

Students' Perception Toward the Use of Google Documents for Online Collaborative Writing in English Education at Ahmad Dahlan University

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history

Received 27 January 2023

Revised 8 February 2023

Accepted 23 March 2023

Keywords

Perception
Online collaborative writing
Google
Documents

ABSTRACT

Google Documents is very important as an online collaborative writing tool. Collaborative writing is one of the methods used in writing learning practice. Studies on collaborative writing have shown that online collaborative writing effectively improves student writing quality. Therefore, this study explores students' perceptions of using Google Documents for online collaborative writing. Moreover, this study also determines the benefits and challenges of using Google Documents for online collaborative writing.

This study used mixed methods research designs. The questionnaire collected quantitative data consisting of 20 closed-ended questions. Semi-structured interviews involving six students out of twenty-five were used to collect qualitative data. This study was conducted in English Education Study Program at Ahmad Dahlan University, Yogyakarta, Indonesia. The participants are 25 students in the third-semester classes B and C.

This study's results show students' positive perception of online collaborative writing through Google Documents. It indicates that using Google Documents in online collaborative writing allows them to share ideas and comments easily (Mean=3,36). The benefits of using Google Documents for online collaborative writing helped them to pay attention to proper punctuation, vocabulary, and grammar (Mean=3,44). Furthermore, online collaborative writing improves their writing skills (Mean=3,08). The challenge of using Google Documents for online collaborative writing is an unstable internet connection, which makes it difficult to do online collaborative writing through Google Docs (Mean=3,2). In addition, the lack of technology adaptation makes using features in Google Documents difficult.

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How to cite: Fatimah, I., Hapsari, C. S., & Effendi, M. S. (2023). Students' Perception Toward the Use of Google Documents for Online Collaborative Writing. *International Undergraduate Conference on English Education*, 2 (1), 1-8. <https://doi.org/10.12928/iucee2022.v2i1.12867>

1. Introduction

Indonesians' English proficiency is low, ranked 80th out of 112 countries in 2021. These results were obtained from the Education First English Proficiency Index EFEPI (2021) test data, followed by participants who took the EF Standard English Test (EF SET) worldwide. EF Education First (EF) was founded in Sweden in 1965 and focused on language, academic, cultural exchange, and educational travel programs. It is believed that a country's English Proficiency Index (EPI) is a strong reason for the education sector to care and immediately address this problem.

Hootsuite data shows Indonesians spend more than eight hours daily accessing the internet (Kemp, 2022). The data above shows that technology is essential to learning English, especially writing. According to Gepila Jr (2018), writing is the most difficult to teach and learn among the four macro skills. Writing is crucial because it allows people to share information through their compositions. In this case, Indonesian education can utilize technology as a digital learning medium in English writing classes. One of the media that can be developed to improve students' English writing skills is using the Google Docs platform for online collaborative writing.

Based on the observation, many students need help managing and conveying their ideas in writing and have limited time to communicate and collaborate. In addition, students need to be more aware of common spelling errors, such as incorrect conjunctions, punctuation, grammar, and capitalization. However, students were enthusiastic and motivated to use Google Docs for writing. Studies have demonstrated that collaborative writing using Google Docs positively impacts and engages students and instructors (Aldossary, 2022).

There are some previous studies about collaborative writing using Google Docs. One of the previous studies explored the perceptions of elementary-level French FL learners using a qualitative approach and several case studies. It found that collaborative multimodal writing through Google Docs motivates and engages students to write more, improves writing skills, encourages shared learning through peer assessment, and facilitates synchronous writing and revision via Google Docs.

Perceptions regarding the use of the Google Docs application in English learning and writing instruction have been the subject of this research. According to Kırkgöz (2018), perception combines knowledge and concepts from experience regarding a positive or negative subject. In addition, according to Ittelson (1973), there are four aspects of perception such as cognitive, affective, interpretive, and evaluative components.

Google Docs is an online word-processing platform for collaborative learning (Zhou et al., 2012). According to Chen (2018), collaborative writing is a technique used to improve second language learners' academic performance and motivation. Lowry et al. (2004) identified five online collaborative writing strategies: group single-author writing, single sequential writing, parallel writing, reactive writing, mixed-mode writing, and mixed-mode writing. In this study, the writing class adopted a collaborative writing strategy group single-author.

A benefit is an advantage that positively impacts the improvement of people as individuals or organizations (Hornby, 2015), while the term challenge refers to the cognitive, affective, psychomotor, and technological issues that have a negative impact on students' learning (Maboe, 2019). This study aims to describe the perception, benefits, and challenges of using Google Docs for online collaborative writing in English Education at Ahmad Dahlan University, Yogyakarta.

2. Method

This research used mixed methods research designs. The instruments to collect the data were questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. This research was conducted on third-semester students in class B and C writing professionally, majoring in English Education, Ahmad Dahlan University, Yogyakarta. The total number of participants was twenty-five students.

The questionnaire consists of twenty closed-ended questions exploring the participants' perceptions of using Google Docs in writing classes. The questionnaire uses indicators: 1)

perceptions, 2) benefits, and 3) challenges. A four-point Likert scale (strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree) was used to measure responses to all questionnaire items. The four-point Likert scale encouraged the respondents to complete the questionnaire and provide definite responses. The questionnaire consists of positive and negative responses. The average ranges for each scale are presented below:

Table 1. Mean Range of Perceptions Scale Scores

Score	Mean Range	Degree	Interpretation
4	4.00-3.00	Strongly Agree	Positive
3	2.99-2.00	Agree	
2	1.99-1.00	Disagree	Negative
1	1.00-0.99	Strongly Disagree	

The second instrument is the semi-structured interview. The interview protocol was adapted from Chansom (2019) and consisted of five questions asking participants' perceptions of collaborative writing, the benefits, and the challenges of using Google Docs. The participants of the interview are six out of twenty-five students. The interview was conducted online, the researcher sent the questions through WhatsApp, and the participants responded using the recording.

Calculating Score

The mean score is calculated using the formula as follows:

$$\bar{x} = \frac{\sum x}{n}$$

- \bar{x} : mean
- $\sum x$: sum of all scores
- n : total number of data

3. Findings

3.1. Students' Perception Toward The Use Of Google Documents For Online Collaborative Writing

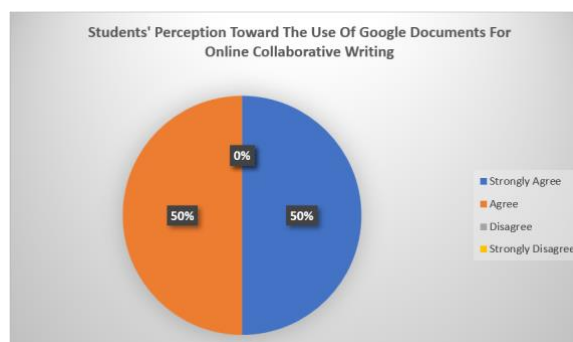


Figure 1. Students' perception toward the use of Google documents for online collaborative writing.

Figure 1 shows that most of the students have positive perceptions of using Google Docs in online collaborative writing with a percentage level of strongly agree (50%) and agree (50%). Almost all students strongly agree that online collaborative writing activities through Google Docs allow them to share ideas and comments easily with their friends (Mean= 3.36), which has the highest score. Next, many students strongly agree that they feel safe because the documents are saved automatically (Mean= 3.24). Collaborative writing online via Google Docs encourages their critical

thinking (Mean= 3.12). The students also enjoy being able to complete writing assignments with collaborative writing online via Google Docs (Mean= 3.08). Moreover, the students feel motivated to write when doing online collaborative writing (Mean= 3.00).

In addition, the students agree that completing writing tasks with collaborative activities through Google Docs is easier than writing individually (Mean= 2.92). The students also agree that collaborative writing online through Google Docs increases their confidence in better writing (Mean= 2.92). Furthermore, the students agree that feedback or comments from their friends through Google Docs are easy to understand (Mean= 2.92). The students prefer to practice writing independently rather than using Google Docs in online collaborative writing (Mean= 2.36). Finally, few students agree that online collaborative writing using Google Docs does not improve English writing skills (Mean= 2.04), a low average score.

3.2. The Benefit and Challenges of Using Google Documents for Online Collaborative Writing

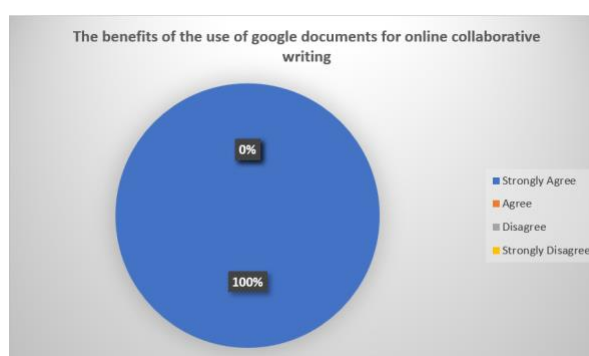


Figure 2. The benefits of the use of google documents for online collaborative writing.

Based on Figure 2, all the students have chosen the option of strongly agreeing (100%) about the benefit of using Google Documents for online collaborative writing. Almost all students strongly agree that using Google Docs in online collaborative writing helps them pay attention to proper punctuation, vocabulary, and sentence structure (Mean= 3.44), which has the highest score. Furthermore, many students strongly agree that they found Google Docs helpful for online collaborative writing projects (Mean= 3.28). In addition, the students agree that online collaborative writing via Google Docs helps them to get valuable comments or feedback on their writing (Mean= 3.16). Finally, the two results have the same score. First, students strongly agree that online collaborative writing helps them to improve their writing skills (Mean= 3.08). Second, students strongly agree that online collaborative writing activities through Google Docs promote the exchange of knowledge and ideas to provide better results (Mean= 3.08).

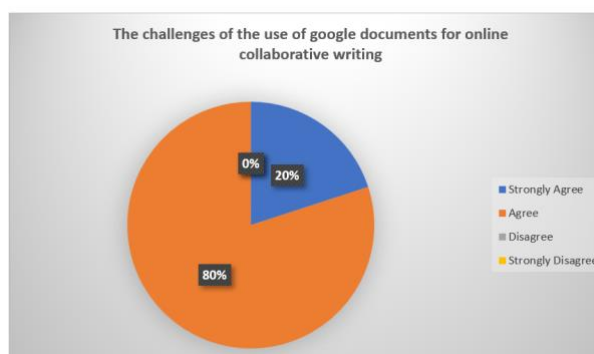


Figure 3. The challenges of the use of Google documents for online collaborative writing.

Based on Figure 3, the students strongly agree (20%) and agree (80%) about the challenge of using Google Docs in online collaborative writing, more students strongly agree that an unstable internet connection makes it difficult to do collaborative writing online via Google Docs (Mean= 3.20), the highest average score. Moreover, the two statements have the same score. Students agree that they are still confused about how to use Google Docs, and they find it difficult because the menu display in Google Docs differs from Microsoft Word (Mean= 2.56). In addition, the students agreed that they have trouble developing ideas that their friends give through feedback or comments on Google Documents (Mean= 2.40). Finally, the students agree that the features in Google Docs are incomplete (Mean= 2.32), the lowest average score.

4. Discussion

5.1. Students' Perceptions Toward The Use of Google Documents for Online Collaborative Writing

Based on the research results of the questionnaire, almost all students strongly agree that collaborative writing activities through Google Docs allow them to share ideas and comments easily with their friends (the highest average score). Students start to be familiar with dealing with and utilizing online applications, particularly in English learning (Soviyah, et al., 2023). These findings support Akoto (2021), who says collaborative writing through Google Documents encourages students to share knowledge or lessons through peer assessment. Furthermore, many students strongly agree that they feel safe because the documents they write are saved automatically. The statement received the second-highest average score.

In addition, collaborative writing online via Google Docs encourages their critical thinking. The students also enjoy being able to complete writing assignments with collaborative writing online via Google Docs. Moreover, the students feel motivated to write when doing online collaborative writing. Completing writing tasks with collaborative activities through Google Docs is easier than writing individually. This result is in line with the idea of Vega-Abarzúa et al. (2022) that Collaborative learning creates behavioral engagement that effectively helps students to achieve the teaching goal.

Furthermore, the students agree that collaborative writing online through Google Docs increases their confidence in better writing. Feedback or comments from their friends through Google Docs are easy to understand. On the other hand, some students prefer to practice writing independently rather than using Google Docs in online collaborative writing.

The result from the interview supported the result from the questionnaire. The students were excited and interested in using Google Docs for online collaborative writing. They think Google Docs is very easy to use and has beneficial features. One of the exciting features for students is the converted speech-to-text feature. This feature is beneficial for students who are lazy to write.

The following are statements given by student 6:

" The features in Google Docs are complete such as correcting grammar or other errors. If we are lazy to type, there is also a feature that makes it easier to say, like VN. It will be recorded and automatically typed. That's what makes me interested in using Google Docs."

Writing through Google Docs is new to them, but they can learn and work together to solve problems through online collaborative writing. Students can share their work with others, and they can find each other's mistakes in their writing. The statement supports Zhu (2012) who stated that during online collaborative writing, Students can discuss, argue, and negotiate meaning in an online environment Google Docs is very useful for students to practice writing. In addition, Google Docs makes it easier for them to complete various class assignments collaboratively.

5.2. The Benefits and Challenges of Using Google Documents for Online Collaborative Writing

Almost all students strongly agreed with the statement that using Google Docs in online collaborative writing helps them pay attention to proper punctuation, vocabulary, and sentence structure. This result supports Nixon & McClay's (2007) statement that collaborative writing helps students decide what to write and which structures to use in the text. In addition, many students strongly agreed that they found Google Docs helpful in the online collaborative writing project. Zhou et al. (2012) also found similar results in that most students found Google Docs a valuable tool for group work.

Next, two research results had similar scores. First, students strongly agreed with the statement that online collaborative writing helps them improve their writing skills. Second, students strongly agreed with the statement that online collaborative writing activities through Google Docs encourage the exchange of knowledge and ideas to provide a better result. In line with the result, Akoto (2021) has proven that collaborative writing through Google Docs improves writing skills, genre awareness, and semiotic awareness and encourages shared learning through peer assessment.

Based on the interview results, each student has their own opinion about the benefits of using Google Docs for online collaborative writing. Students mentioned that they can learn from each other, and lecturers can guide them to learn and practice collaborative writing online through Google Docs. In addition, students also mentioned that they could edit each other, correct grammar, and comment to improve their writing skills. Aldossary (2022) gives relevant ideas which propose collaborative writing through Google Docs to improve the interaction between students and teachers, and students' writing skill, and encourages discussion among the students.

Students also mentioned that online collaborative writing through Google Docs is essential and valuable because learning or work can be done anywhere online. These results match Jeong (2016) who stated that students can collaborate with other students and instructors in real-time to create and edit documents online.

The most challenging aspect of using Google Docs is the internet connection. Most students strongly agreed that an unstable internet connection makes it difficult to do online collaborative writing through Google Docs. Alharbi (2020) also gives an underline of the internet connection that has a significant role in students' online learning. Internet connection becomes a challenge for students in online activity (Hatmanto et al., 2023). Students agree that they are still confused about how to use Google Docs and find it difficult because the menu display in Google Docs differs from Microsoft Word.

In addition, the students agreed that they have trouble developing ideas that their friends give through feedback or comments on Google Documents. That statement is supported by the results of interviews about the challenges or difficulties students face while using Google Docs for online collaborative writing. One of the students found a challenge because of differences in thinking when doing collaborative writing, so students prioritized writing individually. This result is the same as Fernández Dobao & Blum (2013) in their study about collaborative writing that shows students prefer to write individually.

Following is the statement given by student 6:

"Difficulty using Google Docs when I get corrections, proofreading, or commenting on other people's writing. This is because sometimes there is a lot of vocabulary or grammar that I do not understand. I find it difficult when I want to comment on others because I am afraid of being wrong. I am a beginner and have only used Google Docs a few times for collaborative writing. Another difficulty is that I am still not used to using Google Docs."

In addition, one student mentioned that it was challenging to give corrections or feedback to other people due to their lack of mastery of English grammar and vocabulary. Finally, the students agree that the features in Google Docs are incomplete. Thus, the teacher's role still has an important role in managing the class effectively by creating interesting classroom activities (Suwartono & Oktavia, 2019)

5. Conclusion

Most students expressed positive perceptions in using Google Docs for online collaborative writing such as feeling secure because documents are automatically saved and encourage critical thinking. The students are enjoyable, interested, and motivated, using Google Docs for online collaborative writing. Moreover, the students strongly agree that Google Docs should be utilized in future courses due to technological advancements. The students who use Google Docs for online collaborative writing pay closer attention to punctuation, vocabulary, and sentence structure. In addition, students report that Google Docs is helpful for online collaborative writing assignments. In addition, Google Docs for collaborative writing activities facilitate the exchange of knowledge and ideas, resulting in superior final products. It can be concluded that Google Docs is very useful in improving students' writing skills. On the other hand, students face several challenges or obstacles when composing collaboratively online using Google Docs such as unstable internet connection, lack of technology adaption, and differences of mind. In addition, students struggle to provide corrections or feedback due to a lack of command over English grammar and vocabulary.

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