EFL Students' Perceptions in Collaborative Writing via Google Docs: A Case Study at Van Lang University

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Abstract

Collaborative writing represents as an integrated technique for tackling students' writing difficulties. Consequently, practising Collaborative Writing (CW) through online technologies, notably Google Docs (GD), can be an innovative model that assists student learning. However, in addition to its credits, this model is not without drawbacks. The current study attempts to demonstrate users' perspectives on the limits of collaborative writing via Google Docs and how they deal with them. The researcher employed a qualitative case-study approach and data collection via a questionnaire at Van Lang University in Ho Chi Minh City. The questionnaire consisted of 17 closed-ended questions to collect data from 9 student participants. The results revealed several advantages of Collaborative Writing as supported by Google Docs (henceforth CWGD), alongside some limitations and challenges to this approach/model.

Keywords: *perceptions, Collaborative Writing, Google Docs, writing*

Introduction

Background of the study

Writing is an essential skill in academic education. Writing is also one of the two productive skills, which is also considered a type of communication, as it involves communication through the written form. Productive skills help students become fluent in their target language, mainly English, as well as maximize their written output (Trinh & Nguyen, 2021). Writing has been recognized as an essential and compulsory skill, a part of teaching that teachers must practice in order to teach well (Djigunović, 2006). Furthermore, one of the most important academic skills is the ability to write, especially in contexts such as schools and colleges (Alawaji, 2020). In the same vein, academic writing is one of the most significant types of writing, particularly for post-college education, as students' essays serve as a means of assessing their progress (Ho, 2024). All students write regularly, such as emails, paragraphs, or essays; however, in order to progress, students must practice and develop their writing skills every day in school. Specifically, for postgraduate students, honing writing abilities is crucial because written documents need high correctness, idea refinement, and enhanced capacity for in-depth material analysis (Nguyen et al., 2025). However, Gökçe (2011) argues that writing is one of the most difficult tasks to master in terms of understanding how to use words, structure, creative thinking

or organizing writing and it is easy for learners to get bored or lose interest. Therefore, learners often have to spend a lot of time learning and practicing to master these writing skills.

Collaborative writing is regarded as one of the strategies that can greatly assist learners to develop their writing abilities. Collaboration is defined as a method of facilitating student learning (Pham Manh Tri et al., 2023). According to Dobao (2012), the approach required students to collaborate in pairs or groups in producing one jointly written text. This strategy allows students to write together, exchange ideas, and interact to achieve a common goal. Not only that, Collaborative Writing (CW) can help learners improve their knowledge and learn from their collaborators. Colina and García Mayo (2007) discovered that even low-intermediate level learners who participate in these activities benefit considerably from their peers' expertise and knowledge. In a similar vein, Dobao (2012) demonstrated that when learners begin working in pairs to finish the assigned task. The output was nearly as exact and fluid, and it employed a more complicated structure than when the activity was completed individually. In particular, this method of learning provides specific benefits to learners by encouraging and promoting learners' thinking while cooperating with others.

While technology and learning aids have been around for a several decades, their popularity has recently increased. Wikis, OneNote, Google Docs, and other online applications can be used to enhance online learning and teaching. With the launch of the Google Docs (GD) application, one of its notable benefits is that it is convenient and cost-effective for many users. If users are unable to talk and collaborate with classmates in person, the Google Docs (GD) application will be a viable option for connecting users (Conner, 2008). It is an online software with a basic interface that can be accessed with just one mouse click. Besides, this program allows numerous users to access and use the link simultaneously (Wahyuningsih, 2021). Furthermore, this application is a web-based edition of Microsoft Word that users can access for free (Suwantarathip & Wichadee, 2014). Additionally, through a virtual space, learners may easily connect with one another and manage their work (Woodrich & Fan, 2017). With Google Docs (GD), users may monitor colleagues' work from afar, write collaboratively, modify articles, and evaluate each other's articles in real-time (Zhou et al., 2012). The above discussion demonstrates that Google Docs (GD) as an effective support arm for learners.

Statement of the problem

Collaborative Writing (CW) may be a pedagogical tool for promoting more classroom interaction among students who are used to working individually (Biria & Jafari, 2013). Pham (2021) discovered that Collaborative Writing (CW) had a substantial impact on students' writing fluency in both collaboratively and independently produced papers. On the contrary, there were numerous limits to employing Collaborative Writing (CW) approach, including increased pressure, logistical obstacles, conflicts between learning styles, and equality concerns (Mulligan & Garofalo, 2011). Diab (2010) also implied that students could not properly identify and fix their classmates' errors. Hu and Lam (2009) recognized that their learners did not believe in the accuracy and authenticity of peer ratings, they prioritized and valued instructor input.

Thus, it appears that Google Docs (GD) is a crucial tool for encouraging students to embrace collaborative writing. One of the most crucial elements in raising student achievement and learning motivation is online collaborative writing (Farrah, 2015).

Nevertheless, research shows that there aren't many publications that use Google Docs to encourage the usage of collaborative writing in the context of Vietnam and Van Lang University. This demonstrates the necessity for further study on this paradigm to identify the possible advantages of Collaborative Writing via Google Docs (CWGD) while also identifying

some of this model's drawbacks. Students will learn more efficiently if they can comprehend both the advantages and disadvantages of a new model.

The purpose of the study

This paper investigates graduate students' views at Van Lang University when applying Collaborative Writing via the Google Docs (CWGD) application. Besides looking at students' reflections on experiences, the study zooms in upon several helpful aspects of this model and explores its potential drawbacks.

Literature review

Perception of students

The primary cognitive connection that humans have with the environment around them is perception. Because all conceptual knowledge is predicated on or derived from this fundamental type of awareness, the study of perception has always been of particular importance in philosophy and science (Efron, 1969).

According to prior studies, there are numerous aspects that contribute to the formation of a student's perspective and consciousness. Previous research has shown that there are clear correlations between students' attitudes, approaches, and outcomes (Lizzio, Wilson, & Simons, 2002). The expectations of students can be examined by defining three primary categories: course content, experiential learning, and outcomes.

Perception is the way one views the world. It is a highly individual experience and only what is known to oneself can be drawn upon. Moreover, Hwang et al. (2011) as cited by McDonald (2011) also state that object perception in the visual world is influenced by elements such as shape and color, as well as the meaning and semantic relationships between them.

Oxford Learners Dictionaries (2019) defined perception as "the way you notice things, especially with your senses," "the ability to understand the true nature of something," and "an idea, a belief, or an image you have as a result of how you see or understand something."

Collaborative writing

Sharples et al. (1993) claimed that Collaborative Writing adds an additional layer of social engagement. Collaborating writers not only have different writing styles that must be harmonized, but they also constitute a social group with their own identity and dynamics.

Throughout the writing process, students collaborate, sharing copyright and ownership of the finished result. Throughout the collaborative writing process, people will assist each other in brainstorming ideas, organizing an article, and editing each other to achieve the final result. In the opinion of Storch (2011), the basic feature of collaborative writing is shared ownership of the finished text. Collaborative writing is defined as an approach in which collaborators interact in all stages of the writing process, exchanging ownership for and controlling the entire text produced (Storch, 2019).

Google Documents

The Google Docs (GD) application is one of the internet technologies that facilitate Collaborative Writing (CW). Google Docs was formally launched in July 2009 as a free browser-based productivity and web storage suite. Google Docs' word processing program has several advantages for writing a variety of documents ranging from articles and blog posts to

less formal documents such as meetings and class notes. Users of Google Docs would appreciate the simple and uncomplicated Web interface (Ramirose et al., 2008).

Google Docs (GD) is a completely free online suite of tools that contains most of the functionality found in Microsoft Office or Open Office, providing excellent opportunities for student collaboration during experimentation and outcome analysis (Spaeth & Black, 2012). Users may easily engage and collaborate in this application, and they can be creative with many little tools on Google Docs, such as making tables, inserting photographs, and suggesting comments and edits in a variety of colors with a variety of fonts.

Based on Dekeyser and Watson (2006), as referenced by Ishtaiwa and Aburezeq (2015), the Google Docs (GD) application is an extraordinary application with a significant impact on the technology business. At the same time, the study noted some of the advantages that this application provides, such as:

- The application's portability: Users only need to register for an online account to access it.

- The simplicity of use: The application has a user-friendly interface, does not require advanced technology to use, and has high connectivity.

- The online editing system's effectiveness: As the program supported numerous editors, update conflicts are relatively unusual.

Previous Research Studies

This section will list some previous research articles and summarize the findings of other authors. From the previous findings, the research paper will declare a research gap that needs to be addressed.

The benefits when students use Google Docs for their study

Wahyuningsih (2021) conducted research during the COVID-19 pandemic to take full advantage of the technological advances at the time. Similarly, the author aims to learn about the positive aspects and downsides of utilizing Google Docs for collaborative writing. For 62 participants, the researcher used a qualitative case study and two data collection methods, questionnaires and interviews. Findings indicated that Google Docs offered key benefits to users; however, the study did not highlight the downsides of using the Google Docs app.

The benefits and challenges of combining collaborative writing with technology

Tri et al., 2023 conducted a study with 80 freshmen, sophomores, juniors, and seniors at Van Lang University's Faculty of Foreign Languages. The purpose of this study was to investigate EFL learners' perceptions of computer-mediated collaborative writing activities through an online application and to investigate the problems associated with CMCW. The findings indicated that there are common issues when employing the computer-mediated Collaborative Writing (CMCW) approach, as well as opportunities for teachers to enhance their lesson preparation and help students improve their writing abilities.

The benefits and challenges of combining Collaborative Writing via Google Docs (CWGD)

Suwantarathip et al. (2014) conducted research with the goal of increasing the abilities of learners in reading and writing logical responses to texts. The author tested with students enrolled in the EN 012 course, which was the first course in a private university in Thailand. In this study, it was only a trial version because of the large number of students. The author divided

the learners into two groups of 40 students each and was provided to finish four writing activities utilizing distinct working techniques, one group in the classroom and the other via the Google Docs program. Research showed that the group of students using the Google Docs app achieved higher results than the students who worked directly and had a very positive attitude when using Google Docs. This research has contributed to identifying some of the benefits of collaborative writing via Google Docs (CWGD), most of which are responding quite well to serving learners. However, contrary to this, research was only conducted with a small group of learners, and during the learning process, learners also had the opportunity to practice other abilities. Thus, somewhere has an impact and influence on students' time and results. The writer could spend more time conducting an in-depth study on writing ability with a bigger number of participants for a more effective solution.

Afterward, Damayanti et al. (2021) conducted research on how six high school students were assisted in approaching Collaborative Writing (CW). Interviews, student chat room conversations, and peer evaluation activities in Google Docs (GD) were used to collect data. The consequence was Google Docs (GD) can be valuable to learners. This software has brought users closer together by promoting collaborative writing and student peer evaluation. Students could even utilize this tool to talk and discuss while also demonstrating the versatility of Google Docs (GD).

A study published in 2022 by Valizadeh aimed to assess the impact of Collaborative Writing via Google Docs (CWGD) app and individual writing practice on the descriptive paragraphs of EFL learners. The study was carried out on 48 intermediate-level Turkish language students, who were divided into two groups. The findings demonstrated that the experimental group that used collaborative writing using Google Docs produced superior and more significant results. The study's purpose was just to provide some benefits and recommendations for learners to use this online program; there were not new discoveries.

An additional investigation in 2022, written by Irshad, the study intended to discover the obstacles that first-year students had when using the Google Docs app, as well as their perceptions and perspectives when utilizing this online application. The research project involved five undergraduate sub-groups, and their written transcripts were assessed for their engagement patterns in equality and mutuality by applying the Taxonomy of Writing Change Functions and Scaffolding Approaches. The data reveal that the Google Docs tool has provided many benefits to students, yet this application also had many drawbacks. Despite the above-mentioned issues, the author still enjoyed the Google Docs application and urged users to utilize it. Finally, when investigating the advantages and disadvantages of the Google Docs application when combined with collaborative writing, the research did not provide an effective solution for the future.

According to Wenyi Zhou et al. (2012), the purpose of their study was to teach students how to write collaboratively using Google Docs and then evaluate the usefulness of this application. The study included 35 college students who were randomly divided into small groups and given two projects, one with and one without the Google Docs app. The results demonstrated that some pupils continue to struggle with Google Docs while others do not. On the contrary, some pupils believed the software was useful to them. However, this research still did not provide any answers to the limitations that Google Docs brought.

The combined model of Google Docs as a digital application and Collaborative Writing (CW) as a learning approach has opened up a new level of up-to-date and smart learning for students. Students today can study efficiently through communication with their classmates without necessarily participating in a face-to-face meetings. Recognizing these helpful utilities, many

educators worldwide have attempted to combine collaborative writing with Google Docs application to serve their writing courses (see, for example, Suwantarathip et al., 2014; Damayanti et al., 2021). Empirical experiments from these researches have revealed many benefits of this practice. However, while revealing advantages, such studies have hardly highlighted any potential disadvantages of this combination. In particular, such model with its potential pros and cons has not been explored in Vietnam. To compensate for this research gap, the current study sets out to embark on this model by not only identifying possible benefits of Collaborative Writing via Google Docs (CWGD) but also exposing difficulties encountered by students who employ this model. The study is set in the specific context of graduate students of Van Lang University who are currently undertaking an Advanced Writing course in English.

Research Questions

To fulfill the purpose of the study, the survey was seeking to answer the following research questions:

Research Question 1: What are some helpful aspects of students' experience with collaborative writing in a face to face setting with peers versus via working with Google Docs?

Research Question 2: What are some challenges to the practice of collaborative writing in a face-to-face setting with peers versus working with Google Docs?

Methods

Pedagogical Setting & Participants

The study was conducted at Van Lang University Faculty of Foreign Languages, one of the most popular educational institutions in Ho Chi Minh City, founded in 1995. Currently, the Faculty of Foreign Languages offers three categories of majors including English language majors with five intensive orientations: Business English, Pedagogical English, Translation and Interpreting English, Business English, and Tourism English. The Chinese Language major has two intensive options: Business Chinese and English - Business Chinese. Finally, in 2021, the Master of Arts in English Language Studies training program was founded and developed, with two core programs: Research-oriented Master's Program in English Language and Application-oriented Master's Program in English Language.

Up to now, there have been two enrollment courses for graduate students, with the first enrollment group starting in June 2021. The Master of Arts in English Language Studies at Van Lang University's Faculty of Foreign Languages is divided into two directions: Research-oriented and Applied orientation. The program's goal is to assist graduate students in supplementing, updating, and improving their knowledge of English language studies. Furthermore, students who select the research track would be able to conduct research projects and publish their findings in national and international journals. The course consists of a total of 60 credits lasting from 18-24 months.

The study was conducted in the second course with a total of 7 females and 2 males. Graduate students are aged between 23 and 30. According to the survey, the majority of them had been studying English since primary school or middle school. They decided to take part in the Master's program for a variety of purposes, including a desire to improve their teaching skills, a desire to conduct scientific research, and so on (based on interview results). The participants were graduate students taking the Advanced Writing course (at the time of research) and experienced Collaborative Writing via Google Docs (CWGD). A Convenience Sampling method was implemented, that is, the researcher only surveyed those she could reach out to. As

such, the study involved 9 student participants (2 males and 7 females). For the sake of confidentiality, their names will be replaced with pseudonyms: Mai, Lan, Minh, Tuấn, Hoa, Linh, Phương, My, and Trang.

Design of the Study

The project employs a qualitative case-study approach. The case involves 9 student participants at Van Lang University on a journey to reflect upon their experiences with the use of Collaborative Writing via Google Docs (CWGD). In its scale, the case has a micro dimension; thus, generalizability is not intended. Instead, the researcher hopes to unpack students' perceptions of the pros and cons of the CWGD model in a specific educational context of Vietnam.

Methods of data collection and analysis

Questionnaire. The researcher created a two-part questionnaire based on the findings of prior investigations. *1) Students' experiences when employing collaborative writing via Google Docs 2) Students' challenges when employing collaborative writing via Google Docs.* The lecturer commented on and amended the questionnaire to ensure its rigor and accuracy in service of the research paper.

Once the questionnaire was finalized, the researcher invited nine people who had studied Collaborative Writing (CW) in Advanced Writing through Google Docs to share their thoughts through *Google Forms*. The participants gave specific examples of what they encountered with each answer and were pleased that their personal information always remained secure.

The researcher employed a questionnaire through Google Forms to acquire information for the investigation using the qualitative method. Besides, in this study, closed-ended questions on a Likert scale of Disagree, Neutral, Agree, and Strongly Agree were employed. Participants were asked to rate each statement using a questionnaire with four Likert scale options. The survey's main purpose was to explore the experiences and challenges of the Collaborative Writing (CW) approach using Google Docs. Participants were required to indicate their gender, age, and occupation. Their responses and information were exclusively used for the purpose of publication.

Results/Findings

When asked about skills that learners believe are difficult to perfect and require a long time to practice when learning a new language, most learners believed that writing is one of the skills that they must master and take a long time to acquire. The remaining skills, i.e., speaking and listening, were thought to be less demanding than other skills. In participants' perception, Collaborative Writing (CW) represents a preferred learning activity that was internalized by most as a helpful way of polishing productive skills.

Figure 1.

The hardest skill to improve
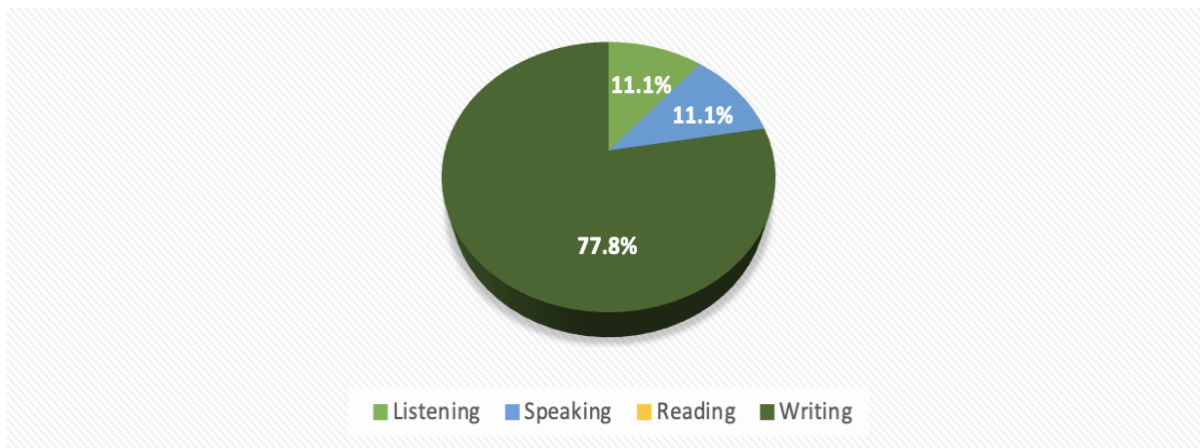
Research question 1: What are some helpful aspects of students' experience with collaborative writing in a face to face setting with peers versus via working with Google Docs?

Advantages of Collaborative Writing (CW)

Initially, according to the interview results, most students have known about Collaborative Writing (CW) since they began university, and some just learned about it when they began taking the Research Writing classes while studying for a master's degree. In general, learners can use this learning method effectively and efficiently. When it comes to this learning style, students all have similar benefits. The figure below depicts the outcomes of Collaborative Writing (CW).

Figure 2.

Benefits of Collaborative Writing (CW)
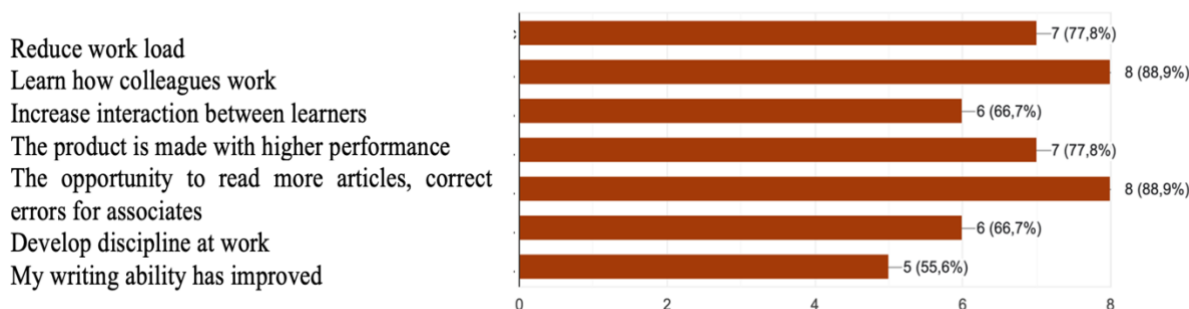
Participants had the chance to choose the benefits that CW has brought them; they were not limited to how many possibilities they could mention and could include more if the above benefits were not what they thought of. Based on the results, it could be shown that the two most noteworthy benefits, accounting for 88.9%, are learning how to collaborate with classmates and having the opportunity to read more articles. Similarly, having 77.8% chosen by users decreased work stress and created a product with greater performance. Furthermore, independent of the quality of the articles or learning from one another's experiences, CW helped learners connect with their classmates and establish discipline to work for themselves, with these two benefits accounting for 66.7% of the total.

Advantages of using Collaborative Writing via Google Docs (CWGD)

On the other hand, when it comes to learners' experiences with combining Collaborative Writing (CW) with Google Docs (GD), they also highlighted certain pros of this strategy. Almost all users were familiar with the Google Docs software when they first started college. Figure 3 provides more information on the content and data.

Figure 3.

Benefits of Collaborative Writing via Google Docs (CWGD)
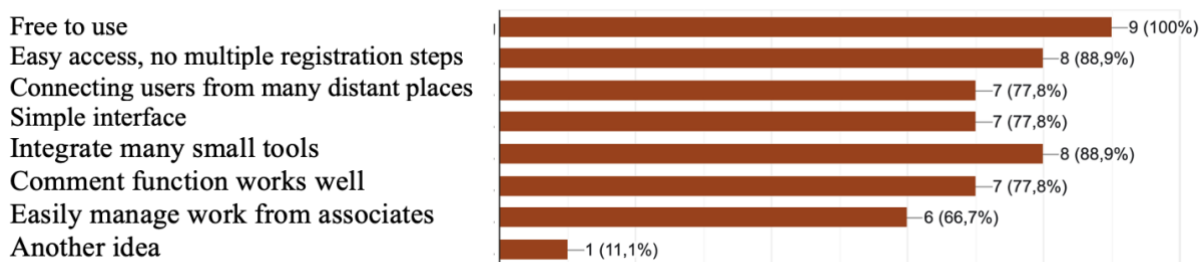
First, a benefit that accounts for 100% of the votes was that the Google Docs (GD) application did not cost the user any money. Second, 88.9% of users believed that the methods to create an account and gain access are simple. With the same percentage of votes as before, Google Docs was regarded as an online application that could integrate many minor tools, thereby providing users with outstanding support. Additionally, the features that had a straightforward interface, the ability to submit evaluations, the ability to supervise teammates' work, the ability to link people from a distance, and comments had received very excellent feedback, making up about 77.8% of each aspect.

Based on the foregoing experiences, when asked to choose the attitude of learners when utilizing Google Docs to serve the Collaborative Writing (CW) technique, the data acquired is shown below on a Likert scale.

Figure 4.

Attitudes of learners when experiencing Collaborative Writing via Google Docs (CWGD)
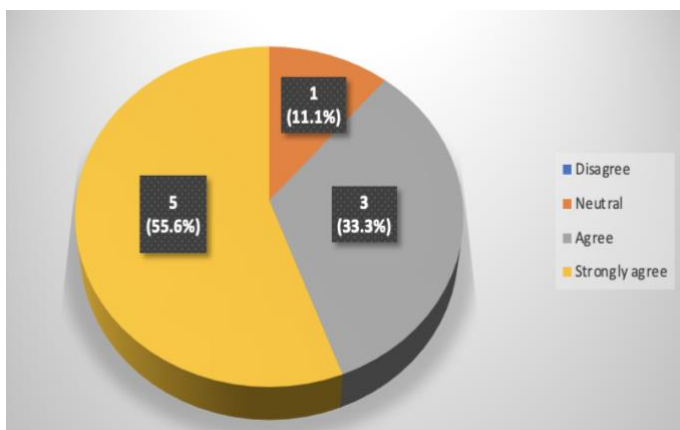
According to the statistical results, most learners strongly agree with the use of Google Docs for collaborative writing, accounting for 55.6%. Next, 33.3% of users rate this combined method in agreement. In general, users have a highly positive view of the CWGD model

through the Likert scale.

Research Question 2: What are some challenges to the practice of collaborative writing in a face-to-face setting with peers versus working with Google Docs?

This section will present two sub-sections on learners' difficulties and challenges when practicing Collaborative Writing via Google Docs (CWGD). The first sub-heading below will present the difficulties of Collaborative Writing (CW) in a learning environment versus working via with Google Docs. The second sub-heading will then discuss the challenges of practicing collaborative writing, including specific problems, solutions, and time to solve. In addition, unresolved challenges will be left blank.

Disadvantages of Collaborative Writing (CW)

Collaborative Writing (CW) offers drawbacks for students in addition to the benefits listed. While experiencing this approach in an Advanced Writing course, students are gradually aware of its limitations. The statistics table below is one of the key issues that learners have encountered; additionally, learners have similar difficulties that are represented in the data.

Table 1.

Students' perspectives on the challenges of using Collaborative Writing (CW)

No.	Limitations	N
1	Lack of responsibility and discipline	6
2	Time-consuming	4
3	Disagreement when working collaboratively	2
4	The level difference affects the final result	2
5	Information overload, duplicate opinions	2
6	Information is not authentic and reliable	2

One of the most significant disadvantages that all learners confront is a lack of responsibility and discipline when working in groups. As many as six people believe that this was one of the most powerless and challenging aspects of Collaborative Writing (CW). As some opinions revealed:

If a team member is late, it slows down the entire process and affects teammates. My work is usually completed on schedule. However, my team members are not always. Instead, they overlooked the submission deadline and submitted it after it had passed (Tuấn).

Some members provide a lot of ideas, but there are also many pals who rely on their teammates all the time. They are easier to grasp because they do not provide thoughts but instead listen and then agree. They are not in charge of the task. (Phương).

The next limitation with four agreeing opinions is the time-consuming problem. Students felt that they had wasted their time on a lot of activities when it comes to CW approach.

Collaborative Writing (CW) requires time to discuss ideas and divide work, which needs to be completed in the most specific time, but this is also a persistent problem that our team faces constantly. (Linh).

I feel it is a waste of time and effort because CW requires an investment of time to discuss, comment, and edit each other's articles (Hoa).

Following that, the issue of dispute when working together, as well as the level difference

between learners in the same group, significantly impacted learners. At the same time, they contended that these issues are unavoidable when it comes to CW.

> *If I choose a group of good classmates who are responsible and disciplined, the Writing result will be better and I will receive a higher score (Trang).*

Similarly, learners believed that advice from colleagues was not always correct. When receiving, critical thinking is necessary (Hoa). As a result, disputes develop when people work together. Furthermore, information overload and duplicate opinions were issues that generated challenges for students. Tuấn and Minh contended that the diversity of information sources lowers the ability to discern between significant and unimportant information and that many perspectives were duplicated when discussed.

Disadvantages of Collaborative Writing via Google Docs

Google Docs (GD) application of course still has limitations that cause difficulties and affect learners when Collaborative Writing (CW). Table 2 provides one of the typical difficulties that users encounter.

Table 2.

Students' perspectives on the challenges of using Collaborative Writing via Google Docs

No.	Limitations	N
1	Unoptimized security information	3
2	Features are still limited	2
3	Cannot be used offline	2
4	Trouble with synchronization	2

When asked what obstacles impede the Collaborative Writing via Google Docs (CWGD), almost all the participants pointed to the lack of information security as the very first weakness of the model. As Mai and Linh stated, if an article was made public, it would almost certainly be scanned for plagiarism. Similarly, if one fails to exercise caution when sharing the URL with others, the article would be leaked (Hoa).

Three additonal drawbacks have been indentified by the student participants. As a second weakness, two participants expressed the concern that Google Docs (GD) suffers from the lack of citation function that many students wish to use but do not have (Trang). A third drawback is that the application of GD is greatly dependent on Internet access, without which the tool would cease to operate (Phương). A fourth drawback is viewed as a 'traffic jam' that happens when multiple users edit one document simultaneously, which might result in data loss (Lan).

Challenges of Collaborative Writing (CW) in the classroom

Table 3.

Challenges and solutions to deal with Collaborative Writing (CW) in a face-to-face learning environment

No.	Limitations	Solutions	Time
1	Lack of ideas to write	Reference from classmates / using ChatGPT	30mins
2	Difficulty arranging time	Using Google Calendar, schedule reminders for each other	10mins
3	Difficulty dividing tasks	Understanding aspirations and clear division	15mins
4	Different learners' abilities	Effort and support for teammates	X
5	Difficult to control when editing articles	X	15mins
6	Submit manual assignments via paper	Take notes with sticky notes	X

The comments brought to light a number of challenges that arose during group writing assignments. Lack of ideas was a frequent problem; some teams had been brainstorming and conferring with other groups for as long as 30 minutes, but ChatGPT had cut this time down to 5–10 minutes. Because team members had trouble locating appropriate discussion times, scheduling meetings was a particularly demanding task. Time changes had occasionally differed by 10 minutes, despite the use of Google Calendar and reminders. There had also been issues with job division, including conflicts and misunderstandings, as well as reluctance on the part of some members to take on tasks. It took around fifteen minutes to complete this process to ensure everyone agreed to their roles. In addition, disparities in writing ability and speed also caused challenges because some participants required more extended time than others to complete their assignments, necessitating greater comprehension and peer support. Information gathering, which required team members to share their search, also resulted in more delays. To complicate matters further, it had taken up to additional fifteen minutes to review and modify drafts. Last but not least, administrative problems including manual paper submission sometimes led to troubleshooting. The absence of a well-defined system to monitor submissions and establish deadlines had exacerbated inefficiencies. These were the multiple challenges experienced by students during collaborative writing in a face-to-face learning environment.

Challenges when using Collaborative Writing (CW) via Google Docs (GD)

Table 4.

Difficulties in writing directly through Google Docs

No.	Limitations
1	Impatient
2	Loss of interest
3	Location distance
4	Internet connection
5	Difficulty using functions
6	Misunderstandings among teammates

In the meantime, data from CWGD practice revealed a range of challenges encountered by participants. When not working face-to-face anymore, team members frequently struggled to stay inspired and motivated, which resulted in a loss of engagement. Furthermore, it had been more difficult to share ideas and clarify corrections due to the lack of direct communication, which had led to misunderstandings. Without direct interaction, technical problems such as network outages or connectivity issues had disrupted the process and resulted in data loss. When

multiple team members were editing the same Google document simultaneously, collaboration failed to synchronize, occasionally causing data to be inadvertently lost or jumbled. Furthermore, such lack of communication also frequently resulted in unclear feedback, necessitating teammates to confirm one other's ideas and opinions. Effective cooperation demands high levels of mutual tolerance and comprehension as a response to these difficulties. By and large, CWGD has caused several serious issues for users, some of which their lecturers may not always be well aware of.

Although the study had not meant to focus on yielding solutions to the problems, in the course of filling out the questionnaire some students took the initiative to express their personal ways of handling challenges when using the CWGD model. As some students revealed:

(1) "Impatient*: I am always actively texting teammates to do homework. Always willing to help you if they are in trouble. Take advantage of completing a part of the article or making a clear outline in class. This will reduce the workload when doing homework through Google Docs, making everyone feel lighter. To reduce the wait, can increase communication and face-to-face discussions with other members to Be clear on issues and make quick decisions (Lan).*

(2) Loss of interest*: I frequently generate motivation by establishing precise goals, exchanging ideas, and soliciting assistance from other members. Activities such as brainstorming, creating space for creativity, and exchanging new ideas can also be employed to revive excitement (Mai and Phương).*

(3) Location distance*: With my team, we use two devices at the same time, communicating with teammates through other applications like Zalo, and Messenger. We will call each other to discuss and confirm information, creating a virtual environment like we are sitting next to each other (Tuấn).*

(4) Internet connection*: Use a high-speed network or connect via a backup mobile network to ensure a stable internet connection. Be aware of potential connection issues and be prepared to take corrective action as soon as possible (Linh).*

(5) Difficulty using functions*: Normally, I only observe and comment on my teammates. I will write the article elsewhere, and when the final draft is available, I will copy it to the document page that the entire team is working on. If something goes wrong while working in Google Docs at the same time, I'll sit back and manually reset it from scratch while waiting for the Internet to recover and press back (Hoa and Minh).*

(6) Misunderstandings among teammates*: My team always uses strong language and provides enough information to ensure clarity in speech. Simultaneously, we make additional room for live conversations in order to rapidly settle any misconceptions that may develop (My)."*

By comparision, the challenges to CW in face-to-face learning environments versus CWGD are different as a result of contextual features. That is, peer communication was not the same between the two modes of working. All things considered, the CWGD model poses additional difficulties that are mostly technological and non-participatory in nature.

Discussion

Our study sought to elicit learners' perspectives on collaborative writing experiences using Google Docs. First, in terms of the benefits and drawbacks of the CW technique, the results reveal that this method provides learners with some typical benefits, such as learning how to work with classmates, which supports the result of Valizadeh (2022). By reading more articles and correcting peer errors, both CW and CWGD were seen to assist peers in improving their writing quality. This finding aligns well with research conducted by Damayanti et al. (2021) regarding the relationship between peer work and writing efficiency. Furthermore, several CW barriers are nearly consistent with past study articles, such as learners disagreeing when working with colleagues and taking a long time to work, which is consistent with Irshad (2022).

Next, employing CWGD in the Advanced Writing classes provides some significant advantages. According to Wahyuningsih (2021) and Suwantarathip (2014), this model helps users learn more successfully and efficiently. Because this strategy requires high involvement, Wahyuningsih (2021) encourages users to discuss and comment on one another. Furthermore, one of the standout aspects when students apply the CWGD model is the commenting and editing option. Learners can change the results and provide better and more thorough suggestions to their teammates (Damayanti et al., 2021).

As presented in data discussion, alongside many benefits of CWGD, some drawbacks the model have been identified. One of the conclusions congruent with Wahyuningsih (2021) is that learners cannot write collaboratively without access to the Internet; thus, this model cannot be operated offline. Furthermore, the analysis reveals that Google Docs' security information has not yet been optimized. To put it another way, users must exercise caution when sharing links with teammates because strangers can easily enter their messages. Furthermore, when articles on GD are made public, it can result in plagiarism. Next, users perceive that some functions, such as citing sources, are still limited and not as usable in GD as they are in Microsoft Word (Irshad, 2022). After that, Wenyi Zhou et al. (2012) said that some students still struggle to use Google Docs. Despite the fact that the interface is fairly simple, this outcome is entirely compatible with our study. Finally, after learning about the common benefits and drawbacks, students score CWGD model on a Likert scale. The scale has four levels of disagreement: disagree, normal, agree, and highly agree; the results are quite positive and objective. The majority of people have had a very positive experience with this method, and there have been no negative votes.

Researchers compared CW in the classroom to CWGD to see whether there were any major differences. When working jointly, the results suggest that these two methodologies face similar challenges such as time loss, work pressure, and conflict. However, CW in a face-to-face learning environment appears to present learners with more problems to address. Similarly, some issues cannot be resolved in a timely manner. In contrast, collaborative writing using GD brings a number of other challenges, such as boredom, impatience, and technological and functional barriers. However, learners can overcome these challenges and lessen their overall load. Aside from these challenges, students provided several tips for more effective use of GD for CW. As Tri et al. (2023) stated, writing with technology improves the ability to assess, discuss, and share ideas with teammates. According to this study, students can be more productive by using Google Docs, a particular online tool (Wahyuningsih, 2021). In addition, to avoid mistakes, students should come up with ideas when writing, discuss attentively, and pay attention to matters linked to the Internet. Furthermore, the study encourages students to foster teamwork and patience when working toward a more better output.

Limitations and recommendations

The current study featured a small number of participants, which influenced the view of the entire population in EFL environments. The current study's procedures are not objective enough because the outcomes rely mainly on students' opinions.

The current study's researcher examined the short-term impacts of Collaborative Writing via Google Docs (CWGD) and found beneficial results. Future researchers should investigate the long-term impact of the intervention in question to see whether the good benefits discovered will last for a prolonged length of time. Furthermore, it is a good idea to analyze a larger number of students' views to achieve more reliable results.

Conclusion

In summary, this study aims to draw attention to the advantages and drawbacks of using Google Docs in conjunction with the Collaborative Writing (CW) method at Van Lang University. This will give students a new perspective on the approach and help them create an effective learning strategy that will ease their workload.

According to the findings, the advantages of this strategy are undeniable. Nevertheless, restrictions are an important consideration. However, after using this strategy, students better understand its benefits and drawbacks, as well as how to deal with them. Furthermore, learners do not place too much emphasis on the aforementioned constraints. Instead, they avoid using the collaborative writing approach via Google Docs and instead contribute new recommendations that they have created after learning. This study is to inspire learners to have a more objective view of new learning methods and to share and support teachers in their efforts to find the most successful teaching methods.

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Ethical statement

Biodata

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