



Exploring students' view of using Google Docs in writing class

Fahmi Hidayat

Universitas Lambung Mangkurat
fahmihidayat@ulm.ac.id

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore students' view of using Google Docs on writing, the potential of Google Documents in facilitating and supporting pedagogical practices in a writing course at the tertiary level. Thus, it was offering new experiences for students in writing on an online environment and also real-time comments and feedback between the lecturer-student and student-student. In this qualitative case study, it was carried out in a writing class that the students do the writing using Google Docs; they wrote article reports. At the end of the semester, students were interviewed and the results were qualitatively analyzed. The findings showed when the students wrote using Google Docs, mostly the students feel it helps the students to improve my teamwork and discussion skill. And also, it makes the students feel easier to communicate and interact with my lecturer than a face to face interaction in the classroom. And for the learning experience, as an online platform, it contributes to unique experiences for the students.

Key Words: Online Document, Google Docs, Peer-Feedback

Introduction

There are many platforms for creating and sharing files online. Denton and Wicks (2013) state examples of add-on platforms, autonomous platforms, and social media networks. One of the many rewards to using social network platforms for creating and sharing files online is availability and adaptability (Clark & Eynon, 2009). As a well-known platform, google has many features to support the online learning process. One of the google features in terms of education is Google Docs, whereas it is a free platform for teachers and students. However, the use of education features in google itself is limited to certain educators who are interested in technology to apply in their classroom, it can be assumed, not all levels of education introduce google especially Google

Docs at the secondary level. Therefore, several students encounter Google Docs as a first-timer user in the learning environment.

At the tertiary level, view digital technologies like a laptop with net associations, blogs, networking websites, and phones as tools to enable students to express their creativities in writing. It also can be thought-about as a challenge for lecturers to deploy this technology to assist scholars. This is a beneficial point for the lecturer to embrace technology especially Google Docs. Students who born as digital natives used to have a mobile phone as a necessary item. Therefore, Google Docs as suitable flatform in the classroom.

Google Docs as part of well-known google features have probable to be used by lecturers and students as an interactive environment for their students' group work or assignments (Alharbi, 2019). The synchronous of Google Docs permits teachers to oversee their students' progress in their written tasks (Chu and Kennedy 2011; Gillow-Wiles and Niess 2015). Thus, Google Docs connects lecturers to students without any boundaries such as location and time. It also allows students to interact with other students.

The interaction between lecturer-students and students-students in writing synchronously is one of the powerful points of Google Docs. In writing it is remarked as feedback(Harmer, 2007). The feedback itself is indeed necessary for teaching writing so that students can learn from their mistakes in their writings. Students are eager to write a comment on their friends' writing, so, the online environment is lively. However, students' comments should provide meaningful feedback as a means of creating a connection between participants and providing new perspectives (Palloff and Pratt, 2007). Therefore, Google Docs offers a unique experience not only for lecturer-students feedback but also for students-students feedback.

Based on the theoretical background that feedback may be one helpful methodology for academics in the class, the researcher is concerned in finding out what the students do think about Google Docs

when they have an opportunity to communicate, interact, and monitor their learning writing environment. Thus, it already used by many researchers to explore its benefits and advantages. Yet, still, little researchers know students thinking and opinion when using google when they give feedback on their classmates' writing. In the Indonesia context, there is also a challenge to bring the internet in terms of supporting tools into their learning process. Several researches had done about writing and their results could improve students' ability (Rahmawati, et al, 2019; Marleni, 2020; Heryandi, et al, 2020). Those previous studies were different from the current study because this current study focused on the students' view of using Google Docs on writing.

Research Methodology

This study used a qualitative research approach that suits its purposes of exploring students thinking of their experience in using Google Docs (Creswell, 2015). Especially, the type of qualitative approach used in the study was a case study approach that focuses on a critical thinking class as a case. In the class, students wrote an argument about certain cases. Then, the lecturer and their classmate check and comment on the argument through Google Docs.

This research is conducted at one of the Universities in Indonesia and Students of this University as participants of this study. Specifically, the first-year of students who have taken writing class, the nature of the class which applies Google Docs, and providing lecturer-students and students-students feedback that requires of this study. To obtain the necessary data for the study, Cohen et al. (2007:349) state that interviews permit the researcher to press for responses about the compound and profound the data. The researcher uses a semi-structured interview to collect data. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009:102) convey seven phases of an interview inquiry, specifically thematizing, scheming,

interviewing, transcribing, analyzing, verifying, and reporting. These are precisely followed in this study.

The interview concerned to capture the students' view when they were writing using Google Docs; whereas as a supporting tool which differs from their experience when writing in paper or offline word-processing application. Thus, when applying Google Docs, the real-time interaction was involved in their experiences as a user, whereas it was as part of activities in writing class.

Table 1: Interview guides

*Students are encourage to share their experience, opinion and idea while writing in class using Google Docs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is your first impression when writing on Google Docs?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you think about the feature in Google Docs?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How is your experience of writing on Googel Docs?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How is your experience of responding your lecturer' feedback on Google Docs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you prefer writing on paper or Google Docs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do your prefer your lecturer feedback or peer feedback on Google Docs?

Findings and Discussion

Findings

Students' view of using Google Docs on writing

In general, the students expressed their positive views of using and practicing writing by Google Docs. Especially the students recognize the value of feedback through Google Docs. As they receive from lecturer and peers. Moreover, they gained new experience in writing on Google Docs.

Interviewer: What is your first impression when writing on Google Docs?

Student: It is similar to the word office, but just with an online connection. But, of course, there are several new feature that I found in Google Docs (student interview)

The familiarity of Google Docs' appearance to word-processor application makes the students comfortable to use it. Besides, Google Docs has an online connection.

Interviewer: What do you think about the feature in Google Docs?

Student: besides the internet connection, it is easy to use, the comment boxes and other features are comforting for the user like me (student interview)

The feature which has similarity with the word-process application is a beneficial point for Google Docs. However, there is a thing that should concern, to facilitate a good internet connection in the classroom area. Otherwise, the learning process becomes going unwell due to the obstacle of the connection. On the other hand, Google Docs offer a new experience for students. Therefore, it affected the students' attitude when writing on the application.

... Writing on Google Docs offers me a new experience, I know it when I write something, everyone in the class can read my writing, so I write a draft first and post it in Google Docs (student interview)

It was found that it is not the feedback from lecturer and peer that makes the students aware and cautious in writing, but the feeling of it opens to others. These new user experiences motivated the students to be more aware of their mistakes.

Interviewer: How is your experience of writing on Google Docs?

Student: I think when I wrote on Google Docs or my mobile phone or laptop, I comfortable and easier for me, If I stuck, I can switch the tab and do browsing or take a look into a dictionary. ...and for me, it looks like I cannot separate from my electronic devices. Moreover, it was amazing, I could see the changes in my writing and I made several changes in different colors. (student interview)

From the students' point of view, writing on a laptop or mobile phone is not something sophisticated. Electronic devices are part of their

lifestyle. Furthermore, the editing-traceable in Google Docs allows the user to use highlight colors, for some students, it is eye-catching and helps them to revise their work. Thus, bringing the supported facilitation as Google Docs is necessary to support the learning process.

... when I got feedback, it helps me to point out my mistake not only in my writing organization but also grammar (student interview)

... when I gave feedback on my friend, I felt so good about it because I need first to read about it and then give my opinion (student interview)

To value feedback practices in Google Docs, students were being able to detect and correct the issues in their work. Moreover, involving their thought to other fellow students' work, such as commenting, they felt as active and participate in helping their friends.

Regardless of the value and gratitude of Google Docs in supporting and facilitating practices in writing, a few students perceived it to some extent find problems due to the slow internet connection, most of the students admitted that after doing final editing their report, they still concerned about the grammar, then they re-read their report of the last draft. They had to check again on formatting their last drafts to be submitted to the lecturer as part of their performance assessment in the writing class.

Students' view of the interactions between lecturer-students and students-students on Google Docs

In general, students had positive opinions towards the lecturer and their peers' comments and rectifications. However, the first task of the lecturer was to push students actively in giving comments, and involving in the discussion; this considered another hard work for the lecturer. Then, bringing Google Docs into the classroom is helps half of the lecturer task to persuade students as active learners. The writing class could make good use of Google Docs as an interactive platform for teaching writing. It provided either for the lecturer or students to be able to exchange

feedback and correct their written text. The feedback comments on writing exchange on Google Docs identified various patterns of corrective feedback.

Interviewer: What is your opinion toward the lecturer's feedback on Google Docs?

Student: It is an important input for me, through the feedback or comment I know my mistakes, it points out on the highlighted colors or in the bubble, it is easy to spot on it. (student interview)

There are a lot of strategies for the lecturer to persuade the students in order to improve their writing. Giving direct feedback is an easy way, but to give indirect feedback is another challenge for the lecturer. Furthermore, the comment box or the bubble, it notified easily by the students, they easily recognize the problem they had. However, comment box not only for getting feedback but students could reply and ask questions regarding the mistakes.

... I could have interaction with the lecturer in our writing task. Through this, I could ask the lecturer how to improve my writing through Google Docs which enable me to understand my mistake and avoid doing it again. (student interview)

Written feedback or comments from the lecturer through Google Docs was aimed to improve the students' writing performance. Thus, the feedback, as a result, could encourage students to improve their writing. The variation in giving indirect feedback such as the lecturer did not show the students' mistakes specifically. Instead, the lecturer suggested the students be aware of finding their own mistakes to make the students can understand it well, or vice versa.

... I prefer the lecturer comments than my friends' comments (student interview)

Meanwhile, in certain cases, students usually did not put attention to peers' comments. Sometimes, they disregarded their peer's comments since they thought their thoughts or expressions were superior to their peers'. On the other hand, students included more thoughts than might have been anticipated by their peers' comments. They would welcome their peers' comments, in any case, they favored the lecturer's comments

and adjustments since they thought those comments (positive and/or negative) from their peers.

Besides, they stated that their peers' corrections and feedback centered on the specified components (i.e. lexicon and grammatical range and accuracy) but the lecturer was more on certain areas (i.e. content and coherence and cohesion), which both had been pretty useful for improving their writing skills. They clarified that their peers' corrections and comments were easier to understand, however, if they did not understand one comment, they may want to supply applicable important points and examples to make the commented section clearer to understand.

... since all the peers share their writing, I can learn a lot and comparing my writing with others (student interview)

To reflect their text to others as a way to self-correction. A similar voice from another student that stated that their peers' corrections and comments with the aid of Google Docs contributed to their writing capabilities because they should reread and with no trouble revised their work many times primarily based on their corrections and comments; however, the concept used to be extra convenient to edit and put feedback on their peers' writing the use of Google Docs.

Finally, the students did not state any inconvenience concerning posting their writing via Google Docs and getting comments both from the lecturer and peers. It was fairly worthwhile to continue real-time peer-editing using Google Docs after finishing the course.

Discussion

The purpose of the current study was to explore students' views of using Google Docs in the writing class. Google Docs as a supporting tool can help students to improve their writing. When using Google Docs, students as users gain unique experiences. Then, focusing on Google Docs experienced by the lecturer and students (only students' view), the study

provided interesting findings indicating that one of the potentials of offering a new experience in practicing writing. It is in line with Ebadi (2017) The results indicated that online peer-editing using Google Docs and peer-editing in the face-to-face classroom significantly developed EFL learners' academic writing skills. Moreover, the findings would possibly be added due to the splendid perceptions and attitudes of the students towards the writing class which using Google Docs. It has a similar voice with Ertmer, et. Al. (2010) the students in using Google Docs noted several advantages to the participating comments box, the discussions made it easier to express their opinions. Thus, the user-friendliness of Google Docs, in the study, allowed peers to give comments on their peers' writing.

Though Google Docs supports and facilitates innovative writing practices, it occasionally poses challenges for students that may affect their positive views of this tool in writing. Even they are familiar with the feature but some students face some challenges by lack of skill using it, the slow internet connection, and the formatting issue. Yet, those challenges may not seem to be serious. Moreover, Google Docs appear important in supporting and motivating students to pursue their writing activities to the intended aim or goal.

Conclusion

This study has several limitations that should be addressed in combination with a useful suggestion for future research. First, this study merely involved a small number of students as part of a writing class using Google Docs. Therefore, future researches are recommended to investigate the use of Google Docs among a large number of students. Secondly, the study was limited to the lecturer-students and students-students interaction and merely using direct and indirect feedback, so future researchers should aim to provide a comprehensive investigation of the entire process of writing likes drafting, editing, and revising and also all types of feedbacks. Analysis of the students' interviews in this study focused on the students' view when writing on Google Docs and Interaction among them. However, for future researchers interested in the impact of Google Docs-based on students' ability in writing. Future

researchers may also explore the student's perspective when they collaborate or work together on a single text using Google Docs.

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