


Students' Perceptions and Practice of the Blended Learning Approach to Writing Skills: Using Google Docs

Nguyen Thi Hang^{1*}

¹ Faculty of Foreign Languages, University of Finance and Marketing, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

* Corresponding author's email: nt.hang@ufm.edu.vn

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7285-6236>

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ABSTRACT

It's undeniable that technology has been popularly employed in the teaching and learning process all over the world in the digital era, especially in the pandemic-affected context. Specifically, the benefits of google docs as an innovative collaboration tool in writing activities have been discussed in many foreign studies such as Sholihaha & Setyandaria (2018), Mare F. & Mare Z. (2020), Nabhan & Sa'diyah (2021). However, recent studies on this field in the university domain in Vietnam are scarce, so this research was undertaken to discover the merits and downfalls of applying google docs in learning writing collaboratively. Besides, this paper aimed at tracking down students' attitudes towards implementing google docs technology in writing classes. To obtain these objectives, two student questionnaires were delivered to 21 English-majored freshmen and learners' writing assignments were assessed to collect data. The study result suggests there were no significant effects between google docs and students' collaborative writing grades. However, students had positive attitudes toward employing Google docs in writing collectively. Additionally, learners, especially low-level ones, have improved their social skills and technological knowledge. Finally, the study reveals students complained about expensive costs, difficulties in processing Google documents on smartphones, and internet loafing.

Keywords:

Blended Learning,
Google docs,
Writing skills,
Perception, Practice

Introduction

In the digital age, thanks to technological advancements, numerous teaching, and learning platforms have been applied and have been playing an increasingly significant role in foreign/second language teaching and learning (Kupelian, 2001; Warschauer & Healey, 1998 as cited in Shang, 2007), for they could evoke creativity, activeness, and collaboration in teachers and learners (Yi & Jang, 2020). According to Mabuan & Ebron (2017), the brick-and-mortar mode of teaching incorporated with online teaching, namely using email technology encouraged learners to write more effectively, helped them to develop their positive attitude and motivation in language learning, and offered them a good social space for interaction and collaboration. Mabuan & Ebron (2018) also stated students rated MOOCs (massive open online courses) as a creative, dynamic, and practical way of supporting the learning process, a pivotal 'add-on' to the curriculum, and a platform for boosting learners' autonomy. Additionally, recent technology like Facebook can influence the writing skills of students positively (Al-Tamimi M. F. et al., 2018). Not to mention, a number of studies have demonstrated that students' writing

performance, motivation, and social skills improved via Google docs software (Sholihaha & Setyandaria (2018), Mare F. & Mare Z. (2020), Nabhan & Sa'diyah (2021)).

Overall, there has been a wide range of studies in the field of blended learning, and these studies pinpointed good aspects of creating a hybrid learning environment. However, research into this issue is really scarce in the university domain in Vietnam. Also, most previous studies stayed focused on investigating the correlation between applying Google docs, as a blended learning model, in in-class writing activities and students' attitudes and language synchronously writing competence. And thus, this small-scale study was conducted to work out if using google docs, as a collaborative writing tool, in out-of-class writing classes synchronously and asynchronously brings participants in the teaching and learning process more merits than traditional writing classes or not. On top of that, this paper aimed at investigating learners' attitudes toward applying google docs.

Literature review

Blended learning

The increasing integration of technology aids like overhead projectors, electronic whiteboards, online textbooks, remote learning platforms, and learning content management systems into the teaching and learning process leads to the shift to the blended learning approach which has been understood as a combination of face-to-face and technology-mediated instructional forms and practices. Christensen, Horn & Staker (2013) defined the blended learning model as the incorporation of students' learning at least in part at a supervised brick-and-mortar location away from home and at least in part through online delivery with some elements of student control over time, place, path, and/or pace. Their blended learning program has 4 models: rotation, flex, a la carte, and enriched virtual. The rotation model comprises four sub-models: station rotation, lab rotation, flipped classroom, and individual classroom.

A La Carte Model

This model encourages students to take one or more courses entirely online either on the brick-and-mortar campus or off-site to supplement their traditional courses and the teacher-of-record is the online teacher (Christensen, Horn & Staker, 2013).

Enriched-Virtual Model

This model allows students to allocate their time to going to a brick-and-mortar campus and to staying at home and learning remotely using online delivery of content and instruction. They meet in person with teachers for their first-course meeting in a physical classroom. Many Enriched-Virtual programs work full-time and then blended programs are created to provide students with brick-and-mortar school experiences (Christensen, Horn & Staker, 2013).

Rotation Model

In this model, students rotate between learning stations: physical classroom and virtual classroom. The rotation is carried out according to a fixed schedule or at the teacher's choice between learning modalities, at least one of which is online learning. Whole-class, small-group or one-by-one rotations can be implemented. Activities such as group projects, individual tutoring, and pencil-and-paper assignments are also included (Christensen, Horn & Staker, 2013).

Flex Model

Lectures are delivered primarily online with the teacher's assistance when necessary. Some in-class meetings focus on discussions and problem-solving. Delivering substantial face-to-face support or minimal support depends on learners' demands. Some flex models may have face-to-face certified teachers who supplement the online learning on a daily basis, whereas others may provide little face-to-face enrichment (Christensen, Horn & Staker, 2013).

Google docs

According to Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, Google document (Google Docs) is defined as "an online word processor included as part of the free, web-based Google Docs Editors suite offered by Google", and this online document editor is also a free web-based service and storage of documents, spreadsheets, presentations, and forms from google (Sholihaha & Setyandaria, 2018).

This application brings users an array of miracle features. First, Google docs offer collaboration in the documents. Belomestnykh (2010) claimed that Google docs include not only traditional word processing functions, but also innovative tools which can extend collaboration capabilities in the documents. The new characteristic is shown on a sidebar that lets collaborators see who else is editing at the same time, and chat with them right next to the document. Similarly, Walsh (2010), Tabone (2014), and Sholihaha & Setyandaria (2018) pointed out that thanks to Google Docs, more than one person can work on a particular document at the same time.

The second feature of Google docs is the document editor mentioned by Tabone (2014). He admitted that it can be a challenge if we need to make some edits to the original documents and send them back right away without the aid of Google docs which allows users to alter the content in the files and send them back in their original format on the website or mobile apps. On top of that mobile apps for Docs let users create and make changes to the files no matter where they are, even if they're offline.

The next item of Google Docs is offering grammar suggestions. In specific, errors will be marked, and suggestions will be given (Nieva (2018), Susan (2012)). Furthermore, not only simple mistakes (like "affect" vs. "effect") but also more complicated issues such as verb tense disagreement or improper preposition use will be recognized by a newly upgraded grammar checker (Karcz, 2019). Besides, with the latest upgrade, machine translation techniques are used by Google to catch tricky errors and make logical contextual suggestions like using correct subordinate clauses, and such inline grammar suggestions will be denoted by a squiggly blue line when writers type (Karcz, 2019).

The fourth feature of Google docs is related to the spellchecking system. Spelling has been a part of Google Docs for seven years now, and spelling allows users to check words, see if it's misspelled, and offer the correct spelling (Karcz, 2019). With the same opinion, Susan (2012) stated that a built-in smart spellchecking system used by Google Docs helps the student to easily identify spelling as the spellchecking service is more comprehensive than a typical dictionary because the Googlebot constantly crawls the web for new and popular definitions. Since students used spell checkers in Google docs, their mistakes in spelling words were reduced.

Duddu (2012) mentioned the research pane as a new aspect provided by Google docs. The research pane taps into Google Search directly from Google documents, so users can access the web's wealth of information and add any words or phrases of a topic or a quote to bolster their writings without opening a new tab. The explore tool brings users different types of results including: "web results, images, quotations, maps, reviews, and more" by doing one of the following ways (Weber & Harrison, 2012):

- “*Selecting the Research option from the Tools menu.*
- *Using the keyboard shortcut (Cmd + Opt + R on Mac, Ctrl + Alt + R on PC).*
- *Right-clicking on a specific word and select Research”.*

Another characteristic of Google docs is that documents will be stored automatically in link <http://docs.google.com/>, so there is no risk of total data loss as a result of a localized catastrophe (Sholihaha and Setyandaria, 2018).

Wikipedia also lists the characteristics of Google docs mentioned above, but it adds two new characteristics. First, a revision history with changes is saved, and the editors' position is highlighted with an editor-specific color and cursor. Second, opening and saving documents can be done in the standard Open Document format as well as in Rich text format, plain Unicode text, zipped HTML, and Microsoft Word. Exporting to PDF and EPUB formats is also implemented.

Writing skills

Challenges in writing skill

According to Lru ((2014) cited in Tran et al (2022)), students' writing skills are considered destitute skills because they have not been focused on since they were still studying in general education. Therefore, students face many difficulties when learning writing skills at university. Firstly, lack of vocabulary is one of the primary problems which refrain students from acquiring writing skills (Misbah et al, 2017); vocabulary is regarded as a fundamental element in constructing sentences which are deemed as the core of efficient writing skills (Asep, 2014). Secondly, the next trouble lies in the grammar itself which also takes on an important role in writing. Grammar provides information that helps the reader to understand sentences' meaning, and a structure can convey the detailed meaning of the writer to the reader. Thirdly, Foster (2015) believes that, to complete a successful task, students' readiness which can be either physical or mental is of another particular concern. Fourthly, uneasily accessible language resources make writing in English a slower pace, but they also hinder the students' ability to communicate their writing goals (Petric, 2006). The last challenge that L2 writers tend to encounter is the lack of motivation, as explained by Gbollie and Keanu (2017), the importance of motivation is put in a higher position than other factors in bringing about optimal learner achievement.

Evaluation scales of writing skill

Holistic and analytic evaluations have been considered as the most common evaluation methods of writing (Bacha, 2001). While looking through a paper to get an overall impression of a writer's writing skill is called the holistic evaluation often used for informing placement decisions and measuring students' achievement, the analytic scoring involves an itemized analysis and is commonly used to identify weaknesses in a student's writing such as usage of articles or the correct word order in students' piece of writing (Klimova (2011).

A lot of different scales for evaluating writing are available for teachers and researchers to use in ESL Composition Profile by Jacobs et al. (1981), Haswell (2007), Bacha (2001), and Klimova (2011). The Profile contains five major writing aspects such as content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics. Each criterion consists of four rating levels of very poor, poor to fair, average to good, and very good to excellent. Each component and level give clear descriptors of the writing proficiency for that particular level as well as a numerical scale.

The Writing Rating scales of the Vietnamese Standardized Test of English proficiency (VSTEP) has also created a scale to mark Vietnamese learners' English writing performance.

Its scale contains 4 components: task achievement, organization, vocabulary, and grammar. In this paper, the author employed the VSTEP assessing scales to analyze and assess students' writing pieces.

Related Studies

There has been a considerable amount of publication on the integration of the online document editor - Google docs into EFL writing classrooms. It's believed that this application has the potential to offer students collaboration opportunities with schoolfellows. Zhou et al. (2012) found that Google Docs was considered as a useful tool for group work in an out-of-class writing activity. Similarly, Mare F. & Mare Z. (2020) proved that Google Docs allowed students to do the same tasks successfully with only little restrictions which can be found sometimes in conventional classrooms.

Besides, a number of researchers highlighted that the student's writing skills improved when they processed their written work in Google docs with their collaborators. For instance, Sholihaha and Setyandaria (2018) and Mare F. and Mare Z., (2020) pointed out that student writers' language writing ability improved noticeably through the experience of collaborative writing in Google Docs, particularly in exploring, sharing, and organizing ideas, and using the correct vocabulary, punctuation, and grammar. Nabhan and Sa'diyah (2021) held a similar view that when employing Google Docs for collaborative writing, student users enhanced their writing languages elements such as appropriately written syntax and vocabulary since they could utilize the spelling and grammar checking system, and they were able to learn new terminologies from their peers at the comment section of the Google-docs page. Now that Zhou et al. (2012) couldn't find out any effect of Google docs on students' paper grades.

Furthermore, it is argued that one of the benefits of collaborative writing with Google docs is that it improves the writer's social skills. To be specific, students showed the enhancement of their social skills aiding communication in the technological environment among the group thanks to Google-docs features enabling users to share and exchange ideas easily (Nabhan and Sa'diyah, 2021, SriRahayu, 2016). SriRahayu (2016) and Mare F. & Mare Z., 2020 also added that communication in the technological environment among the group lowered the anxiety associated with completing assignments alone, raised the student's confidence in mastering English, and hence increased students' enthusiasm and engagement.

Nabhan and Sa'diyah (2021) uncovered that after working with Google docs, students could reduce their competency gap in using technology. They stated that some students were perplexed by using the medium, but after that, they comprehended it and used it professionally. For example, they could insert pictures, exchange files or operate the medium easily.

Overall, the above-mentioned studies were carried out in a small scale, and applying Google docs was done in in-class collaborative writing activities. Besides, these papers also proved that learners could take advantage of Google docs' new features to improve their writing ability, social communication, digital ability, and motivation in learning writing.

Research Questions

This paper was carried out to find the answers to the following research questions:

1. What are the learners' attitudes on learning in a hybrid learning environment in which using google docs is exploited in collaborative writing activities?
2. What are the merits and challenges when applying the blended learning approach?

Methods

Pedagogical Setting & Participants

The study was conducted with 21 English-majored freshmen (n=21, 8 males and 13 females) who were 19 years old and studying at the university of Finance and Marketing in the 2022-2023 academic year. This population was selected as the present study involved the first writing course “Writing 1” included in the curriculum for the first-year majors in the second term of the 2022-2023 academic year, and during this research period, students haven’t studied the subject, so the researcher has called for volunteering participants. In addition, twenty-one undergraduates joining the study filled out two online questionnaires, and they were divided into 4 groups with each group consisting of 5 or 6 students. The 4 groups with the same members would complete 2 writing assignments with the first one written on paper and the latter processed in Google docs. The group composition was based on student’s choice so that they felt the most comfortable when working in team.

Design of the Study

Only quantitative data were gathered to obtain the research objectives. The quantitative data was assembled through assignment results and two online questionnaires via Google Forms to find out students’ demographic information, experience in Google docs, attitudes toward blending Google docs in collaborative writing activities, and effects of utilizing the application.

Data collection & analysis

The data collection process started with obtaining data from the groups’ paper-and-pen collaborative writing assignment. To gather data for students’ collaborative writing ability, the researcher required students to do the first writing task on paper in groups outside their physical classroom after being given the knowledge of the task genre. Then, an online questionnaire with only 3 questions focusing on eliciting participants’ experiences in Google docs was assigned to students to fill out. This survey helps the author know if the Net generation knew and used to utilize this collaboration tool. Next, the author administered the second assignment on the Google Meet platform with different groups at different times in accordance with their appointment. All the participants were required to turn on their cameras during their working process. Students were asked to write a short paragraph (about 200 words) on the assigned topic within 40 minutes. Their works were analyzed and evaluated according to 4 criteria: task achievement, organization, vocabulary, and grammar designed by the Writing Rating scales of the Vietnamese Standardized Test of English proficiency (VSTEP). Finally, an online questionnaire tailored in Google Forms was delivered to 21 undergraduates. There were 3 sections in the question list, including students’ demographic information, attitudes toward blending Google docs in collaborative writing activities, and advantages and drawbacks of utilizing the application. The first section with 2 items asks for participants’ demographic information. Section 2 with 6 items asks about learners’ interest, and level of contribution activeness. The final section has 7 questions, and it triggers positive aspects of applying the blended learning model in brick-and-mortar classes.

The study results were demonstrated through specific numbers and percentages (%), Mean, Standard Deviation, and Sig via the software called the statistical package for social science 22 (SPSS 26). The researcher applied Cronbach’s Alpha to determine the reliability of data obtained by three questions measured by a five-point Likert scale. The score of Cronbach’s Alpha test of 0.76 indicated that data collected from questionnaire items were reliable ($0.6 < \text{Cronbach's Alpha} < 1$).

Besides, paired-sample t-tests were used to determine correlations between assignments with and without using Google docs on groups' performance. Paired-sample t-tests were applied with significant level is 0.05. Table 1 below shows the data collection procedure.

Table 1. Procedure for data collection and course assignments

Week/ Teaching mode	Procedure
Week 1 On campus	-Course introduction: materials (Great Writing 2 by Folse, K. S. et al. (2004)), content, course requirements and evaluation -Group membership assignment: 5 or 6 students were divided into a group -Lecture: Unit1 Opinion paragraph -Collective writing practice on paper -Pen-and-paper assignment 1: allowing a one-week period to complete
Week 2 via Google Meet	-Questionnaire 1 -Google docs Introduction: via videos -Teacher's step-by-step introduction on how to use Google docs -Question and answers related to opinion paragraphs and collaborative writing on the tool -Synchronous collaborative writing practice on Google docs -Submitting assignment 1 -Assignment 2 (Google-docs condition): allowing a one-week period to complete
Week 3 Via Zalo platform	-Assignment 2: Turned in by each group by sending the teacher their assignment link to Google docs -Questionnaire 2

Results/Findings and discussion

Questionnaire results

Experience with Google docs

Table 2. Participants' Google-docs experience

No.	Items	Answer	Number	Valid Percent
1	Do you know the google docs application?	Yes	21	100
		No	0	0
2	Have you ever used Google docs to complete assignments individually or in group?	Yes	20	95.2
		No	1	4.8
3	Did you find Google docs useful? Circle one: Yes/ No– Please explain why or why not?	Yes	21	100
		No	0	0

In table 2, All participants knew Google docs and rated this tool as useful, and a big number of participants were familiar with this tool (95.2%).

*Attitudes towards Google docs in collaborative writing***Table 3.1.** Participants' Google-docs attitudes

No.	Items	Answer	Number	Valid Percent (%)
1	Did you enjoy working with Google docs for group collaboration in writing classes?	Yes	19	90.5
		No	2	9.5
4a	I created a new document on the Google docs application.	Yes	13	61.9
		No	8	38.1
4b	I shared the Google document link with my group members.	Yes	17	81
		No	4	19
4c	I shared ideas with my group members.	Yes	13	61.9
		No	8	38.1
4d	I gave comments on my coworkers' sentences in terms of vocabulary, grammar, and ideas.	Yes	13	61.9
		No	8	38.1
4e	I corrected my friends' mistakes in terms of vocabulary and grammar.	Yes	19	90.5
		No	2	9.5
4f	I edited my coworkers' sentences in terms of vocabulary, grammar, and ideas.	Yes	13	61.9
		No	8	38.1
4g	I used the research tools provided by Google docs to look for vocabulary, synonyms, collocations, idioms, grammar structures, and ideas.	Yes	6	28.6
		No	15	71.4
4h	I used the spelling-check tool and grammar-check system provided by Google docs to check grammar, and spelling.	Yes	14	66.7
		No	7	33.3
4i	I edited the overall organization of the document.	Yes	13	61.9
		No	8	38.1
13	Are you going to exploit the good functions of Google docs for your future collaborative writing assignments?	Yes	19	90.5
		No	2	9.5

Table 3.2 Participants' Google-docs attitudes

No	Item	1 (NVA)	2 (NA)	3 (N)	4 (A)	5 (VA)	Mean	SD
2	How active are you in collaborative writing activities using the digital learning tool: Google docs?	1	1	2	13	4	3.85	0.963

Table 3.3 Participants' Google-docs attitudes

No	Item	1 (VN)	2 (N)	3 (N)	4 (P)	5 (VP)	Mean	SD
3	How did Google docs influence your group's collaborative experience?	0	1	1	9	10	4.14	1.062

Table 3.4 Participants' Google-docs attitudes

No	Item	1 (TD)	2 (D)	3 (N)	4 (A)	5 (TA)	Mean	SD
12	Google docs is a powerful collaborative writing tool.	7	0	2	6	6	3.23	1.609

The survey results assembled from questions 1, 2, 3, 4, 12, 13 in the tables above indicates that 90% loved writing with a circle of classmates in Google docs and intended to employ it for future cooperative writing tasks because they proved that it is a very good collaboration tool to compose pieces of writing ($M=3.23$) and it influenced their group writing performance positively ($M=4.14$). In terms of students' contribution to their group, they were rated active or very active (Mean=3.85). They contributed a lot to their groups. For example, most students shared the Google-docs link with group members and corrected friends' mistakes in grammar and vocabulary (81% and 90.5% respectively). More than half (over 60%) opened and created a Google-doc page, shared ideas with their coworkers, gave feedback, edited friends' sentences, and used spelling-check and grammar-check systems for correct language use and spelling.

Benefits of google docs in group writing activities

Table 4. Advantages of writing with peers using Google docs

No.	Items	Answer	Number	Valid Percent (%)
5	Do you think that your digital literacy has been enhanced thanks to using google docs?	Yes	19	90.5
		No	2	9.5
6a	Accessing websites, searching for, curating, organizing and sharing digital information	Yes	21	100
		No	0	0
6b	Comprehending and employing many functions of useful applications: Google docs, Google meet, Microsoft word, etc.	Yes	17	81
		No	4	19
6c	Others	Yes	0	0
		No	21	100
7	Has your social skill been improved?	Yes	19	90.5
		No	2	9.5
8a	I was happy to exchange more ideas.	Yes	14	66.7
		No	7	33.3
8b	My level of mutual interaction increased.	Yes	16	76.2
		No	5	23.8
8c	I was excited about typing comments and suggestions in terms of vocabulary, grammar, and ideas.	Yes	20	95.2
		No	1	4.8
8d	Others	Yes	0	0

		No	21	100
9	Have your language writing skills been improved?	Yes	21	100
		No	0	0
10a	I could write sentences using more advanced vocabulary, collocations and idioms.	Yes	13	61.9
		No	8	38.1
10b	I could write sentences using complicated grammar structures.	Yes	9	42.9
		No	12	57.1
10c	I could realize basic grammar errors and mistakes I used to make.	Yes	17	81
		No	4	19
10d	I could write sentences using cohesive devices.	Yes	12	57.1
		No	9	42.9
10e	Others	Yes	0	0
		No	21	100

According to Table 4, the results present that all or nearly all students have improved their digital knowledge, social skills and especially writing skills (90.5%, 90.5% and 100% respectively). In terms of computer skills, 100% of survey doers reported that they could access any websites directly from Google or Google docs platforms to look for, select, organize and share with their collaborators. 81% said that they were also able to utilize the web 2.0 tools such as Google docs, Google meet, Microsoft word, etc. better after experimenting with the Google-docs technology. With reference to mutual communication in teams, about 70% of the participant shared that they were happy to discuss with their peers. In addition, they admitted that their interaction with friends went up considerably (76.2%). 95% agreed that they were excited about group contribution activities. When it comes to writing ability improvement, applying Google docs in their group writing helped train them to denote basic grammar errors receiving the most votes (17 votes, 81%). Being able to create meaningful sentences with correct and high-level lexical resources ranks second with 13 votes accounting for 61.9%. Finally, students' production of sentences with complicated grammar structures and cohesive devices accounts for a similar proportion (42.9%, and 57.1% respectively).

Google-docs downsides in synchronous writing in groups

Table 5. Drawbacks in synchronously collaborative writing on Google docs

No.	Items	Answer	Number	Valid Percent (%)
11a	I didn't know how to use Google docs.	Yes	0	0
		No	21	100
11b	I had to pay for 4-G technology to get access to the Internet.	Yes	8	38.1
		No	13	61.9
11c	I had to buy a laptop to do assignments on Google docs.	Yes	6	28.6
		No	15	71.4
11d	It was time-consuming and inconvenient to type on	Yes	11	52.6

	my smartphone.	No	10	47.4
11e	The internet connection was unstable.	Yes	15	71.4
		No	6	28.6
11f	Others	Yes	0	0
		No	21	100

Table 5 represents an array of problems arising when student writers were asked to compose a paragraph on the web-based page (Google docs). In particular, most participants experienced poor Internet connectivity and spent a big amount of money on new laptops, smartphones, or 4-G fees (about 70%). Not to mention, half of the participants (52.6%) had to first download Google Docs to their phones and had difficulty in typing.

Collaborative writing assignment scores

Table 6. The pre-and post-writing assignment scores of 4 groups of first-year majored students

Groups	The pre-writing scores without Google docs			The post-writing scores with Google docs			Vstep writing level	N
	Rater 1	Rater 2	Mean scores	Rater1	Rater2	Mean scores		
F5	6	6	6	7.5	7	7.25	B2 (6-8)	5
Bunbo	6	6	6	7	7.5	7.25	B2 (6-8)	5
Minhthu	6.5	7	6.75	6.5	6.5	6.5	B2 (6-8)	6
Sunny	6	6	6	6.5	7	6.75	B2 (6-8)	5

Table 7. Overall mean scores in assignment 1 and assignment 2 between groups

Experimental/ paired sample TTest	N	Mean	SD	Sig-(2-tailed)
F5_with Google docs F5_without Google docs	6	7.25 6.00	0.353 0.000	0.126
Bunbo_with Google docs Bunbo_without Google docs	5	7.25 6.00	0.353 0.000	0.126
Minhthu_with Google docs Minhthu_without Google docs	5	6.50 6.75	0.000 0.353	0.500
Sunny_with Google docs Sunny_without Google docs	5	6.75 6.00	0.353 0.000	0.205

Table 6 revealed that there was no significant difference found in grades of assignment 1 and assignment 2 among different groups' writing performance with $p=0.126, 0.126, 0.500, 0.205 > 0.05$ corresponding with groups: F5, Bunbo, Minhthu, and Sunny. However, the overall mean scores of all 4 groups are higher when they utilized the Google platform to produce their opinion paragraphs, and all groups of students got B1 level, according to Vstep writing level.

Discussion

Question 1: What are the learners' attitudes on learning in a hybrid learning environment in which using google docs is exploited in collaborative writing activities?

The present study discovered that most UFM (University of Finance and Marketing) students had good attitudes toward exploiting Google-docs functions in writing synchronously with peers. Specifically, almost all collaborators were interested in working with the 2.0 application and intended to employ it for future cooperative writing tasks (90.5%). The participants also agreed that Google docs are a very good collaboration tool to compose pieces of writing (M=3.23), for it influenced their group writing performance positively (M=4.14). Furthermore, student writers were active or very active (Mean=3.85) when making contributions to their group. Students' activeness manifests in sharing the Google-docs link with group members, correcting friends' mistakes in grammar and vocabulary (81% and 90.5% respectively), opening and creating a Google doc page, sharing ideas with their coworkers, giving feedback, editing friends' sentences, and using spelling-check and grammar-check systems for correct language use and spelling (over 60%).

The research findings of the present study completely match the study results by Sandolo (2010), Woodrich & Fan (2017), Mare F. & Mare Z. (2020), Nabhan & Sa'diyah (2021), and Nguyen & Nguyen (2022) when they all concluded that students felt enthusiastic and excited about study.

Question 2: What are the merits and challenges when applying the blended learning approach?

Benefits of Google docs in collaborative writing

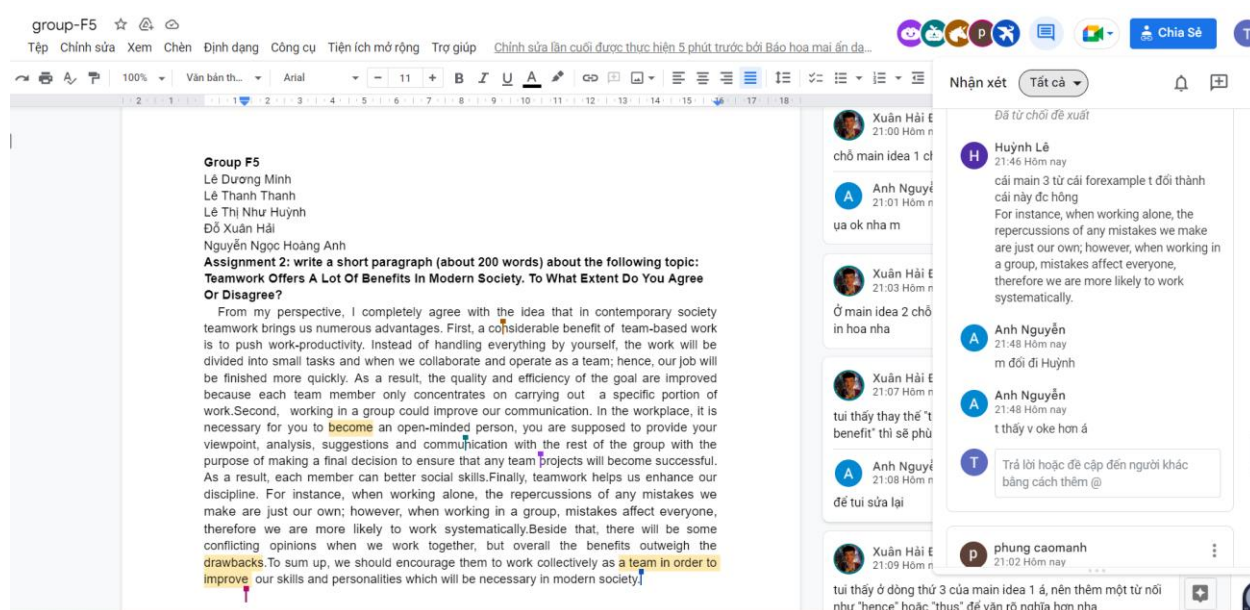
The survey results present that all or nearly all students have improved their digital knowledge, social skills and especially writing skills (90.5%, 90.5%, and 100% respectively). In terms of computer skills, 100% of survey doers reported that they could access any websites directly from Google or Google docs platforms to look for, select, organize and share with their collaborators better than ever. They all explained that this computer improvement was the result of using a "hands-on exploring tool right on the Google-docs sidebar. Besides, after experimenting with the Google-docs technology, experimenters said that they were also able to utilize the 2.0 computer programs such as Google docs, Google Meet, Microsoft word, etc. better than before. These findings confirm other studies such as Nabhan and Sa'diyah (2021) with the statement that learning using digital media in the class enhanced students' ability in using technology.

With reference to mutual interaction among team members, it's clear that two third of participants polished their social skills. According to the study's statistics, over 70% shared that they were happy to discuss with their peers in the digital circle with Google docs, and their interaction with friends went up considerably. More importantly, 95% agreed that they were very active in group contribution activities. It seems that the increasing level of student engagement is linked with a hybrid learning environment in which synchronous collaborative writing in Google docs occurs, and it enables users to discuss orally or in word via Google Meet and chat room right on the Google-docs taskbar. This research result is consistent with that of Nabhan and Sa'diyah (2021).

When it comes to writing ability improvement, applying Google docs in their group writing enabled learners to denote basic grammar errors (81%), to create meaningful sentences with correct and high-level lexical resources (61.9%), and to produce sentences with complicated grammar structures and cohesive devices (42.9%, and 57.1% respectively). The analysis of

open questions from the survey and F5 group's writing assignments (See picture 1 below) also proved that employing Google-docs technology let students be able to use a wide range of appropriate vocabulary for the task and to use advanced ones (proverb, point out, teamwork, productivity, quality, efficiency) thanks to Google-docs research tool giving them convenient access to dictionary or collocations on websites. Therefore, student writers mastered more vocabulary. This finding confirms the study by Iskandar & Pahlevi (2021) in that online collaborative writing involves students learning cognitively by acquiring new lexical resources. Noticeably, they produced no errors in spelling and/or word formation by using spell checkers in Google Docs. On top of that, Google Docs with grammar checking system and chat room could help co-workers deal with grammar problems. As a result, they had good control of tenses, articles, prepositions, and punctuation, and used a wide range of structures, including simple sentences, compound sentences, complex sentences, and compound-complex sentences.

Picture 1. F5 group's writing assignment in Google docs



In contrast, the findings from analyzing writing assignments by SPSS 22 pointed out that there was no significant effect of employing Google docs on students' writing ability ($P=0.126, 0.126, 0.500, 0.205 > 0.05$). These findings resemble many studies such as Zhou, Simpson & Domizi (2012), which found that there was no significant effect of the collective authoring and ideas-processing tool, Google docs on students' writing grades; Woodrich and Fan (2017), which maintained that anonymous collective writing in Google docs didn't lead to more successful writing products, or Pham (2019), who concluded that there was no significant correlation between student collaboration in Google docs and writing quality.

Challenges encountered while applying Google docs

There remained some problems arising when student writers were asked to compose a paragraph on the web-based page (Google docs). First, most participants (about 70%) experienced poor Internet connectivity. This study result is consistent with the studies by Mare F. & Mare Z. (2020), Nabhan & Sa'diyah (2021), Irshad (2022), and Nguyen & Nguyen (2022), who maintained that students faced some technical problems such as internet loafing. Second, the same proportion spent a big amount of money on new laptops, smartphones, or 4-G fees (about 70%). Not to mention, half of the participants (52.6%) had to first download Google

Docs to their phones and had difficulty in typing, which is aligned with the study by Irshad (2022).

Conclusion

The study has unveiled several findings. First, students had positive attitudes when using Google docs to write together. In particular, students were active and motivated in cyber group discussions. They were inspired to share ideas with their partners since they could browse on the Internet and felt comfortable typing their sentences because wrong words or grammar mistakes were denoted, and correct suggestions were given thanks to Google-docs features such as the explore tool, dictionary, and grammar checker. Second, participants in the survey conveyed their improvement in social skills when working with Google docs. Google docs helped increase active participation and engagement with other members in comparison with writing on paper documents via Google Meet and the chat room available on the Google-docs taskbar which allowed students to express their opinions or give comments on their friends' ideas both orally and in writing. Next, students' exposure to Google docs made them technologically literate. For example, they knew how to operate Google meet, or they could share information with collaborators. Another result is that Google documents brought students good learning experiences. For instance, students' ideas are built, shared, and organized in Google docs with the help of the explore tool and the chat room. Besides, the grammar-check, spelling-check system, and dictionary provided by Google docs let users expose correct, advanced vocabulary with collocations and phrasal verbs and correct, correct grammar sentences with suitable punctuation and cohesive devices. However, no correlation coefficient between this technology with students' writing performance was found. Finally, employing Google docs also brings learners some drawbacks such as expensive costs, difficulty processing Google documents on smartphones, and unstable Internet access.

Suggestions for Further Research

The present study explored students' experience and their attitudes toward utilizing Google docs as a blended learning approach in writing classrooms. Due to time constraints and the author's ability, the study just used the quantitative research design with a small sample size. Therefore, to validate the study results, future studies should be conducted using mix-methods and a bigger sample size to gain a wider view and to generalize to a full setting. Moreover, students' patterns of interaction and contributions, and their employment of scaffolding strategies in the google docs platform should be included in the research to determine if collective writing activities lead to productive writing quality. Finally, future studies should examine teachers' perceptions and practice of Google docs to enhance students' writing performance.

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Biodata

Nguyen Thi Hang is currently a lecturer at the University of Finance and Marketing in Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam. She has been working as a teacher of English for more than 10 years. She is interested in research fields such as language assessment, teaching and learning methodology, emerging learning and teaching environments like MOOCs, and remote collaboration tools like Google docs.