

Students' Perceptions of Using Google Docs in Collaborative English Writing

Sakina Simal* and Yuyun Yulia

Master of English Education Department, Faculty of Language, Arts, and Culture, Yogyakarta State University, Special Region of Yogyakarta 55281, Indonesia

ABSTRACT

This study explores how students perceive the use of Google Docs, their challenges, and their specific impact on their writing skills. 44 EFL students are participating. The data was obtained through surveys and interviews, which provided insights into students' experiences. Data was analyzed using thematic and percentage analysis. The result revealed that Google Docs is primarily used for group assignments, promoting real-time collaboration and allowing immediate feedback. Students reported improved writing skills, including better organization, primary usage, and increased grammatical accuracy. However, technical problems such as limited formatting options and unstable internet connection posed significant barriers. Addressing these issues through better technical support and training could optimize using Google Docs. This research suggests Google Docs has strong potential to support collaborative learning and enhance digital literacy in EFL contexts, making it a valuable tool in educational technology.

Keywords: Collaborative writing, Google Docs, student's perception

INTRODUCTION

Information and communication technologies (ICT) have become vital in education, particularly English language teaching, by offering innovative solutions to traditional challenges. One significant development is online collaborative tools that allow students to discuss, critique, and share knowledge (Gao et al., 2009). Google Docs, a cloud-based platform accessible from various devices, supports collaboration through features like synchronous and asynchronous editing (Mohammed & Al-Jaberi, 2021), commenting and autocorrect tools (spelling, punctuation, and grammar), and writing assistance (Zainal & Fan, 2024). While these tools enhance collaborative writing,

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received: 12 December 2024

Published: 28 March 2025

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47836/pp.1.2.021>

E-mail addresses:

sakinahsimal@gmail.com (Sakina Simal)

yuyunyulia@uny.ac.id (Yuyun Yulia)

* Corresponding author

challenges like unstable internet and synchronization issues require technical support and training.

Previous studies have shown that Google Docs promotes peer interaction, critical thinking, and self-confidence (Alharbi, 2019). However, research focusing on the experiences of Indonesian EFL students using Google Docs for collaborative English writing remains limited. This study fills this gap using a mixed-method design involving 44 EFL students from Indonesian universities, with data collected through surveys and semi-structured interviews. Surveys provided quantitative data, while interviews added depth and validated findings. Before using the instruments, the researcher conducted pilot testing to validate the instruments used.

The quantitative data was analyzed using percentage analysis and interviews through thematic analysis to identify key themes. Data integration highlighted patterns and differences, offering comprehensive insights. Clear instructions and a user-friendly survey platform addressed response bias and technical issues. Triangulation ensured the accuracy and reliability of results.

This research offers a fresh contribution by exploring the benefits of Google Docs and addressing practical challenges faced by students. It offers a localized perspective on ICT use in Indonesian EFL contexts.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

This study examines students' perceptions of using Google Docs in collaborative writing in English. Understanding students' perceptions can provide insights into future educational practices and guide improvements in digital tools to better support collaborative learning. By addressing the limitations faced by students, such as technical issues and learning curve challenges, educators and policymakers can optimize the use of Google Docs and similar technologies in the classroom environment.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Students' Collaborative Writing Activities Using Google Docs

Based on data, 84.4% of respondents indicated that students use Google Docs primarily for group assignments. The platform supports teamwork in an academic setting, allowing students to work together in real time, share ideas, and provide feedback. Google Docs is used more often for structured group assignments than individual activities, indicating that its collaborative features are highly valued. In addition, using Google Docs supports interactions between students and between students and lecturers, which aligns with the theory of social constructivism (Vygotsky, 1978). It shows how technology acts as a mediator in interactions, increasing student engagement in collaborative writing projects.

Experiences Technical Problems

Based on the data, the most common obstacle was an unstable internet connection, reported by 51.1% of respondents. This issue disrupted access to documents and hindered real-time collaboration. In addition, students also experienced difficulties in managing document access and confusion with more complex formatting options. The participant stated, “the features in Google Docs are still a bit confusing, especially when editing the writing format.” These shortcomings indicate better user support and more adequate instructional design.

The Impact of Google Docs on Writing

Google Docs positively impacts students’ writing skills, particularly in improving organization and collaboration. The data shows that 55.6% of respondents reported moderate improvement in their writing skills, with 22.2% strongly agreeing and 55.6% agreeing that their English writing skills have improved. Additionally, 33.3% strongly agreed, and 40% agreed that Google Docs helped them organize their ideas more effectively. The tool also facilitated collaboration on writing assignments, with 60% strongly agreeing and 40% agreeing that the tool made teamwork easier. Additionally, 26.7% strongly agreed, and 60% agreed that Google Docs effectively obtained feedback.

Google Docs’ integration with tools such as Grammarly and Google Classroom creates a comprehensive environment for developing writing skills. Participants noted that the Grammarly integration improved the quality of writing, while the cloud storage ensured accessibility across devices.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that Google Docs in collaborative English writing positively impacts students, particularly in group assignments and joint academic activities, with most respondents reporting improved writing skills. Its real-time collaboration, commenting features, and live revisions foster an interactive learning environment. However, challenges like unstable internet connections and limited text formatting exist compared to other applications like Microsoft Word. To enhance its functionality, developers must strengthen the offline mode and introduce advanced formatting tools. Despite these technical issues, Google Docs remains an effective tool for improving students’ writing skills, facilitating timely feedback from lecturers, supporting academic collaboration, and fostering the development of 21st-century skills.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The researcher expresses gratitude to the participants who contributed to this study.

REFERENCES

- Alharbi, M. A. (2019). Exploring the potential of Google Doc in facilitating innovative teaching and learning practices in an EFL writing course. *Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching, 14*(3), 227-242. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17501229.2019.1572157>
- Gao, F., Wang, C., & Sun, Y. (2009). A new model of productive online discussion and its implication for research and discussion. *Journal of Educational Technology Development and Exchange, 2*(1), 65-78. <https://doi.org/10.18785/jetde.0201.05>
- Mohammed, M. A. S., & Al-Jaberi, M. A. (2021) Google Docs or Microsoft Word? Master's students' engagement instruction written feedback on academic writing in a cross-cultural setting. *Computers and Composition, 62*, Article 102672. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compcom.2021.102672>
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes*. Harvard University Press.
- Zainal, A. Z., & Fan, M. F. (2022). ESL learners' processes and perceptions of using Google Docs in collaborative academic writing. *International Journal of Computer-Assisted Language Learning and Teaching, 12*(4), 1-12. <https://doi.org/10.4018/IJCALLT.310077>