

THE STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF USING GOOGLE DOCS AS ONLINE COLLABORATIVE WRITING PRACTICES AT STIE INDONESIA JAKARTA

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Abstract: To accommodate the rapid development of information technology, it is necessary for the education sector to adapt and implement procedures for learning technology. Google Docs is one of the technologies utilized in this study. It is vital to supporting students in the online learning environment. The aim of the study is to investigate the management students' perceptions of using Google Docs as online collaborative writing to promote peer interactions, as well as its benefits and limitations. This qualitative case study was conducted at the Management Program of the School of Economics Indonesia Jakarta. The data was collected through a close-ended questionnaire and interview. The study's findings showed that most accounting students had a positive view of using Google Docs for online collaborative writing. Google Docs' capabilities have made online collaborative writing more effective and successful, especially for students' performance during group work, communication, and accessibility. In addition to the functionality of Google Docs, successful online collaborative writing also relied heavily on students' active participation.

Keywords: Google Docs, online collaborative writing , students' perceptions

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INTRODUCTION

In the education field, technology has contributed to the development of new learning habits, including data literacy, technology literacy, and human resources (Delipiter, 2019). Online learning became an urgent solution to address limitations in face-to-face social activities due to the rapid and widespread use of technology during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Adapting and utilizing all available resources is crucial for both students and teachers in the learning process.

As one of the most important skills in learning English writing for accounting students, writing has fortunately been facilitated by the existence of various technological applications, including Google Docs, which, among others, has been used by most

teachers and students. Google Docs is the most appropriate tool for students in collaborative learning due to its versatility and power to support a wide range of collaborative learning activities. The purpose of this study is to investigate students' perception of using Google Docs for online collaborative writing, as stated by Cunningham, Rashid, and Le (2019). The study focuses on the perceptions of students in the Management Program of the School of Economics of Indonesia (STIE Jakarta). The issues that need to be addressed in this study are focused on the two research questions below:

1. What are the management students' perceptions of using Google Docs for management students' online collaborative writing?
2. What are the possible benefits and drawbacks of using Google Docs for management students' online collaborative writing?

Perceptions

The aim of this study is to analyze the opinions of Economics students regarding the utilization of Google Docs as a collaborative writing device. Perception is a continuous cycle that involves transmitting or receiving information to the human brain, as well as a connection between the individual and the environment, as stated by Slameto (2010, p. 102). Three elements that affect human perceptions have been identified by Odendaal (2003, pp. 108-109). Perception is influenced by the perceiver's personal traits like attitude, purpose, interest, experience, and anticipation, which are the first element. Identifying the perceived target involves examining its novelty, motion, sound, size, background, closeness, and resemblance, which may be a person, object, or event. The third element is the setting where one perceives, which encompasses time, work, and social situations.

Technology in writing

The use of technology can offer a variety of benefits, such as making a topic more engaging, cutting down on learning time, and enabling non-traditional learning (Lynch & Campos, 2014). A computer, which is the most commonly used learning device, can help students focus on their learning and can assist them in engaging in knowledge instruction, collaboration, and reflection (Rosicka & Mayerova in Pazilah, Hashim, & Yunus, 2019). Ammade et al. (2018) suggests using software as an alternative to using technology for learning.

Moreover, the use of technology can be beneficial for learning writing because it assists writers in writing simple sentences. Karlan (2011) suggests that technology-supported writing can assist with writing demands like editing and word fixing using tools. The use of technology in writing can enhance writers' motivation and increase the amount and quality of their work, as suggested by Nichols in Rahimi et al. (2019). By investigating an experimental group that was given a word processor to help them in a writing activity,

Abdelrahman (2013) discovered that the use of word processors helped EFL college learners' writing skills because it is an effective application that engages the learners and makes the editing process easier.

Online collaborative writing using Google Docs

Collaborative learning with peers was beneficial in in-class activities because it allowed students to have meaningful interactions with their peers, which could involve them in the learning process and give them an interest in engaging or contributing to the learning activity, as well as help them overcome their anxiety (Yate González, Saenz, Bermeo, & Castañeda Chaves, 2013). Collaborating led to supportive learning, in which students learned to appreciate and work with their classmates, and it also allowed them to learn without the need for teacher assistance (Gödek, 2004). Vygotsky (1978) proposed that students gain more knowledge by studying with others or with help from others because of their Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD).



Figure 1. Vygotsky's (1978) zone of proximal development

Collaboration in online learning is not limited to the social presence of the student, as stated by Garrison, Anderson, and Archer (2000) and Garrison & Arbaugh (2007). It also occurs through the link between social, cognitive, and instructional presence.

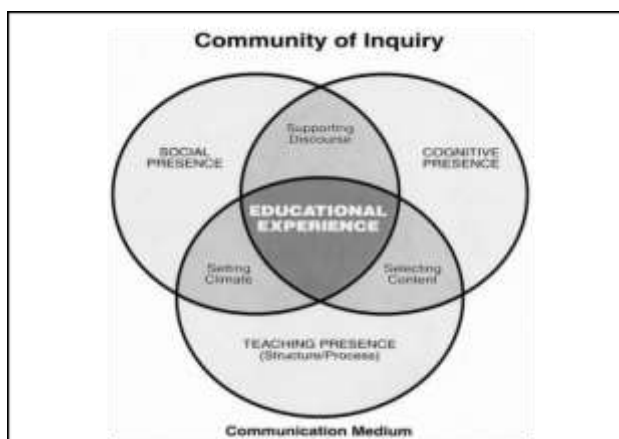


Figure 2. Garrison et al. (2000); Garrison & Arbaugh (2007)

Students have relied mainly on technology to study, but as technology has improved, students may now obtain information using Internet-based applications rather than conventional learning techniques (Pazilah, Hashim, & Yunus, 2019). Online writing apps can help promote and improve online communication and cooperation in the classroom (Alkhataba, Abdul-Hamid, & Bashir, 2018; Brodahl, Hadjerrouit, & Hansen, 2011). Collaboration is now feasible not just through online writing but also through modern technologies such as discussion boards and online chat rooms as technology has improved in the 21st Century (Lawrence & Wah, 2016). Grief (2007) found that group members constantly shared ideas, which made collaborative writing more productive and encouraging. In addition to students learning to write from their classmates, using an online writing platform could simplify collaborative writing (Abrams, 2019). Real-time collaboration can be achieved with an online communication feature in Google Docs, which is one of the most popular writing applications (Ambrose & Palpanathan, 2017). According to Andrew (2019), using Google Docs in collaborative writing offers various advantages related to the simplicity of the use of Google Docs, such as the ability for anybody to work in different places and times. Khalil (2018) stated that Google Docs was advantageous for providing feedback to students and promoting collaborative learning. Teachers can provide students with immediate and detailed feedback, and students can collaborate on projects and peer review each other's work. Collaboration among students leads to greater active participation in learning activities than individual participation, as cognitive ability and social competence impact student learning performance (Liu & Lan, 2016). The study by Liu and Lan (2016) found that collaborative learning activities can help students develop both their cognitive and social skills, and they can also help students achieve better academic results.

In some studies, Google Docs may be viewed as contradictory, despite the benefits it has for increasing students' collaborative writing. In contrast to face-to-face learning activities, Krishnan, Cusimano, Wang, and Yim (2018) discovered that using Google Docs for online collaborative writing activities was challenging since there was no tool to identify who was actively participating in the activity. Collaborative writing using Google Docs was found effective in an eighth-grade English Language Arts classroom by Woodrich and Fan (2017). The statistical significance of face-to-face writing activities was higher than the statistical significance of anonymous collaborative writing with Google Docs. When there are too many students in one group, the students must deal with not only technical issues, such as difficulty logging in and loss of connection but also with the group members themselves, as the students have difficulty tracking changes in their writing and dealing with the fixed structure or result of the text, according to a finding from Brodahl and Hansen (2014) involving 177 students ranging in age from 19 to 44.

Collaborative Writing

Collaborative writing is a term used to describe activities among the students work or learn together. The term could be described the activities as peer response and discussion.

It means that, the students could add their comments on each other's work and the students entire class work together to create one finished the descriptive writing. Collaborative writing could be done with two or more persons working together to produce a written document. <http://grammar.about.com/bio/Richard-Nordquist-22176.htm>. The collaboration processes are:

- a. two or more people jointly composing the complete text of a document.
- b. two or more people contributing components to a document.
- c. one or more person modifying, by editing and/or reviewing, the document of one or more persons; and one person working interactively with one or more person and drafting a document based on the ideas of the person or persons. (Farkas,1991:14; Aggies write & speak well 2011).

The advantage of collaborative writing process is also well known in the old saying, "two heads are better than one." The combined knowledge of the writers could be enhanced by having more than one person work on the writing project. The writing of ideas can be arousing when they come from various people's contributions and perspectives, which can be a powerful resource.

The successful of applying collaborative writing, while the collaborative writing process as a social activity involving knowledge construction among the students who are willing to trust each other with co-ownership in their writing description essay (Spigelman, 2000). Moreover, collaborative writing enables students to learn from each other, resulting in increased confidence and success in their writing practices. Collaborative writing is another chance for students to practice in a different way. The students usually write alone, but in this activity, they work together to write. Collaboration often necessitates a group dynamic in which every member is equally capable and willing to contribute (Emily Viggiano, 2000)

Google Documents

Google Documents could be one of tool to do collaborative writing, both writing together and solo. The students could not have to pay if they want to use it for their writing. Google Document is a free web-based, not only for the students to learn but also the people want to use it. Using Google Document is also introduced by Prof. Hacker as well as some "lessons learned" for the students in using Google Docs in teaching and learning activities in the classroom. Prof. Hacker also mentioned, Google Docs is a 'free Web-based word processing program.' Although the name says "Docs," <http://chronicle.com/blogs/profhacker/author/jmeloni>. The students aren't limited to just text-based documents with the occasional image thrown in for good measure. By using Google "Docs" (and a Google Account) anyone can create or import spreadsheets and presentations in addition to documents. Once the students have created or imported a document, spreadsheet or presentation, the students could edit their assignment or even tasks, save it, export it, and print it. More importantly for teaching and learning activities 'purposes in the classroom, these documents could be shared with collaborators.

Another literature is also mentioned, Google Doc is created by a document owner (or initially uploaded, as Google Docs will import Microsoft Word, OpenOffice, RTF, HTML or text files). Besides that, Google Document could set viewing and editing permissions for others. Meanwhile, the students are sharing the document with specific collaborators, the document owner could allow those collaborators to edit and view the document, or simply to view it. The students also allow the world to view it, but not edit it, by publishing it as a web page. <http://docs.google.com/support/bin/answer>. In teaching and learning activities in the classroom, the students could do editing rights while they are doing collaboration in their writing. The students could do several ways:

- a. Student shares document with Instructor and receives feedback within the document; Instructor can add comments, highlight problem areas, make text changes in a different colour, and so on
- b. Student shares document with a select group of peers and receives peer review feedback through comments and text changes.
- c. Group project leader shares a document with other team members to complete a collaborative or cooperative writing assignment.

Furthermore, Google Docs is a diverse online application geared for productivity and collaboration. This online software requires each student to create a free Google account, that enables the students to import existing documents into their Google Documents account and then, create new documents. Google Docs is another web-based tool that works similarly with a Wiki, but unlike the Wikis which limit the editing process to "one-at-a-time" (Thompson, 2008. This determination following the synthesis of two things: the results of seeing how well Google Documents met the standards of The Essential Collaborative Writing Toolkit, and students' impressions of Google Documents taken from the transcript analyses. "These criteria for evaluating collaborative writing, also known as The Essential Collaborative Writing Toolkit, were distilled to the following categories: fundamentals, role control, version control, synchronicity, awareness, and communication (Youngblood & Joel West, 2008)."

METHOD

The method described in this section are focuses on investigating accounting students' perceptions of the use of Google Docs for online collaborative writing. Thus, the qualitative case study was adopted as it explores a process, activity, or event that requires a detailed description of the investigated subject (Creswell, 2009). In support, a close-ended questionnaire and semi-structured interview were selected as the research instruments.

Management Program of School of Economics of Indonesia (STIE Indonesia Jakarta) was selected as the location of the study. In addition, the accounting students who participated in the Computer Assisted Language Learning class participated as the study participants. The study took place from December 2023 to March 2024.

The data collection was carried out using two instruments, namely, a questionnaire and interview. The questionnaire, which was presented using Google Forms, was a close-

ended type with thirty-five (35) questions, having a Likert-scale range as the measurement tool. The interview itself was done based on the interview guide, consisting of eight (8) open-ended questions. To perform this, Google Meet or Zoom was used as the meeting platform based on the personal agreement between the participants and the researchers.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study were reported in the questionnaire under six sub- themes: (1) Student's perception of social interaction in collaborative writing, (2) Management Student's perception of the indicator of online collaborative writing, (3) Management Student's perception of their performance when using Google Docs for online collaborative writing, (4) Accounting Student's perception towards Google Docs' features, (5) Management Student's perception towards the easiness of communication in Google Docs, and (6) Management Student's perception towards the accessibility of Google Docs.

Students' perceptions of the use of Google Docs for online collaborative writing The findings of the student's perception of social interaction in collaborative writing are presented in Table 1. The first statement found that twenty-six (26) students (41.9%) answered "Agree," meaning that the presence of collaborative learning speeds up their work. According to the second statement, 35 students (56.5%) "Agree" that learning cooperatively in a group helps them gain more information. Exchanging ideas, opinions, critiques, and recommendations among group members is a way for students to gain more information when studying collaboratively, as indicated in the third statement.

The findings from the interview below indicate that they align with the questionnaire results, as follows:

1. In my opinion, learning collaboratively with peers is both plus and minus (50/50), depending on the people whom I work with. I need both (learning collaboratively with peers and learning individually). (Interviewee 1)
2. When I have collaborative learning, the work can be distributed among the group members, which makes it finished quickly. By having collaborative learning, I can also exchange ideas with other group members, and I can get new insights from them, too. (Interviewee 4)
3. However, when it comes to developing ideas, learning collaboratively with peers is more comfortable because each of the group members can share their ideas, and we can know what should be improved from each member's ideas. There will be lots of suggestions and critiques that help us to make new and better ideas. (Interviewee 2)

The findings above align with Vygotsky's (1978) theory that studying in collaboration with peers helped students learn more than learning alone. Furthermore, because the work was accomplished in collaboration with other group members and each student was responsible for completing the same job, learning cooperatively with peers sped up the process.

The second table reveals the significance of critical thinking and problem-solving skills, the role of peers, the digital literacy requirement, and the role of teachers. From Table 2, it can be observed that thirty-three (33) students (53.2%) responded “Strongly Agree” to statement number seven, showing that collaborative writing requires critical -thinking and problem-solving abilities. In response to the statement which discussed the value of group members’ participation in collaborative writing, forty (40) students (66.1%) selected “Strongly Agree.” Thirty-five (35) students (56.5%) agreed that to participate in online collaborative writing, students must be technologically literate. However, twenty-seven (27) students (43.5%) “Agreed” that instructors should be present in the online collaborative writing to watch the group’s work.

From the interview, when it comes to online collaborative writing, it suggests that the most vital point for each group member to have been their social presence. It can be seen from the quotations below.

- a. Having online collaborative learning quite limits the things that need to be done. (Interviewee 3)
- b. My technology and digital literacy were improved. At the senior high level, I hadn’t used any online writing applications; the group work was still done traditionally by meeting face-to-face with the group members. After I got CALL class, I learned that there is an online writing application called Google Docs, which can be used for individual writing or collaborative writing. (Interviewee 4)
- c. Social presence is the important thing as I think that communication is the key point to make the group work successfully. The cognitive level of each person is different, and I don’t mind if I happen in a group with someone whose cognitive level is not that good. However, I do emphasize the communication and their willingness to do the job. If they find difficulties, just directly ask on the WhatsApp group. (Interviewee 2)
- d. I think that teaching presence is not important. Sometimes, I need the presence of a lecturer only to ask about the group work’s progress. (Interviewee 4)

The students perceived that the attendance of each group member was vital since the project would not work well if one or more people were missing, especially once the work distribution had been distributed to each group member. Students, on the other hand, need the presence of the teacher while engaging in online collaborative writing. The teaching presence was limited to that of a facilitator or observer. The findings supported the Community of Inquiry model suggested by Garrison et al. (2000) and Garrison & Arbaugh (2007), which said that online collaborative learning was accomplished by blending social, cognitive, and instructional presence.

The benefits and drawbacks of using Google Docs for online collaborative writing

The benefits and drawbacks of using Google Docs for online collaborative writing
Another interesting finding is related to how the students perceived their performance when using Google Docs, as shown in Table 3. By statement number one, thirty-seven (37) students (59.7%) “agreed” that utilizing Google Docs helped them accomplish their

group project quickly and efficiently. Using Google Docs for online collaborative writing saved students time because they could write collaboratively at the same time while not meeting in person. Consequently, students believed they could easily share ideas while using Google Docs for online collaborative writing since it could be accessed at any time and from any location by anybody who was asked to participate in the writing using Google Docs. It supports the results of a previous studies by Rahayu (2016) and Sudrajat & Purnawarman (2019), which demonstrated that using Google Docs in the classroom project allowed students to work collaboratively by allowing them to easily communicate ideas and modify their writing with other group members. Twenty-nine (29) students (46.8%) answered “Disagree” with the statement, “I interact more actively with my classmates while doing online collaborative writing using Google Docs than in face-to-face group work.”

Moreover, in the interview, one of the students argued:

- When I use Google Docs for online collaborative writing, I have an opportunity to write anything and say any ideas freely, as sometimes, when having offline collaborative writing, I am quite shy to express my opinion with others. (Interviewee 4)

The quote above echoes the earlier study by Liu and Lan (2016), which found that utilizing Google Docs for online collaborative writing helped students be more active in group work. How active students were in online collaborative writing depended on the individual.

The students also perceived the ease of communication in using *Google Docs*. Table 4 summarises their perceptions. Thirty-two (32) students (51.6%) “agreed” that their *Google Docs*-based online conversation was productive. Thirty-three (33) students (53.2%) answered “Agree” to the statement, “I can obtain comments from my classmates easier while utilizing online collaborative writing with Google Docs.”

Meanwhile, from the interview, the students also perceived that the presence of Google Docs was easy enough to help them in online collaborative writing because it offered a chat box and comment capabilities like those present in other online talking programs. It can be seen from the excerpts below:

1. When my group members did online group work, it was hard, right, when we directly wrote anything in Google Docs? So sometimes we communicate using Google Docs, and it becomes the substitution of WhatsApp indirectly. As a result, my group members usually use Google Meet to discuss things that we need to work on, and after that, we then write what we have discussed on Google Docs. However, if other group members can't access applications for direct communication, like Google Meet, the comment feature can help my group members to have direct communication. Through the comments put on others' work or writing, they can know what's wrong with what they have written or what needs to be added to their writing. (Interviewee 1)
2. The feedback can also be given easily by using the comment feature, as it allows us to write any comment on the intended part. It helps me to know what's wrong with my writing. (Interviewee 2)

Students could use the chat function to have textual discussions with other users while producing material on Google Docs. Still, it could only be used to convey text and not to share items like images, voice recorders, and so on. While utilizing the comment feature, students might provide comments, critiques, or changes to other members' writing. It was consistent with the findings of previous research by Khalil (2018), who observed that utilizing Google Docs benefited students' writing by allowing them to easily acquire comments from other group members, encouraging each group member to participate in online collaborative writing.

The last feature concerns the Accessibility of Google Docs, as summarized in Table 5. Thirty-one (31) students (50%) chose "Disagree" to the statement "I have difficulties in fixing the group work's result when online collaborative writing having using Google Docs," indicating that there were no significant issues among students when they had to fix their work in online collaborative writing using Google Docs. Because Google Docs could be accessed through a single URL, no one in the group needed to provide several files, as they did with Microsoft Word. There were forty-one (41) students (66.1%) who selected "Strongly Agree," as well as thirty-three (33) students (53.2%) who chose "Strongly Agree," suggesting that all group members could readily access the group work on Google Docs and had no problem doing so.

The interview results below confirm the above findings. The students stated that correcting the group work was simple since they could work on a single page, making it easy to track which version was the most current, as follows:

1. Before I knew Google Docs, there would be so many files sent in WhatsApp by my group members each time they revised the work, and it was hard for us to know which one was the fixed work. While in Google Docs, we can work together at the same time, and I think it is very effective. We can know the fixed work as we only work in one sheet. (Interviewee 1)
2. I only need to use one link to access Google Docs, which is more efficient compared to other offline writing applications when it comes to online collaborative writing. We also don't need to waste our time installing any application since Google Docs can be accessed online without installing anything. In contrast, Google Docs needs to be connected to the internet whenever we write something so that it will be automatically saved. When the internet connection is suddenly lost, the progress that has been made will be wasted. (Interviewee 4)

This finding contradicts the findings of previous research by Brodahl and Hansen (2014), who found that when students used Google Docs for online collaborative writing, they had difficulty resolving the text structure or the project's outcome when there were too many group members. Google Docs made collaborative writing easier for students since it could be accessible online, allowing all group members to work at the same time and get real-time writing updates even if they did not meet in person. Google Docs may also be opened on several devices with the same Google account. It was consistent with Andrew's (2019) previous study, which found that everyone in the group or other

individuals could readily use Google Docs for online collaborative writing regardless of time or place.

The implications of the findings of this study support the fact that Google Docs is a useful tool that makes the online learning environment possible. Students can gain knowledge in a relaxing atmosphere where they can make informed judgments on whether mistakes should be corrected and learn how to accept comments from others. In the meantime, it is clear that Google Docs encourages students to help each other in writing without the time and place restrictions. The tool helps students who have writing willingness work more efficiently on written assignments, and they were comfortable when their texts were edited or deleted. The findings of this study have confirmed the effectiveness of the study collaborative writing activities using Google Docs will benefit from their writing (Zhou et al., 2012; Zhou et al., 2012)

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to learn about students' attitudes toward utilizing Google Docs for online collaborative writing. The findings of this study suggest that Google Docs can be a valuable tool for online collaborative writing, particularly within the context of Ignatian Pedagogy (Nowacek & Mountin, 2023). According to the findings, many students were enthusiastic about utilizing Google Docs for online collaborative writing. It provides features that support collaboration, reflection, and critical thinking, all of which are essential for Ignatian learners (Suparno, 2015; Mesa, 2017). The students found that collaborating on writing assignments in real-time and using the features of chat boxes, comments, and revision history is engaging. Students said Google Docs improved their online collaborative writing, especially when they couldn't meet in person. The presence of Google Docs for online collaborative writing benefited students' performance since they could interact at any time and from any location using only one online service, making their working time more efficient and convenient. Google Docs' capabilities were designed to assist students with online collaborative writing. Google Docs still allows students to communicate through chat box and comment capabilities, which enable them to have written conversations with other group members and give feedback.

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