojo. Through ClassDojo, students could make comments, ask questions about the content of their friends' posts and give words of encouragement, which became the motivation for students to try to do better the next time. The topics in the conversation were also expanded, and the interaction time was more.

Last but not least is improving the interaction between learners and content with various source materials. According to the results obtained from the survey before applying ClassDojo in English self-study of students outside the classroom, it was mainly completing the homework assigned by the teacher, and the frequency of students watching videos and reading books was low. When ClassDojo was implemented, students could acquire English from various resources anywhere, at any time. It created opportunities for students to record videos to practice reading, speaking, writing articles, and doing projects. Most students shared that they were no longer afraid to record a video about a specific topic in English and felt more confident when writing a paragraph in English, even though they were not scared to do so. Maybe their writing is not good, but they are used to it and know how to deploy the content.

Students commented that ClassDojo was an easy-to-use application because it allowed students to interact and participate in other activities assigned by teachers anytime, anywhere, just needing the Internet and a smart device like a smartphone, tablet, or laptop. Students could log in, do assignments, participate in group activities, and post their work. The comment feature helped students to interact with their classmates and instructors. ClassDojo users did not take much time to get used to and learn to use it for the first time accessing the application.

According to the results obtained from the survey after using ClassDojo, the resources provided on ClassDojo were diverse. Through these tasks, students could practice listening and reading comprehension skills and receive other valuable information sources since learning English had also improved.

On the other hand, the students said that they also had some difficulties during the 14 weeks of experimentation, namely that students could not directly upload their production on Class story, which is a feature that only the instructor has. Therefore, students will not be shown any notifications if the group's project product or other groups comment on them.

From the above advantages and disadvantages, students shared that they hope this model will be continued and they will be had more opportunities to interact with classmates, instructors, and other resources on ClassDojo. Students expected that the teachers could provide various videos, articles, and magazines around the subject matter they are learning in the primary curriculum to expand their knowledge.

## 5. CONCLUSION

This study has provided several crucial findings. Firstly, the study evaluated how ClassDojo enhances online interaction in English learning. Then, the study pointed out how the students feel when using ClassDojo. Finally, the model could be applied on a bigger scale.

First and foremost, students identified the importance and role of learner-instructor, learner-learner, and learner-content interaction outside the classroom, but that interaction was still low. Students felt comfortable and close when communicating with their classmates, but some feel less confident when communicating with teachers. Topics used for exchange mainly revolved around homework and tasks required by the teacher. Therefore, it is essential to increase the frequency of communication and improve students' feelings so they can confidently interact with teachers.

Secondly, the application of ClassDojo to enhance interactions outside the classroom has been practical. According to the results obtained from the survey, the interaction improvement had increased in all three types of online interactions. Specifically, the number of exchanges, asking and answering questions from teachers outside the classroom had risen from low to moderate. In addition, ClassDojo also increased the number of learner-learner interactions, such as giving encouragement, working in groups, and exchanging and sharing about daily life and interests. Last but not least, students' self-study skills were improved. Besides doing their daily homework, students watched English videos, read English articles, practiced writing, and recorded English-speaking videos.

Furthermore, students felt the gap between teachers and students was narrowed. They can easily interact as well as help the teacher. Learner-learner interactions allowed students to work in groups and receive compliments from classmates who rarely interact in face-to-face classes. After 14 weeks of implementing ClassDojo, with the variety of resources provided on ClassDojo, students had spent more time on their learning and doing teacher-assigned activities outside of the textbook.

Finally, the survey results show that ClassDojo had effectively increased the interaction between learner-instructor, learner-learner, and learner-content. However, this application still had some limitations, such as short text code usage time and the Internet connection needed to access the application.



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### CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest. The funders had no role in the study's design, data collection, analysis, or interpretation of the data, in the writing of the manuscript, or in the decision to publish the results.

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All claims expressed in this article are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of their affiliated organizations, or those of the publisher, the editors and the reviewers.

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