

Collaborative Writing Using Google Docs in an EFL Classroom: Voices from High School Students

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Abstract

The employment of technology in the teaching and learning process is unavoidable in the digital age. One of the online media utilized in English classes is Google Docs. However, there has been minimal discussion on the use of Google Docs for collaborative writing, particularly in high school EFL classes. As a result, the purpose of this study is to find out what EFL students think about utilizing Google Docs for collaborative writing in an English class at a senior high school. The researchers performed a qualitative case study to solve the problem. The information was gathered through an interview with kids from one of Sidoarjo's private schools in East Java, Indonesia. To support the main, classroom observations and the analysis of students' documents in the form of a portfolio were used to triangulate the data. After that, the data were subjected to thematic analysis. The study uncovered two key topics that addressed the advantages and drawbacks of utilizing Google Docs for collaborative writing. Students' enthusiasm, digital literacy, social skills, and writing skills improved when they used Google Docs for collaborative writing. Students, on the other hand, experienced some difficulties in terms of internet connection, the availability of accompanying gadgets, and their own abilities. The findings of the study could have practical implications in English classes.

Keywords: Google Docs, collaborative writing, English classroom, suburban high school

INTRODUCTION

Writing is one of the English talents that allow you to express yourself in a readable manner. Writing, according to Ariyanti (2016), is an important element of language abilities since it allows pupils to improve other language skills. There are two techniques to teaching writing: the process approach and the product approach. According to Graves (as cited in Zhou, 2015), the process writing approach focuses on the students' writing process rather than the finished output. The product approach has been connected in traditional teaching writing in which compositions are examined as completed products and writing skills are evaluated, according to Porto, as cited in Zhou (2015).

In the English classroom, a process writing technique has been introduced. Students went through numerous stages in the teaching and learning process, including prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and evaluation (Ngubane, Ntombela, & Govender, 2020). During the teaching and learning of writing, however, various problems were met, including several requirements that teachers should prepare for effective classroom instruction (Ariyanti, 2016). Furthermore, the teacher should provide resources and review students' writing to ensure that they comprehend the information presented.

Beetham and Sharpe (as cited in 21st century learning is a platform that attempts to provide students with specific competencies. To meet the difficulties of the twenty-first century, several abilities are required. It emphasizes not only cognitive ability, but also personal and social abilities. Critical thinking, creativity, cooperation, and communication are the four Cs. According to Yu et al. (2019), the 4C aspects of 21st-century learning play an important role in students' learning. The first goal of 4C is to encourage pupils to think critically and solve problems. Of course, in order for pupils to train themselves to analyze

and evaluate the information they receive, they must have a critical mindset. Second, the ability to think outside the box is referred to as creativity. Those with a high level of creativity may think about and see a problem from a variety of angles. Third, cooperation refers to actions in which people work together in a group to attain a common goal. Finally, communication refers to the ability to express information, ideas, and opinions in a timely, clear, and effective manner. That is to say, one part of 21st-century learning that is stressed is collaborative writing.

Several media, including Google Docs, can be used in the context of collaborative writing in the EFL classroom. According to Widyastanti (2019), Google Docs is an online digital application that aids teachers in collaborative writing by providing powerful features that help students improve collaborative writing skills. There have been a number of researches on collaborative writing. She also claimed that collaborative writing improves social skills. Students were aware of engaging and cooperating with other students in constructing their projects, according to Metilia and Fitrawati (2018). Furthermore, students were able to discuss their ideas with their peers. In addition, Wigglesworth and Storch (as cited in Abrams, 2019) described how collaborative writing could help to generate and strengthen shared knowledge. As a result, collaborative writing improved students' social and cognitive skills by allowing them to share ideas and enhance their writing with others. Although there have been various researches looking into the possibilities of collaborative writing using Google Docs, to date, the study of collaborative writing with Google Docs in a high school EFL classroom has remained unexplored. As a result, the purpose of this study is to look at the opinions of students who use Google Docs for collaborative writing in an English classroom in a senior high school. This research is expected to provide useful information and experiences about the use of online tools in an EFL classroom, as well as the factors to consider when choosing an educational application.

METHOD

Research Design

To solve the research topic, a qualitative case study was performed. Because this study aims to gather real and contextual knowledge in a specific issue, this design is acceptable. Qualitative research is a type of research that looks at the quality of activities, materials, or circumstances, as well as their relationships (Ainuningsih, 2018). In addition, Denzin and Lincoln (as cited in Ainuningsih, 2018) noted that this method entails the use of qualitative data, such as interviews, documents, and observations, to describe and understand a social phenomenon. As a result, this qualitative method is a good fit for this research.

Subject and Site of the Research

The study took place in the academic year 2020-2021 at a suburban senior high school in Sidoarjo, East Java, Indonesia, with students in grade 10. Aside from the ease of gathering data, the research topic was chosen since the researchers are familiar with the

school and its students. The researchers pretended to be professors at a prestigious institution. The pupils that took part in the study were discovered to be unfamiliar with Google Docs. As a result, the researchers developed and implemented an application to teach collaborative English writing.

Data and Source of Data

The information was qualitative, and it came in the form of interview transcriptions, field notes, and certain documents, such as a portfolio or a student worksheet. The information was gathered from students' interviews, observations, and papers. A total of 12 students participated in the study's interview.

Data Collection Techniques

The data was collected using a variety of methods. To begin, the researchers created a lesson plan, teaching materials, and media. Instruments for the investigation were designed at the same time. According to the lesson design, the researcher taught the students English writing with the topic of recount text using Google Docs. Using field notes, the researcher observed throughout teaching sessions. After instructing, the researchers evaluated the students' writing and provided feedback to them both in person and via WhatsApp. Interviews were conducted by the researchers. The interview was conducted in Indonesian with 12 participants and then transcribed into English. In addition, a review of documents in the form of student portfolios was conducted to supplement the primary data.

Data Analysis

The data was then evaluated using theme analysis once it was collected. Thematic analysis is thought to be the best method for any study that involves interpretation (Alhojailan & Ibrahim, 2012). It adds a methodical element to data analysis. This enables the researchers to link a frequency analysis theme to a section of the content. There are numerous techniques to conducting thematic analysis, according to Braun et al. (2019). To begin, the researchers familiarized themselves with the recorded interview results by listening to them frequently and then transcribing them into written form. The researchers then created a list of beginning ideas from the data, as well as some coding points. The next step was to come up with ideas for themes. Researchers grouped the different codes into probable themes and collected all additional coded data that was related to the chosen theme once the data had been coded and collated. Themes were then reviewed to ensure that they were appropriate for representing the data. The next step is to define and name the topics. The theme was defined and identified by the researcher. The researchers completed the final analysis and report writing by writing up their findings.

RESULTS

This study aims to find out how students feel about using Google Docs for collaborative writing in an EFL high school classroom. Two primary themes and eight minor themes emerged from the data analysis. The first major theme is the advantages of

using Google Docs for collaborative writing. The pupils' struggle with collaborative writing utilizing Google Docs is the second major issue. Promoting students' motivation, familiarity with utilizing the media, expanding students' digital literacy and awareness, improving students' social skills, and improving students' language writing skills are all subtopics related to the first main subject. Students' availability in accessing the Internet, students' skill gap in using technology, and inadequate qualification of the supporting device are all sub topics related to the second main subject.

Benefits of Collaborative Writing Using Google Docs

From the data, collaborative writing using Google Docs brings several benefits for the students as follows:

Promoting Students' Motivation

The usage of collaborative writing medium in senior high school English classes, such as Google Docs, increased students' motivation to learn to write. The kids' statement reflects this: "Hmm Google Docs sangat membantu untuk pelajaran." (Hmm, Google Docs comes in handy for this course) [S2]. Furthermore, a student claimed that Google Docs was quite useful for their class instruction. Furthermore, the files were automatically stored as the pupils typed their information.

"Saya tertarik dengan media ini, karena ini seperti Microsoft Word" (I'm interested in this media since it's similar to Microsoft Word), said one student [S7]. This is to suggest that she was drawn to the medium since it and the characteristics of Google Docs were similar to those of Microsoft Word. The researchers saw a positive atmosphere in the classroom based on their observations during instruction. The students were excited about their studies. There were no absent students in the other meeting, and the students were intrigued and eager to continue the lecture.

Students' Familiarity in Using the Media

Using their gadgets made it easier for students to study. Students were able to operate the medium despite not being instructed how to do so. As a result, the teacher attempted to employ media in the classroom to help the kids learn English. "Menurutku iya, karena ini pertama kalinya untuk saya belajar menulis tanpa kertas dan saya menikmati kelas ini," a student explained. (I believe so because this was my first experience with paperless writing, and I enjoyed this session.) [S11]. This comment stressed how impressed the students were in their Google Docs writing lesson. Google Docs had a function that was explained by a student: "Ssss... Iya, Google Docs dapat membantu kami untuk menyelesaikan teks recount." (SSsssssss.... Yes, Google Docs can help us to finish recount text.) [S5]. This media helped students to finish the text because this media was very accessible.

Furthermore, another Google Docs response is as follows: "Hmm iya benar, media ini sangat mudah digunakan and mereka memiliki banyak fitur-fitur yang bagus." (Hmm, yes.) This medium is incredibly user-friendly and has a lot of useful features.) [S10]. It has a lot of wonderful features that made it easier for students to write well. Students included a photo,

a table, a page, and a variety of writing styles in their recount narrative. It also made it easier to double-check spelling and grammar. There was also a function that allowed you to alter your friends' text.

Enhancing Students' Digital Literacy and Awareness

The researchers questioned the students about their use of Google Docs based on their prior experience with the tool. "I've heard of Google Docs before," a student said. This is a piece of content from the Google Docs app." (I'm familiar with Google Docs.) It's a Google application media in the form of a document) [S11]. This response indicates that the learner was already familiar with the medium and knew how to use it before being trained.

In addition, "Emmmm ini adalah medium pembelajaran yang bagus di kelas, sejauh ini kami belajar menulis hanya melalui buku," said another student in reaction to the use of Google Docs for collaborative writing. Today, we have the opportunity to collaborate with new media." (Emmmm It's a good learning medium to utilize in class; previously, we had only learned to write using a book.) With the use of a new medium, we can now collaborate in the classroom.) [S10]. Teachers frequently use books in class when teaching English, although Google Docs is rarely used. In this scenario, the media helped students shift from a manual to a digital learning style or experience.

"Awalnya, saya benar-benar bingung dengan media ini dan bagaimana menggunakannya, maka saya mencoba mempelajarinya dan akhirnya mulai mengerti," said one pupil. (At first, I was perplexed by this medium and how to use it; nonetheless, I strived to learn it and eventually came to comprehend it.) [S4]. As can be seen from this reaction, some students knew about this medium and those who did not. One of the pupils said that he had no prior knowledge of Google Docs or how to use it. Because he was intrigued by this medium, he attempted to learn it and eventually comprehended it. Through the learning using digital media in the class, it enhanced students' ability in using technology.

Students' Social Skills Improvement

Students mentioned that one of the advantages of collaborative writing with Google Docs is that it improves social skills. "Ya benar," a pupil said. Google Docs has the ability to improve our social media presence both offline and online." (Indeed, it does.) Offline and online, Google Docs can help us develop our social abilities.) [S10]. A student explained another response to the use of this media: "Yups, saya merasakannya." When menulis teks report saya dan teman-teman berbagi pendapat dan kerja sama, teks akan menyelesaikan secara aman." (Yup, I'm feeling it.) When composing the recount narrative, my buddies and I discussed our ideas and collaborated to get the text written quickly.) [S5]

Both statements demonstrated students' social skills during the class's learning process of writing recount narratives using Google Docs. It was carried out both online and offline. Google Docs made it easier for pupils to complete their assignments. Students began to write the text with their groups based on observations and explanations from the professors. They collaborated and shared their thoughts, according to the researchers.

Increasing Students' Language Writing Skills

Another advantage of using Google Docs for collaborative writing is that it improves students' language writing skills. Google Docs includes a lot of useful features that might help students enhance their writing skills. "Yups, media ini memiliki pemeriksa ejaan dan tata bahasa, jika ada kesalahan pada teks saya," a student said. "Hmm, I'll look at it." (Yups. If there is a mistake in my content, this medium features a spelling and grammatical checker. Hmm, I'll figure it out.) [S10]. According to the student's account, Google Docs did have a spelling and grammar checker. This feature's purpose was to check for misspelled words and incorrect grammar. . Students could utilize the spelling and grammar checker to check for problems in their writing, such as improper spelling, inappropriate grammar usage, correcting capitalized words, and punctuation.

Furthermore, students benefited when composing recall texts. "Ya," said one of the students. Because of this, I am able to improve my ability to write in English. Saya menemukan kosakata baru dan menerjemahkannya dalam proses menulisnya." (I did it.) Because I was able to improve my writing skills in English. I discovered new vocabulary while writing and then translated it.) [S3]. Many pupils learned new terminology while writing the recount text. They learned new words. The terminology was then documented and translated.

"Iya, kami dapat mengetahuinya dengan melihat fitur komentar," a student said. In this case, we are more likely to notice who is offering advice or protection." (Yes. By glancing at the comments section, we can learn more. We can see who made suggestions or made improvements there.) [S7]. In addition, Google Docs offered a comment option that allowed students to correct and suggest changes to their classmates' work. Students were able to give each other feedback and edit each other's drafts at the same time. Many pupils commented and corrected their friend's writing based on their worksheets. They improved the grammar by correcting the recount text's structure and capital letters.

The data gathered from the students' documents in the form of a writing portfolio aided in the enhancement of the students' writing skills. The data revealed that the writing's language elements, such as syntax and vocabulary, were appropriately written. This is possible since the Google Docs application has a grammar and spelling checker.

Students' Challenges Toward Collaborative Writing Using Google Docs

Aside from the advantages of using Google Docs for collaboration, there were some drawbacks of utilizing Google Docs for collaboration. They were demonstrated using the following extract:

Students' Availability in Accessing Internet

There were drawbacks to adopting Google Docs to introduce collaborative writing in the classroom. "Kekurangannya ya media ini ummm membutuhkan internet," a student said. (The disadvantage of this medium is that it necessitates the use of the internet.) [S11]. [S12] Another student added, "Tantangannya adalah sinyal buruk" (The challenge is a terrible

signal). Both of the previous comments stressed that one of Google Docs' drawbacks was that it required an internet connection to utilize. As a result, they had to connect to the internet before using it. According to the findings, when students wished to practice using Google Docs, some of them were unable to do so since their internet signal was poor.

Students' Competency Gap in Using Technology

Every student had various capacities; some found it easy to assimilate the content, while others found it difficult. Students had some issues producing recount narratives using Google Docs from interview data, according to the researcher. "Saya masih bingung untuk menulis tema teks yang saya dapatkan," a student said [S12]. "Saya masih bingung untuk menulis theme teks yang saya dapatkan." This comment indicated that the student was still perplexed by the theme.

Furthermore, they were unsure how to use the medium. The expression "Kami lemah dalam kosakata untuk menulis teks recount" was used to represent it. "Kedua, kita bingung membagi file dan menyisipkan gambar." (In order to compose a good text, we need to improve our vocabulary.) Second, we were unsure how to add a photo and share a file.) [S8]. A student stated another response to the use of this medium: "Saya masih bingung menggunakannya." Because of this, I was tutored by a colleague and asked a question of Anda." (I'm still unsure how to use it.) As a result, I seek the assistance of a friend and turn to you.) [S10]. Students were still perplexed about how to utilize Google Docs, such as inserting pictures and exchanging files, despite their lack of vocabulary. Furthermore, several students asked questions about things they didn't grasp when the researchers were teaching them, based on observations. However, the researchers noted that some students had difficulty changing the language based on some of their workbooks.

Low Qualification of the Supporting Device

Students utilized a phone or laptop to learn with Google Docs. "Kami harus menginstal atau mengunduh Google Docs dahulu," a student stated. (First, we'll need to install or download Google Docs)[S9]. Because they did not have access to a laptop, several students had to first download Google Docs to their phones . Many pupils did not need to install this media because they just opened the Google web browser, clicked the Google application, and chose Google Docs. Furthermore, the researcher highlighted certain students' issues after they installed the app based on their observations. Their phone, for example, was not supported and was overflowing with RAM.

DISCUSSION

The previous section has provided the results of the study using thematic analyse. The discussion of the findings is as follows:

Because it had good features and was easy to access, the usage of digital media for writing in class can make it easier for students to learn. It does, however, have a number of drawbacks. It has something to do with Ivi's research Ivić (2019). According to him, digital media has a unique set of characteristics that, despite their many advantages, pose

significant hazards to brain organization and function, as well as the learning process. Google Docs is a collaborative platform that can aid students in their English writing learning. It was explained by Alsubaie and Ashuraidah (2017). They claimed that Google Docs allowed them to have significant pair interactions that were not possible with traditional writing. It was really simple to use and extremely beneficial for the lesson, not just for English but also for other subjects. This medium consisted of documents with features similar to those found in Microsoft Word. The students were all over it. They were intrigued by the lesson and were wondering about it.

Many students preferred to use their phones for activities such as talking, playing games, shopping online, and so on. They were able to operate it despite not having been trained how to do so. It was related to the study by Onye and Du (2016). They contended that children born from the 1980s onwards are referred to as "digital natives," while those born before are referred to as "digital immigrants." As a result, teachers turned to e-learning to provide students with another technique of effortlessly absorbing information Khan (2019) has previously stated that this result was in keeping with his stance. He claims that e-Learning is an effective and convenient method of teaching English.

Because students were studying at home during the epidemic, teachers had to rely on online tools like Google Classroom, Zoom, and Google Meet, as well as Google Docs. This diagram depicts the transition from printed books to digital media. This circumstance would encourage pupils to become more digitally literate. From here, Anisimova (2020) went on to say that teachers' digital literacy is a necessary requirement for the successful and capable integration of information technology in the classroom. According to Kalash (cited in Anisimova, 2020), digital literacy refers to the knowledge, skills, and understanding needed to use digital technology properly, safely, and effectively.

Google Docs was commonly used to facilitate collaborative writing in recount text. Collaboration, according to Ingleton et al (as cited in Vens, 2010), helps students complete their activities and assignments. According to Metilia and Fitrawati (2018), students were able to communicate and write with their friends while using Google Docs for collaborative writing, which improved their writing abilities. In addition, Ainuningsih (2018) assumed that in collaboration class, students shared ideas or opinions with their group. Furthermore, according to Alsubaie and Ashuraidah (2017, P.13), was an effective tool for creating an online learning environment. Meanwhile, Google Docs offered a number of useful features, one of which improved the quality of students' text. Widyastanti (2019), claims that Google Docs made it easier for students to access, edit, and share materials. This medium also allowed students to discuss ideas, provide feedback, and make suggestions to one another. Moreover, Metilia and Fitrawati (2018) Furthermore, Google Docs, according to Alsubaie and Ashuraidah (2017, P.13), was an effective tool for creating an online learning environment. Meanwhile, Google Docs offered a number of useful features, one of which improved the quality of students' text. Widyastanti (2019) claims that Google Docs made it easier for students to access, edit, and share materials. This medium also allowed

students to discuss ideas, provide feedback, and make suggestions to one another. Furthermore, Metilia and Fitrawati (2018) noted that Google Docs, a Google tool available to all users, may be utilized for collaborative writing, in which all students in a class can participate in the creation of a good piece of writing.

The researcher discovered barriers to collaborative writing utilizing Google Docs during the classroom learning process. Despite the fact that Google Docs is a free service, it requires an internet connection to use. Students can't open or type text in Google Docs if they do not have access to the internet. It was linked to a research by which said that the system's application success is contingent on the availability of a good internet connection. During practice, students experienced a number of difficulties.

The study was dominated by problems linked to the students' proficiency. Several students were said to have a limited understanding of technology. However, because they are familiar with specific applications such as social media, the majority of the students were called digital natives who understand how to use technology. This is a new sort of knowledge, according to Lankshear and Knobel (as cited in Chan, et al 2017). It is associated to "digitally saturated social practices often utilising mainly communication modalities" such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube.

Google Docs can also be accessed from any device, including a phone, laptop, tablet, or PC. Many students did not have access to a PC when practicing Google Docs, so they relied on their phones. According to Terras and Ramsay (2016), Work, education, family and social interactions, and ways of communication can all be used with a phone. Furthermore, in order to utilize Google Docs on a phone, students had to first install or download the application. Some students were unable to install the media because their phones would not support it or because their memory was full.

CONCLUSION

From the perspective of high school students, this study identified the use of Google Docs for collaborative writing. The findings indicated two themes: the benefits of collaborative writing with Google Docs and the problems students face while using Google Docs for collaborative writing. Students' motivation was increased, their familiarity with Google Docs was increased, their digital literacy and awareness was enhanced, their social skills were improved, and their language writing skills were improved as a result of the collaborative use of Google Docs. Some pupils said they were having trouble utilizing Google Docs. Google Docs, on the other hand, was extremely beneficial to pupils in terms of improving their writing skills as well as promoting digital literacy. Teachers are strongly encouraged to use Google Docs in their EFL classrooms, not only for recount text, but also for other resources. The research has pedagogical consequences, such as raising awareness of the necessity of using online tools to improve teaching and learning practices and assessing the relevance of the chosen learning tools for the students and the materials provided.

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