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Exploring EFL Students' Perspectives Towards Google Docs in Writing

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Abstract

During an online learning environment, students organize and develop their ideas in writing using Google Docs, and they hold their online consultation through the comment section. The research aims to explore students' perspectives towards Google Docs in writing classes. A survey method using a quantitative approach was employed to collect data for this research. The researcher composed a questionnaire consisting of 17 questions and an interview as the instrument of this research to explore EFL students' perspectives regarding Google Docs and distributed it to 24 students in a Seminar on ELT D of the English Language Education Program at Universitas Brawijaya. After processing the findings of the questionnaire using SPSS ver. 25.0, the researcher found that the students of the Seminar on ELT D project had a positive perspective towards Google Docs in writing class. As an alternate writing tool in online learning, Google Docs can be useful to students. However, students prefer using face-to-face for consultation or employing synchronous learning, such as video conferencing, to assist students in better grasping how to develop and arrange their thoughts.

Keywords: EFL Students' Perspectives; Google Docs; Writing Comprehension; Online Learning

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Introduction

As a highly valued language and a symbol of modernity, the Indonesian government encourages its younger generation to be capable of speaking, reading, and writing in English, as these are considered the prerequisite skills an individual must have in the area of globalization (Sneddon, 2003). Composing and delivering English ideas become necessary if one wants to pursue further education or do job hunting. While other skills have their own characteristics, writing is deemed to be the most strenuous skill for second and foreign language learners (Richard and Renandya, 2002). Harmer (2004, p. 12) defines the writing process as "what humans do when they organize a written form." In other words, writing entails lexical knowledge, coherent devices, syntactic structures, and a language construction process, where thoughts are formed and organized into a comprehensible discourse (Richard and Renandya, 2002). In the case of foreign language learning, writing in English can be a challenge as learners need to be capable of translating their ideas, which may be first composed in their own mother tongue, into the target language (TL). Henceforth, EFL students have substantial challenges in word usage and grammar. Furthermore, particular features of students' writing were revealed, such as paragraph structure, misspelling, and diction (Ariyanti and Fitriana, 2017). Many previous studies have taken great interest in observing these difficulties, which they also offer several efforts and methods to maintain and develop learners' writing ability, particularly in English (Metilia and Fitrawari, 2018; Hairudin, 2020; and Nabhan and Sa'diyah, 2021). Siahaan (2013) attempted to study the difficulties that students have while writing a narrative and descriptive text. She ascertained that, as an outcome, the students' grammatical errors made it difficult for them to write paragraphs. In addition to grammatical errors, students were unsuccessful in distinguishing the conceptual structure of the descriptive text, especially as designated by information connected to the description in the identification section.

In addition to that, Ismiyanti and Kholiq (2020) explained the following as some of the "challenges" students face when writing descriptive essays: 1) Issues with generic structure, indicating that students are still unable to write a descriptive essay with a proper general framework. 2) Grammatical errors. It indicates that the pupil is unable to correctly arrange words and simple-present tense phrases. 3) The issues with spelling. It means that the students are unable to write the correct English words. They also mentioned the aspects that contributed to the learners' challenges in write a descriptive text: 1) a lack of text creation skills, indicating that the students are illiterate in grammar and do not know how to properly arrange

words and sentences. 2) Inadequate knowledge of the text's subject matter to be written.

According to Byrne (1995, as cited in Alisha et al., 2019), elicits three aspects that influence the process of writing: (1) the psychology problem: teachers should be prepared to let their students write on their own without interaction or feedback, which makes the act of writing difficult; (2) the linguistics problem: the teachers need to maintain communication throughout their own effort and ensure that the text they write or produce can be interpreted in their own language, both in terms of the structure and the order in which the sentences are sequenced and connected together. (3) As a cognitive issue, teachers must comprehend the written form of the language and grasp certain structural elements required for effective written communication.

Ceylan (2019) further explains that students face a lot of difficulties when writing in another language. She found out that students lacked an adequate general understanding of the topics suggested and received insufficient writing instruction in class. Students lack sufficient general understanding of the topics suggested and basic writing methods such as pre-writing, drafting, revising, and goal-setting. According to Ceylan (2019), this then assumes that students need to be taught writing strategies; teachers or writing instructors should teach students how to begin writing in order to avoid the stressful writing process. Furthermore, students thought that language-related aspects of academic writing were more challenging than structural or content-related aspects. Students encountered challenges in structuring ideas and arguments, employing appropriate writing styles, and expressing thoughts properly in English.

Many writing strategies have been suggested by experts to overcome the difficulties faced by students, other than those recommended by Ceylan (2019), such as teachers providing students with basic knowledge on the structure of a paragraph or an essay, presenting show samples, making students write, and provide comments on what they write. Bailey (2019) and Chen (2022) stated there are three strategy categories as a metacognitive strategy to assist students in comprehending how they learn or think about their ideas in the planning process; cognitive strategy is intentionally used to regulate one's thoughts and content in order to accomplish aims or solve problems, and corrective feedback strategy in revising the process. However, to cope with the increasing demand for online learning, teachers are

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allowed to create new instructional approaches. The use of technology as a learning media may make the learning process more enjoyable. Teachers and students have begun to take advantage of the use of online writing applications, such as Blogs and WiKi (Jeong, 2016), Google Docs (Nabhan and Sa'diyah, 2021; Hairudin, 2020), and LMS (Indriani and Widiastuti, 2021). In the context of writing online learning in the EFL classroom, several media – Google Docs, Blogs, WiKi, LMS – can be utilized. Among many tools, Google Docs is one of learning media that aids in the implementation of the learner-centered approach in a learning environment. Google Docs is an accessible technology-enhanced teaching tool and easy to use (Abrams, 2019). Through Google Docs, not only students but teachers can access students' writing pieces simultaneously. Anyone with a Google Docs link and access can share, edit, interact and collaborate together.

Since Google Docs is maintained online, students may access it from any device with an Internet connection, whether at school or at home, and students need to create a Google Mail account to have permission to use Google Docs. This application provides conventional editing tools and supports, in real-time, activities involving collaborative writing between teachers and students or students and students. It enables students to create, revise, save, and share their writing online. Thus, Google Docs has a variety of useful features, such as the ability for multiple authors to access and edit a document at the same time; a uniquely colored mark will appear if each author accesses and edits the documents together, and it will be a sign for each author; and even if the authors do have complex editing, for example, cutting, copying, and pasting. Also, Google Docs can automatically rectify the chosen text with comments, possibly clarifying the decisions that go into editing or questioning another author's work. To insert comments, the teachers just highlight some words in the students' work, and the remark will show up on the page's right side. Then, when students tap into any remarks, the highlighted words in their work will change color, allowing them to immediately identify the recommended suggestion from the teacher. The comments can be checked and removed until the students marked them as settled. Every comment is preserved in a separate folder in Google Docs for later perusal and may still be accessed, so students can take a look back again; a chat window is also provided for real-time problem solving; a comprehensive revision history is kept, and previous version versions may be readily reverted to. Google Docs is simple and quick to use, making it ideal for organizing digital collaborative writing workshops such as peer proofreading, cooperative clustering, and small group fine-tuned writing teaching. Because of its unique function, Google Docs is a great piece of software that may encourage collaborative writing activities in the teaching process. Students may access materials at any moment by sharing them and preserving them online.

According to the findings of Nabhan and Sa'diyah's (2021) and Hairudin's (2020) studies, students are enthusiastic in the usage of Google Docs in collaborative writing activities because collaborative writing by using Google Docs allows learners to determine their own and their peers' language use to create meaning. They experienced no issues in using Google Docs for collaborative writing assignments; they only encountered technical issues due to limited internet connectivity. Therefore, collaborative writing allows learners to increase their lexical and grammatical accuracy, resulting in more precise writing and language learning (Storch, 2011; Talib and Cheung, 2017). Afdaliah et al.'s (2019) study discovery was substantiated by Cottrell (2012); she asserted that employing a technology, such as Google docs, may be a far more efficient approach for learners to support one another in the peer review process, and successfully exchange writing thoughts with one another. Moreover, Sudrajat and Purnawarman (2019) explained that the learners respond positively to Google Docs used in translation classes. It is because Google Docs is a feasible medium that might be utilized in the classroom.

The previous studies presented have discovered and shown that Google Docs increases learning outcomes for students. Collaborative writing activities using Google Docs help students improve and enhance their acquisition of skills and knowledge. In order to explore further students' perspectives regarding Google Docs, this research was conducted to exploring students' perspectives towards Google Docs in writing class activities, which is conducted through their individual project writing and the consultation process through the comment section only.

Method

This research employs a quantitative research design in order to answer the stated question. The quantitative approach is utilized to research the research participants by collecting numerical data with statistical tools and then presenting the results numerically and descriptively (Creswell, 2012, p. 13). This research design is used because this research wants to observe students' perspectives towards Google Docs in writing English in the online learning era. Quantitative research design, particularly when the questionnaire is used as a tool for collecting data, is a

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sought-after research design suitable for the research of perspective.

The participants in this research are the 24 students of the Seminar on ELT Class D Academic Year 2017 of the English Language Education Program at Universitas Brawijaya. Slightly, there were 13 female and 11 male participants who participated in this research. The English Language Education Program divides the Seminar on ELT class into five parallel classes with 24 to 25 students in each class, where each lecturer in this course determines which learning media to use in their class. Students are expected to conduct their own research library as the individual writing project in the course. The lecturer of Seminar on ELT Class D is using Google Docs to assist students with their individual writing projects in classroom activities.

This research used a questionnaire with a 5-point Likert Scale as the representation of their personal choice based on the given question and an interview to gain more students' perspectives in the use of Google Docs. The questionnaire contained 17 items with a choice of five rating scale responses: strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), neutral (3), agree (4), and strongly agree (5); the researcher used a questionnaire adopted from Zheng et al. (2015). The original questionnaire has 17 questions, and there are some statements inside the questions. In this research, the researcher adapted the questionnaire by adding five statements about contrasting writing using Google Docs to manual writing by hand; four statements about comparing the use of Google Docs with word processor tools and manual writing by hand in writing comprehension; and eight statements about creating a new questionnaire from this questionnaire. The researcher was required to edit and add certain statements to make the questionnaire more suited for exploring students' perspectives towards Google Docs in writing because the original questionnaire was fascinated by learners' perspective of feedback on their writing regarding Google Docs.

Table 1. Questionnaire Blueprint

No.	Evaluation Aspects	Indicators	Item Numbers
1.	Contrasting the Use	Using google docs helps students stay	1, 6
	of Google Docs with	more organized.	
	Word Processor	Students feel better drafts on Google	4
	Tools and Manual	Docs.	
	Writing by Hand in	Using Google Docs makes students feel	3,8
	Writing	easier to revise/edit their work.	
	Comprehension.	By writing through Google Docs,	5, 9

		students get more feedback.	
		Students prefer writing through Google	2, 7.
		Docs.	
2.	Students'	Students feel better about organizing	10, 11
	perspectives in the	their ideas.	
	use of Google Docs.	Students understand about lecturer's	12, 15
		comments and what they need to	
		revise.	
		Using Google Docs, the consultation is	13, 14
		more effective and convenient.	
		Students prefer consultation by Google	16
		Docs.	
		Grammatical errors in the Google Docs	17
		feature.	

The process of gathering and calculating information from participants is known as data collection. The questionnaire was sent to all of the research's participants over the online platform. The students were learning online during the data collection process. Therefore, the researcher had to send each of them the Google Form via personal chat one by one. The students took about 10 minutes to complete the questionnaire. Following the students' completion of the questionnaire, the researcher collects the completed questionnaire for analysis.

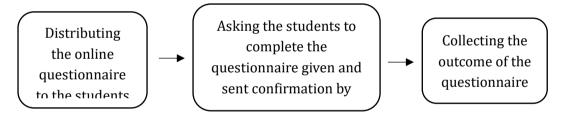


Figure 1. Steps of Data Collection

After collecting the questionnaire, the researcher used SPSS ver. 25.0 and

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Microsoft Excel 2013 to process the findings of the questionnaire. The data was analyzed using descriptive percentage analysis, where the researcher described the findings based on the questionnaire items. The formula for calculating the percentage based on Sudjana (2001, p. 129) was utilized:

$$P = \frac{f}{N} \times 100\%$$

P: percentage n: a number of participants f: frequency 100%: constant number

The statistical validity and reliability have been checked to ensure the validity and reliability of the instrument. Nunnally (1978, as cited in Rhodiyya, 2020) proposed that an alpha of 0.70 be the bare minimum for demonstrating internal consistency. The reliability (Cronbach's alpha) of the questionnaire in this research was found to be 0.96. So, the instrument was valid and reliable to be used as an instrument in this research.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.968	22

Figure 2. Reliability Statistics of Instrument

Results

Comparing the Use of Google Docs with Word Processor Tools and Manual Writing by Hand in Writing Comprehension

To compare the use of Google Docs with Word Processor Tools and manual writing by hand, nine statements were composed to observe their experiences when using either one, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Comparing the Use of Google Docs with Word Processor Tools and Manual Writing by Hand in Writing Comprehension.

No	Statements	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
1.	Using Google Docs instead of paper allows me to stay more organized.	8,3%	0%	25%	5,8%	20,8%
2.	I prefer writing on Google Docs overwriting on paper.	4,2%	8,3%	37,5%	9,2%	20,8%
3.	Google Docs makes it easier for me to modify and edit my work than writing on paper.	4,2%	4,2%	12,5%	27,5%	41,7%
4.	Google Docs allows me to produce better draft than paper.	4,2%	8,2%	20,8%	41,7%	25%
5.	I receive more feedback when I write on Google Docs than when I write on paper	4,2%	4,2%	16,7%	45,8%	29,2%
6.	Using Google Docs instead of word processor tools allows me to stay more organized.	0%	12,5%	12,5%	45,8%	29,2%
7.	I prefer writing on Google Docs over using a word processor.	4,2%	12,5%	25%	33,3%	25%
8.	Google Docs allows me to modify and edit my work more easily than a word processor application.	4,2%	4,2%	12,5%	50%	25%
9.	I ger more feedback on my work when I write on	4,2%	4,2%	12,5%	50%	29,2%

Google Docs rather than a			
word processor.			

45,8 % agree that using Google Docs instead of paper and word processor tools helps them be more organized. Students write their ideas first before composing a whole text. The teacher asked students to use the library research to conduct their ideas. Afterward, the teacher helps students organize their ideas by having a discussion through the comment section in Google Docs. Hence, 25% of students chose netral that using Google Docs instead of paper allows them to stay more organized. It is because they are using Google Docs as a learning media in the classroom for the first time, as can be exemplified in (1).

(1) I am perplexed by the circumantances because online learning is used in classroom activities, and I use Google Docs to do my writing.

Furthermore, 41,7% agree to write better drafts on Google Docs instead of paper. For Example, Google Docs has a feature called "Correction and Suggestion." If students have a grammatical error, Google Docs will automatically highlight their words or sentences in a blue line, and when you click on them, the suggested words will appear in the students' work, which will help students improve their writing. If students make a mistake, the highlight will turn red, as in (2).

(2) Google Docs has a great feature. I only click ctrl + alt + x together. All the misspelled words and grammar can be fixed easily, so I am more confident with my grammar and focus on my writing.

Writing entails a lot of cognitive and metacognitive activities, such as planning, outlining, organizing, drafting, and revising. Students should brainstorm ideas first, then figure out what they will write. Before beginning to outline, students write their ideas first on Google Docs, then they make an outline and have a discussion with the lecturer through the comment section, where the lecturer helps them to have a clear idea before organizing their ideas into written form. Following the students' outline, they begin the drafting stage. The final step was revision. During the revision, the lecturer reviewed each student's work one by one, then commented on each student's work via Google Docs without using a video conference.

41,7% strongly agree that using Google Docs allows students to revise or edit their work more easily than on paper, and 50% agree that using Google Docs is better than word processing tools. Since Google Docs is stored online, students can access

it from anywhere and at any time, as long as they have access to the internet. Students can access it through their device without any additional applications; the applications to open documents like Microsoft Word or WPS Word. Also, students do not need to carry out the paper anymore.

Students can obtain more feedback using Google Docs than they can write on paper or using word processing tools. It shows in table 2 that nearly 46% of students agree that receiving more feedback than writing on paper, and 50% agree that using Google Docs, students receive more feedback than using word processor tools. It is because Google Docs provides various capabilities for immediately correcting students' work, such as grammatical errors. Google Docs will provide the suggested words to make sentences better and fix the grammar. It also helps the lecturer to focus more on the students' writing than the language structure.

Students prefer to write on Google Docs rather than word processor tools, according to 33,3% of them. In comparison, 37,5% chose neutral, preferring writing on Google Docs over paper. It is because of Google Docs, a new writing tool for students. Prior to the invention of online learning, all writing exercises were carried out on paper.

Students' Perspectives in the Use of Google Docs

The students' perspectives items are made up of eight statements that are used to determine the students' perspectives in the use of Google Docs in academic writing. The questionnaire results of the students' perspectives are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. The Questionnaire result of the students' perspectives in the use of Google Docs.

No	Statements	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
10.	Having online discussions allows me to better organize my ideas.	4,2%	4,2%	16,7%	41,7%	33,3%

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	I was able to refine the					
11.	idea during the writing	0%	0%	12,5%	62,5%	25%
	process.			,	,	
	I understand what the					
12.	lecturer commented	0%	8,3%	8,3%	50%	33,3%
	regarding my writing.					
	Getting a consultation					
	through the comment			8,3%		33,3%
13.	section is more	8,3%	33,3%		16,7%	
	effective rather than a	,				
	face-to-face					
	consultation.					
	Getting a consultation through the "comments					
14.	box" is more	8,3%	16,7%	16,7%	29,2%	29,2%
14.	convenient than a face-	0,5 70	10,7 70	10,7 70	27,270	27,270
	to-face consultation.					
	I am able to					
15	understand what parts	0%	8,3%	25%	33,3%	33,3%
15.	of my writing need to					
	be revised.					
16.	I'd rather have a					
	consultation via Google	8,3%	37,5%	8,3%	16,7%	29,2%
	Docs than a face to face.					
17.	Using Google Docs					
	really helps me if there	4,2%	0%	8,3%	41,7%	45,8%
	is a grammatical error.					

41,7% of students say having an online discussion allows them to better organize their ideas, and 62,5% of students say they were able to refine their ideas during the writing process. It is critical for students to feel free while writing because this allows them to understand writing rules such as structure while practicing writing without rushing. They will not be able to write the draft effectively if they are solely concerned about making spelling and grammatical mistakes.

29,2% say getting a consultation through the "comments box" is more convenient than a face-to-face consultation. It is caused by students' not needing to go to campus to do the face-to-face consultation. 33,3% of students strongly agree

that getting consultation through the comment box is more effective than face-to-face consultation as in (3), while 33,3% choose to disagree because the online consultation makes them still confused regarding the lecturer's comments and it is not effective enough. 37,5% would rather have a Google Docs consultation than a face-to-face consultation, as can be exemplified in (4) and (5).

- (3) For me, the consultation through the comment box is more effective because I can understand it well, and it makes me save more time and can do the writing longer.
- (4) consultation process through the comment box I think it is not effective, since when I had a bad connection and it was my turn to have a consultation with the teacher, I lost it, and I have a consultation at the next meeting and it is so bad.
- (5) I am still confused when the lecturer gives a comment on my writing. I could not get it clearly even though I asked the lecturer.

The consultation done by the lecturer gives a highlight on their draft and adds comments through the comment section. 50% of students understand the lecturer's comment regarding their writing. 33,3% of students are able to understand which parts of their writing need to be revised. It demonstrates that students can comprehend the lecturer's comment. 45,8% strongly agree that using Google Docs really helps them if there is a grammatical error. Google Docs is a useful tool for writing activities. They mention that the automated spelling and grammatical checks help them learn from their mistakes while also correcting them, allowing us to focus more on their ideas.

Discussion

The discussion is organized around the research findings and a further description of the associated theories. The research objective is to investigate about Seminar on ELT D students' perspectives. The researcher completed the data collection processes and computed the outcome, which is shown in the Findings, to acquire the information.

As shown in table 2, comparing the use of Google Docs with word processor tools and manual writing by hand in writing comprehension, students often feel that using Google Docs allows them to stay more organized and receive more feedback

on their writing. The automatic features on Google Docs, which are correction and suggestions, make students not need to be afraid of the teacher's feedback on language and structure of writing. It helps students keep organizing their ideas and writing without thinking about their grammatical errors. Also, students believe that using Google Docs makes it easier to revise and amend their work. Since Google Docs is accessible on any device with internet access, they can access it anytime and anywhere. The findings are consistent with Blau and Caspi (2009), who discovered that their students had a good attitude regarding writing on Google Docs.

Harmer (2004, p. 12) defines the writing process as "what humans do when they organize a written form." Writing entails lexical knowledge, coherent devices, syntactic patterns, and a language construction process. Because writing is a process, there are phases that assist authors in controlling a concept and improving their talents. Table 3 presents the outcome of students' perspectives regarding Google Docs in writing class. Students often feel that there are no obstacles to organizing and developing their thoughts. Students also feel that Google Docs is more useful than face-to-face meetings for making the writing process smoother. This conclusion is consistent with the results of Seyyedrezaie et al. (2016), in which students' replies indicated a positive attitude regarding the use of Google Docs. The lecturer only employed synchrnonous learning in the classroom. It meant that everything done in the learning process by students and lecturers was done using Google Docs. There will be no video conference or oral procedure. Learners' perspectives are influenced by their prior experience, motivation, and anticipation (Bootzin, Bower, and Zajonc, 1987, p. 26, as cited in Pratiwi, 2013). The students would rather have a face-to-face consultation than use Google Docs. However, some students feel that seeking counsel through the "comments box" is more effective than getting feedback face-to-face, while others disagree.

Conclusion

The aim of this research is to explore students' perspectives towards Google Docs in writing classes. It is observed that students of the Seminar on ELT D of the English Language Education Program, Universitas Brawijaya, have positive perspectives regarding to Google Docs. They had never used Google Docs in their previous learning process because e-learning is a new approach in their learning activity. Therefore, it was their first time utilizing it in a classroom project. For the whole writing process in a half-semester, Google Docs was used. There was no synchronous procedure; therefore, the consultation was done only by text. Students encountered no challenges in organizing and developing their thoughts. However, students would prefer to have a consultation face-to-face rather than via Google

Docs.

Other research studies may use different data collection strategies to conduct the same research. However, in the current research, the researcher only collects data through written questionnaires and interviews with some students. Therefore, the data acquired is relatively restricted. The next researcher may explore more explicitly, utilizing interviews of the whole classroom and open questions to get additional knowledge and information regarding the use of Google Docs and the obstacles experienced by students for more trustworthy research. Also, the next researcher can discover a way to compare students' perspectives of Google Docs and word processing software when conducting their writing projects.

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