

Exploring Writing Individually and Collaboratively Using Google Docs in EFL Contexts

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Abstract

Online teaching and learning became popular with the evolution of the World Wide Web now days. Implementing online learning tools within EFL contexts will help better address the multitude of teaching and learning styles. Difficulty in academic writing can be considered one of the common problems that students face in and outside their classrooms. Moreover, because the young learners today are digital native, integrating online learning tool with their learning is needed. This research was conducted to analyze students' achievements by submitted tasks using both face-to-face setting for the pre individual and collaborative tasks, and online learning environment for the post individual and collaborative tasks. The participants in this study were a class of Arabic major from a college in Saudi Arabia. The research was searching for the differences between the students' individual and collaborative work using Google Docs, and discerning the students' perspectives toward collaborative work with Google Docs on English writing tasks. To explore the integration effectiveness; pre and post-questionnaires, pre and post written tasks, students' portfolio, a customized rubric for test scores, and post interviews were conducted to test and analyze the outcomes. Results show significant increase in the students' scores using Google Docs. Further, the results were consistent as that students perceived Google Docs as a useful tool for both individual and group work.

Keywords: EFL, online collaboration, google docs, collaborative writing

1. Introduction

In recent years, there were many educational changes worldwide. According to Hargeaves (1994), teachers and teaching methods are the heart of change. In 2001, Fullan argued that changes and updates in teaching methods are not just about putting the latest policies into place; it also means changing the culture in classrooms. He added, "To accomplish the educational change, teachers need to adapt new materials, new theory, new policy and new teaching approaches."

The most significant change in teaching methods is to serve the learner-centered method. Adapting learner-centered methods in teaching is much needed to focus on the students' learning rather than on what the teacher is doing. Learner-centered method is not a specific approach or teaching method, however, it is many different instructional methods can include the learner-centered method, according to Blumberg (2010).

One of the methods that implement learner-centered is the collaborative learning. Collaborative work in the second language learning is supported by cognitive and socio-cultural theoretical perspectives. Socio-cultural learning theory highlights the importance of meaningful social interactions between peers, or between beginner learners and more experienced learners (Vygotsky, 1978). Socio-cultural theoretical perspectives focus on the fact that cognitive functions arise in social interaction; accordingly, learning is not only a result of new knowledge by the individual learners (Lin, 2008). Different researches over the past decades have demonstrated the effectiveness of collaborative Learning methods for the promotion of student learning in the different subjects and social skills. Collaborative learning is a useful way of improving the whole teaching and learning process. It enables students to work together to achieve or accomplish shared goals.

Raja (2012) argued that the general aim of collaboration is to encourage social interaction among learners so that they learn from each other.

Changing the teaching approaches and methods require the use of technology to facilitate the teaching, learning and assessment of second language. Service of language learning using technology, computer-assisted language

learning (CALL) and internet-based learning are consequence of new changes in teaching information technologies.

Besides technology, the diverse online learning tools help the student-centered learning approach becomes a natural extension. Online learning allows group and individual participation and consists of both real-time active interactions using online applications and interactions that occur over extended long time (hours or days) like online discussion board. Online learning enables learners to collapse space and time (Cole, 2000). Further, Online collaborative learning can enhance more active participation and increases students' engagement with content. Moreover, Learners' engagements in learning process via class collaboration tools improve their outcomes and more improves appear when collaborative technology added to this learning process. The integration of collaborative learning with technology in EFL classes and contexts can be used to develop students with different learning styles, the same tools that offer collaboration can also enhance individual learning and can help learning both the technology skills and the second language skills at the same time.

In learning languages, people learn to communicate using the four language skills: reading, speaking, listening and writing. There are many online tools and applications for working collaboratively for the different language skills. There are two main ways to communicate; by speaking and by writing. The writing skill is important because it is used more extensively in higher education and in the work field. There are different ways to help develop students' writing skills, but implementing online tools is one of the best choices. In this study the focus will be on Google Docs which is an application that enables online individual and collaborative writing.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Teaching English language has witnessed substantial developments over the past decades in the whole world. Saudi Arabia has always been engaged in improving the English language teaching programs at all skills and levels few years ago. Integrating online learning tools with different English skills has become very common in all EFL contexts. In Saudi Arabia, there are different common problems that can affect EFL learners' learning ability. Even though, teaching English is not something new in Saudi Arabia, many students are still not able to use the written and the spoken language effectively outside the classroom. Difficulty in academic writing can be considered one of the common problems that students face in and outside their classrooms. The traditional way in teaching and learning writing cannot encourage new generation to learn the writing rules. Teachers must make the classes livelier and not make students only fear of making a mistake rather than learning. This research is an attempt to explore the effects and benefits of using the web-based tool (Google Docs) to learn writing to enable the student-centered learning method and to enhance student-to-student and faculty-to-student communication.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

This research aims at examining the effectiveness of integrating Google Docs as an online learning tool with writing skill outside the classroom. In the educational system in Saudi Arabia, students study English for nine years. Many students graduate from high school without knowing how to use English properly, which is disappointing and a waste of time and effort. The main issue is that the universities' acceptance exams and even some college courses are all in English. So they must have some basics in English to pass. In addition, they need to know how to communicate using English in real life at least. It is a fact that most of students in schools today are digital native and they grow up with technology. This research is an attempt to bring technology especially online learning tools to students to explore if integrating Google Docs as an online learning tool with their writing will make a difference.

1.3 Significance of the Study

In order to reach language proficiency, EFL need to be inspired and interested in the learning of English Language. EFL cannot be taught easily as the first language; it requires simultaneously adopted resources and materials, plenty of time inside and outside the classroom and to integrate the new technology with teaching. The research will try to provide a web-based tool (GD) which EFL teachers can use to reach diversity in learning styles and to give students the chance to interact with their classmates more by encouraging collaboration.

1.4 Research Questions

- 1)- Are there any differences in the students' individual and collaborative work using Google Docs?
- 2)- What are the students' perspectives towards integrating collaborative work with Google Docs on English writing tasks?

1.5 Definition of Terms

The following terms will be used in the present study:

Google Docs (GD): A Web-based application from Google that includes word processing, spreadsheet, presentations, forms creation and cloud storage. Launched in 2006, documents can be uploaded and downloaded in Word, Open Office, RTF, HTML or text formats.

Online Collaboration: Is to Enable individuals to work together to achieve a defined and common aim or purpose in online meetings or setting.

Collaborative Writing: Refers to tasks or projects where written works are created by multiple people together.

English as a Foreign Language (EFL): Learned English language while living in a community where the English is not spoken as a first language.

2. Literture Review

2.1 Collaborative Learning

Collaborative learning is a social interaction involving a group of learners and teachers, where members acquire and share experience or knowledge (Liao et al., 2008). Collaborative learning has been considered as a necessary contributor to active interaction learning according to Kieser and Golden, 2009. Moreover, in 2014, Boud, D., Cohen, R., & Sampson, J. argued that some education goals can be easily achieved through pair work and collaborative teaching and learning strategies. They added working with others means being a member of a learning community so the sense of responsibility for one's and others' learning is there which lead to increased confidence and interaction skills development through this engagement. New ways of thinking from more explanation, arguments and understanding each other point of view arise from collaborative learning.

2.2 Collaborative Writing

Dillon (1993) defined the collaborative writing as tasks and activities started with pre-draft discussions, arguments, edit then a post-draft document produced by more than one writer. Collaborative writing takes on a variety of forms in an active process including using technology as a tool. Teachers need to adapt their teaching practices to integrate new technologies while redefining learning and writing in specific for the 21st century because the concept of teaching writing skills is able to change and develop (Oxnevad, 2013). Al Tai, Y. in 2015, examined "The Effect of Collaboration on Omani Students' Writing: A Compare between Individual, Pair and Group Work". The study explored the effect of collaboration on the second language Omani students writing and their attitudes to such collaboration. The study questions answered by that the learner perceived the collaborative writing positively which proved that collaborative writing has a positive influence on learning the second language not only the writing skill.

2.3 Learning Technology

In 1996, Rist and Hewer defined the learning technology as the application of technology for the enhancement of learning, teaching and assessment. Learning Technology includes Web-based learning, the use of networks, communications systems and multimedia materials to support learning.

Online learning technology instructional methods endorse individual and collaborative learning activities. They are cognitive and productivity tools in which these tools are based on different constructive principles that learners use to construct their own knowing and understanding of new concepts (Scott & Palincsar, 2009).

2.4 Learning Writing Collaboratively Using Google Docs

Collaborative writing can be encouraged with the use of the technology inside and outside the classroom. The online collaborative learning becomes possible with the development of the networks, even if students cannot meet in a classroom (Macdonald, 2006). Different language learning skills can be taught and learn by use of technology learning tools in collaborative activities. Learning tools include applications such as blogs, wikis, chat rooms, forum, learning logs and Google Docs. Google Doc is an online tool that provides teachers with different powerful features to help 21st century students develop their writing skills (Suwantarathip & Wichadee, 2014).

Google docs is a free and easy-to-use technology on which individual, pair, and groups of students can create, write, edit, store, comment and give an immediate feedback on their writing simultaneously from their computers or other tablet devices they have in and outside the classroom. Google Docs is web-based word processor, form, spreadsheet and data storage service offered by Google and it allows users to use, create and edit documents online individually or while collaborating with other users in real-time (Wikipedia, 2016).

Different studies tackled and compared online collaboration writing using different technology tools including Google Docs. "Collaborative writing among second language learners in academic web-based projects" (Kessler

et al., 2012) explored the changing nature of collaborative writing and the influence of Web-based writing contexts in a pre-academic orientation program at a large Midwestern university. Participants in this study were non-native English speaking students. The researchers conduct group collaborative texts produced in Google Docs and a survey applied at the end of the study to gather students' perceptions. The study found that the students focused more on meaning than form. It also showed that the students collaborate successfully in groups and enhanced their own process toward writing and they admit that every member played an important role in this collaborate experience. Another study was conducted in investigated the use of "Google Docs in an Out-of-Class Collaborative Writing Activity" (Zhou et al., 2012). In this study the learners had positive perceptions toward using Google Docs for out-of-class writing activities more than in traditional in-class assignments. The study concludes to that Google Docs is well-suited as a tool for out-of-class collaborative assignments. Another research explored "the roles of Google.doc and peer e-tutors in English writing" (Lin & Yang, 2013). They investigated college students' experiences with integrating both the Google.doc and peer e-tutors into an English writing course and explored their perceptions. In the study finding, the e-tutors (online peer tutors) admit that the Google.doc provided them with meaningful pair interactions unlike the traditional writing technique. Google docs helps enhancing students' personal development and English language learning. Although there were benefits of using this online tutoring activity, there were different challenges emerged while using the Google.doc such as an accidental lag and missing data from the screen that occurred during the course. Other study was in 2014, Suwantarathip and Wichadee discussed "The Effects of Collaborative Writing activities using Google Docs on Students' Writing Ability". The findings of this study showed that Google Docs is an effective tool that makes online learning environment desirable and possible. The general relaxing and democratic atmosphere enable them to accept each other feedback and judge their own mistakes.

All of the previous studies point out that using online writing collaboration can make differences in improving the students writing skills. The studies reflect some challenges and different obstacles that could occur while applying such researches. In Saudi Arabia there is a lack of empirical research to provide substantial evidence for both the theoretical advantages and effectiveness of collaborative work or learning writing collaboratively using technology and online tools. This research aims to investigate the effect of collaborative work on writing tasks using technology and the attitudes of students to such type of learning. It is an attempted to fill existing gaps in the field.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This is an explanatory research that was conducted to determine the effect of online collaborative writing on students' achievement. In this mixed method design, qualitative and quantitative methods of analysis were applied to the collected data.

In order to answer the research questions, data were collected through writing tasks, questionnaires and interviews with the participants. The participants performed pre and post written tasks individually, then they answered similar tasks in pairs. Moreover, a survey was submitted to observe the learners' perceptions on the online collaborative writing experience. Furthermore, interviews with the participants were used to support and explain the findings of the task results. The study took place at Al-Imam Muhamad Ibn Saud Islamic University at the College of Arabic language in the second semester of the academic year 2016.

3.2 Instruments

Different instruments were used in this study: (a) Participants writing portfolio (b) Questionnaires (c) Written tasks (d) A rubric (e) Interviews.

(a) Participants writing portfolio

Different samples from the students writing portfolio were collected to make a clear view about the students writing level.

(b) Questionnaires

To investigate and explore if there are differences on the students' individual and collaborative work using Google, two questionnaires were administrated, the pre-questionnaire at the beginning of the research application (week one) (Table 1), before applying the research and post-questionnaire at the end of the semester after the application of the research. The questionnaire which was administrated to the participants in Arabic "their mother tongue" was adapted from a previous study questionnaire (Zhou et al., 2012) (Appendix A, B, C, & D), translated into Arabic, with some background specific questions being added. These questions included information about the participants' age, the number of years they studied English and their knowledge and

experience in using online learning tools specially Google Docs.

Furthermore, the participants were requested to answer the open questions in the pre-questionnaire and to rate the post-questionnaire statements based on a five point Likert Scale (ranging from 1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= neither agree nor disagree, 4= agree, and 5= strongly agree) (Appendix C & D).

(c) Written tasks

Two written tasks were used to explore the effect of integrated writing individually and collaboratively using online learning tools (Google Docs). All the tasks' topics adopted from the general English course they already take at the university (Appendix E & F).

(d) A rubric

A customized rubric was created and developed before designing the written tasks to score students' papers. For each piece of writing, the participants will earn up to 15 points in total. The fifteen points were divided as the following: five points for presentation of a clear main idea, five points for well organization, and the final five points for the use of correct language (Appendix I).

(e) Interviews

To identify the differences on the students' individual and collaborative work using Google, semi-structured interviews with the participants were conducted at the end of the research application (week five) (Table 1). By interviewing the participants, the researcher was able to gain more information about the participants' background experiences with online learning tools, and the participants were able to elaborate more on their experience and clarify their point of view on the effect of the strategies on learning language collaboratively using online learning tools.

Furthermore, a random sample was interviewed separately. They were requested to answer five questions related to the research questions (Appendix G & H). This gave the participants a chance to clarify and explain their answers on the questionnaire when needed.

3.3 Participants

The sample consisted of twenty-two Saudi female students in their fifth academic level majoring in Arabic language at Al-Imam Muhammad Ibn Saud Islamic University in Riyadh. They have had different English skills courses in their studies in the Arabic College. They were introduced to Google Docs and trained on how to use Google Doc individually and in pairs. The written tasks questions and content were similar to tasks in the English book they used at the same semester in which the study was conducted.

3.4 Data Collection Procedures

The participants performed pre individual and pair work written task without using Google Docs. The researcher designed two similar online written tasks using Google Docs and informed the participants on the time in which she will send them the task, as well as, how much time they have to complete it. On day one, the researcher sent the links to the participants at the arranged time, and explained that they have two hours to work collaboratively answering the given task, and exchange feedback among themselves. On day two, the student received and performed the individual task.

After they finish the two tasks (Google Docs condition), a post questionnaire containing a number of questions about the students' knowledge and their experience with Google Docs were administrated to the participants, and interviews were conducted.

Table 1. Procedure for data collection and assignments

Week	Procedure
Week one	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Google Docs Familiarity Questionnaire: surveyed students' knowledge and experience with Google Docs. 2. Students Writing Portfolios were collected.
Week two	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Divided students into groups for doing the writing tasks. 2. A pre individual and pair work writing tasks (non-Google-Docs condition): performed in the class.

Week three	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Gmail accounts: created by students and shared with the researcher. 2. Google Docs: introduced step-by-step. 3. Blank Google Docs word documents: created for each group and shared among group members.
Week four	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Writing tasks (with a requirement of using Google-Docs for completion.): by two steps: First: performed individually. Second: performed in pairs. 2. Post Questionnaire: surveyed learning and collaboration experience using Google Docs distributed in the class.
Week five	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Post interview about the experience. 2. Informed consent: students were given the opportunity to consent to their data being used for this research project. 3. Debriefing: the purpose of the study was shared with the students

3.4.1 Piloting the Study

a) The Questionnaires

To verify the accuracy of the two questionnaire items, a pilot study was conducted. A sample of five Saudi female students in their fifth academic level majoring in Arabic language at Al-Imam Muhammad Ibn Saud Islamic University in Riyadh were requested to participate in the pilot study. The students were requested to express their knowledge towards using online learning tools especially Google Docs by filling in the two questionnaires. The pre questionnaire based on open questions and two closed questions. The post questionnaire items based on a five point Likert Scale ranging from strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, and strongly agree. After completing the questionnaire, they were interviewed to see what problems they faced while completing the questionnaire and their comment were taken into consideration.

b) The tasks

To verify the accuracy of the two written tasks (Google Docs condition), a pilot study was conducted. A sample of seven Saudi female students in their fifth academic level majoring in Arabic language at Al-Imam Muhammad Ibn Saud Islamic University in Riyadh were requested to participate in the pilot study. The students were requested to answer the two tasks. After completing the tasks, they were interviewed to see what problems they faced while completing the two written tasks and listen to their comments about it too.

3.4.2 Validity and Reliability of the Questionnaires

a) validity:

Both English and Arabic versions of questionnaires were given to a number of professors from different universities and departments inside and outside Saudi Arabia. They were asked to revised, edit, delete and add any necessary changes. More details about these professors are in the appendix, in the referee list (Appendix J). Their comments were taken into consideration when preparing the final version of the questionnaire. Furthermore, the questionnaire was discussed and approved by the supervisor Doctor Ali Ashuraidah.

b) Reliability:

To establish the reliability of the questionnaire, Cronbach's Alpha test was used for the entire questionnaire items.

Table 2. Cronbach's Alpha test

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	No of Items
.740	8

The value of the Cronbach's alpha for the questionnaire is .740 which is higher than .700. This means that the

questionnaire will provide consistent results with all the participants' responses.

3.4.3 Validity and Reliability of the Tasks

a) validity:

The written tasks were given to a number of professors from different universities and departments inside and outside Saudi Arabia. They were asked to revised, edit, delete and add any necessary changes. More details about these professors are in the appendix, in the referee list (Appendix J). Their comments were taken into consideration when preparing the final version of the tasks. Furthermore, the tasks were discussed and approved by the supervisor Dr. Ali Ashuraidah.

b) Reliability:

To establish the reliability of the written tasks, an inter-rater reliability method was used to assess the degree of agreement between the researcher and the teacher assessment decisions. There are a number of statistics which can be used to determine inter-rater reliability. The researcher used Pearson correlation coefficient to measure the percentage of the agreement between the two assessments decisions.

Table 3. Pearson correlation coefficient

Correlations		researcher	teacher
Researcher	Pearson Correlation	1	.977**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	11	11
Teacher	Pearson Correlation	.977**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	11	11

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

All of the data got from the tests were computed by statistical package. A customized rubric was created to score the test papers. For each piece of writing, students earned up to 15 points in total, with up to five points for presentation of a clear main idea; five points for well organization; and five points for correct language use (Appendix I). In this research, both the researcher and the course teacher at the university corrected the participants' writing and marked the papers to ensure the fairness in scoring. In order to confirm the reliability of pre-and post-test scores, the inter-rater approach of reliability estimates was applied. The inter-rater reliability results of the two raters who rated the students' papers had statistically significant inter-rater reliability the Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (Table 3).

3.4.4 Validity and Reliability of the Interview

A pilot study was conducted to verify the validity and the reliability of the interview questions. The questions were presented to the participants of the pilot study and were asked about any difficulties they faced answering the questions. The questions then were revised and adjusted based on the participants' feedback. Moreover, the questions were revised and approved by the researcher's supervisor and his input was taken into considerations.

3.4 Main Research Procedure

After the pilot study was completed for the two questionnaires, the revised pre-questionnaire and post-questionnaire was given to the participants at the beginning of the semester before applying the research and after the application during their regular classes, in the second semester of the academic year 2016. The researcher shared the purpose of the study to the participants, and provided them with the main instructions to make sure that everything was understood. The researcher surveyed students' knowledge and experience with Google Docs and collected random samples from the students writing portfolio.

After that, when they finished their pre individual tasks, the participants were divided into groups to perform the pair work writing tasks (non-Google-Docs condition). Then, the participants created their own Gmail accounts and shared them with the researcher. Google Docs were introduced step-by-step then different blank Google

Docs word documents created for each group and shared among group members (Table 1). Afterward, the participants performed the writing tasks (with Google-Docs condition) by two steps: first, performed the individual task then they performed the pair work tasks.

The post-questionnaire was distributed after the performing the written tasks using Goggle Doc at the end of the semester of the academic year 2016. After completing the tasks and the questionnaires, random samples from the participants interviewed, and were asked five questions related to integrating writing cooperatively using Google Docs. The interview was conducted at the end of the semester after the application of the research.

3.5 Data Analysis

After collecting the questionnaires, the researcher used SPSS to calculate the closed questions answers using descriptive statistics; frequencies, the percentage, mean and the standard derivation of the scores. The open questions were analysed qualitatively. Furthermore, the written tasks results were analyzed quantitatively using descriptive statistics; Wilcoxon matched-pairs signed-ranks test. The data drawn from the pre and post questionnaires, written tasks and the interview were compared to determine the effect of using the online learning tools (Google Docs) on the students writing ability individually and cooperatively.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Results

In order to answer the research questions, data collected from the questionnaire the closed questions were analyzed quantitatively using SPSS and the open questions were analyzed qualitatively, while the interviews were analyzed qualitatively as well.

4.1.1 Results of the Pre- Research Questionnaire

After administering the pre-questionnaire to the participants, a statistical analysis was conducted to find out the frequencies, mean and standard deviation for the “yes” “no” questions in the pre-questionnaire (Table 4).

Table 4. Participants’ responses on the pre-research “yes” & “no” questions based on frequencies, mean and standard deviation

Statistics		question1	question2	question3
N	Valid	22	22	22
	Missing	0	0	0
Mean		1.0909	1.9545	1.7727
Std. Deviation		.29424	.21320	.42893

Out of 22 participants only 2 students did not have a Gmail account. Only one of the 22 students reported some knowledge of Google Docs. Her experience with Google Docs was academic-related activities. Other five students reported some knowledge of another online learning tool which is Edmodo. They use it in some kind of collaborative task such as to complete a research paper. They comment that using Edmodo as an online learning tool was helpful and interesting while they work individually or in groups.

4.1.2 Results of Comparing the Pre and Post Individual Written Tasks

For the pre-individual task, students were given a topic to write about without using Google Docs. They had two hours to finish the task which is the same time for the post written task using Google Docs. The papers were corrected twice; by the research and the course teacher using the same rubric created by the researcher to score the test papers. In order to confirm the reliability of the scores, the inter-rater approach of reliability estimates was applied (see 3.4.3. Validity and Reliability of the tasks).

To verify the differences or development on students’ results, a comparison of pre and post individual tests scores using descriptive statistics; Wilcoxon matched-pairs signed-ranks test was run.

Table 5. Mean median, interquartile range and standard deviation for the pre and post individual scores

	Pre	Post	P-value
Individual tasks (n = 22)	5.727 ± 3.058 6.0 (1 – 14) 3.0	8.545 ± 4.111 10 (0 – 15) 5.63	0.001
Mean ± SD	Median (minimum – maximum)	Interquartile Range (IQR)	

The test showed that the pre-test mean score of students (5.727) lower than that post-test (8.545). The standard deviation for the pre-test score = 3.058 and for the post-test score was = 4.111 (Figure 1). The results are statically significant at the 0.01 level. The increase in the results means that there is an improvement in the students writing results.

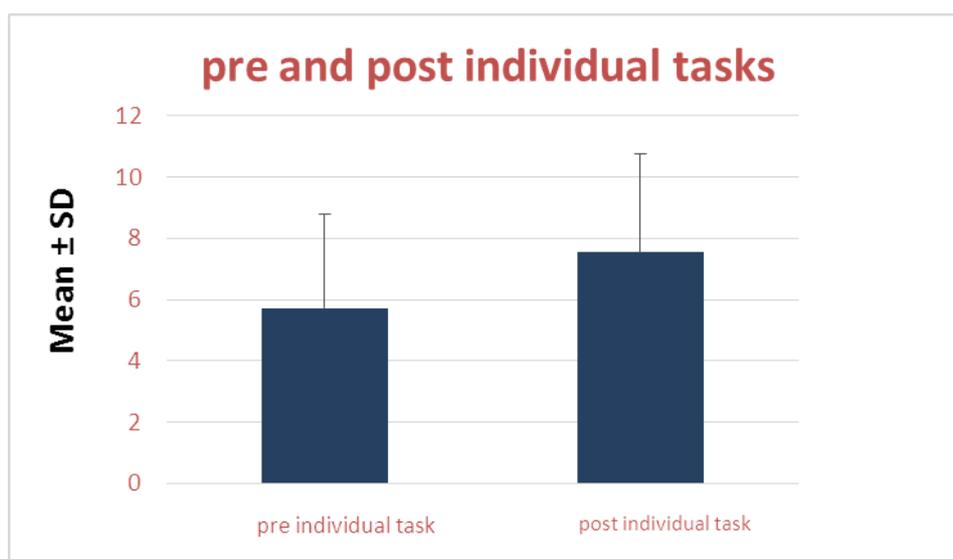


Figure 1. Mean and standard deviation for the pre and post individual scores

4.1.3 Results of Comparing the Pre and Post Collaborative Written Tasks

For the pre-pair work task, the students were asked to divide themselves into groups. Then, they were given a topic to write about without using Google Docs. They had two hours to finish the task which is the same time they were given to finish the post written task using Google Docs. The papers corrected twice by the research and the course teacher used the same rubric which created to score the test papers. In order to confirm the reliability of the scores, the inter-rater approach of reliability estimates was applied (see 3.4.3. Validity and Reliability of the tasks).

To verify the differences or development on students' results, a comparison of pre and post pair work tests scores using descriptive statistics; Wilcoxon matched-pairs signed-ranks test was run.

Table 6. Mean median, interquartile range and standard deviation for the pre and post individual scores

	Pre	Post	P-value
Pair work tasks (n = 11)	7.546 ± 3.205 9.0 (2 – 13) 5.0	10.25 ± 3.444 11.0 (3 – 15) 5.50	0.003
Mean ± SD	Median (minimum – maximum)	Interquartile Range (IQR)	

The results showed that the pre-pair work test mean score of students (7.546) lower than that post-pair work test (10.25). The standard deviation for the pre-pair work test score = 3.205 and for the post-test score was = 3.444 (Figure 2). The results are statically significant at the 0.03 level. The students' scores had increased which means that there is an improvement in the students writing results.

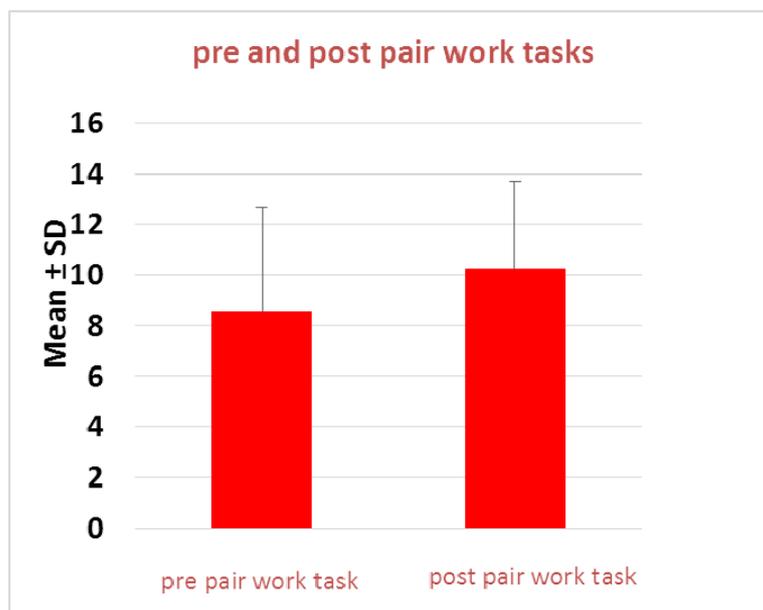


Figure 2. Mean and standard deviation for the pre and post pair work scores

4.1.4 Results of Comparing the Individual and Collaborative Written Tasks

The researcher checked to what extent integrating Goggle Docs affect the individual and the collaborative work and which one had the more influenced by integrating Google Docs with writing. The results from the descriptive statistics; Wilcoxon matched-pairs signed-ranks test represented that the mean of the results rank was (11.18) for the individual test scores and (6.00) for the pair work test scores (Table 7). Even though, using Google Docs enhance the students writing individually and collaboratively, the students individual mean ranked scores were higher than their pair work scores.

Table 7. Wilcoxon signed ranks test between the individual and pair work scores

Ranks		N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Post - Pre	Negative Ranks	3 ^a	6.67	20.00
	Positive Ranks	17 ^b	11.18	190.00
	Ties	2 ^c		
	Total	22		
Post - Pre	Negative Ranks	0 ^d	.00	.00
	Positive Ranks	11 ^e	6.00	66.00
	Ties	0 ^f		
	Total	11		

a. Post < Pre b. Post > Pre c. Post = Pre d. Post < Pre e. Post > Pre f. Post = Pre.

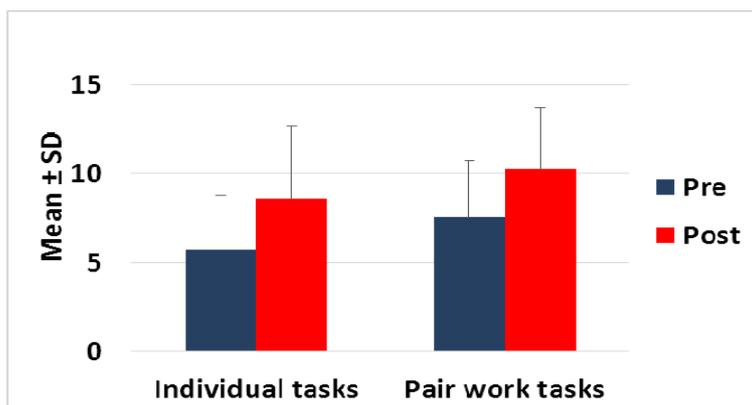


Figure 3. Mean and standard deviation for the individual and pair work scores

4.1.5 Results of the Post- Research Questionnaire

After students completed task 2, the post-questionnaire was administered to the participants. After that, a statistical analysis was conducted to find out the frequencies, percentage, mean and standard deviation for each statement in the questionnaire.

Table 8. Percentages, mean and standard deviation of statements to Survey Students’ Evaluation and their opinion about the experience

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean± SD
1- I enjoyed doing the tasks using Google Docs.	0 (0%)	2 (9.1%)	3 (13.6 %)	9 (40.9%)	8 (36.4%)	4.046 ± 0.95
2- I feel comfortable doing the task using Google Docs	0 (0%)	4 (18.2%)	2 (9.1%)	9 (40.9%)	7 (31.8%)	3.864 ± 1.082
3- I would use Google Docs for my study in the future	0 (0%)	3 (13.6%)	1 (4.5%)	11 (50.0%)	7 (31.8%)	4.0 ± 0.976
4- I would like to do similar tasks again in the future.	0 (0%)	3 (13.6%)	1 (4.5%)	13 (59.1%)	5 (22.7%)	3.909 ± 0.92
5- Google Docs influence our group’s collaborative experience positively.	4 (18.2%)	1 (4.5%)	6 (27.3%)	6 (27.3%)	5 (22.7%)	3.318 ± 1.393
6- Google Docs is a useful tool for learning writing.	0 (0%)	4 (18.2%)	3 (13.6%)	9 (40.9%)	6 (27.3%)	3.77 ± 1.066
7- It was easy to deal with the web environment.	0 (0%)	2 (9.1 %)	4 (18.2%)	9 (40.9%)	7 (31.8%)	3.95 ± 0.95
8- I don’t prefer using Google Docs in learning writing.	7 (31.8%)	6 (27.3%)	3 (13.6%)	3 (13.6%)	3 (13.6%)	2.5 ± 1.439

Participant responses were positive for item 1, almost 76% from them agreed that they enjoyed doing the tasks using Google Docs. It is clear that engaging students in online literacy learning with such an interactive tools;

help them accomplish variety of goals not only academic but also personal goals, to learn how to have fun while learning. For item 2, 71% of the participants show that they feel comfortable while doing the tasks using Google Docs. They found using online learning tools outside the classroom is a relax environment they want to learn in. In item 3, 81% from the participants' show that they want to use Google Docs for their study in the future; they felt they will do better if they study with such environment. More than 81% of the participants show their willingness to do similar tasks again in the future (item 4). At the fifth item, the participants show a low agreement to the statement. Only 49% from the participants reported that using Google Docs influence our group's collaborative experience positively. They felt like evaluated will not be fair because the teacher is not front of them so the teacher will not know who work and who did not. For item 6, 67% of the participants feel that Google Docs is a useful tool for learning writing. They comment that the automatic spelling and grammar check make them learn their mistakes and correct them at the same time so we concentrate on your ideas more. In the seventh item 71% of the participants reported that it was easy to deal with the web environment. 58% participants disagreed to the item 8 statement; they don't prefer using Google Docs in learning writing (Figure 4).

For the open question, the participants asked to add a comment on the experience, suggestion or idea to improve and apply Google Docs in learning. Almost 45% of the participants did not write anything, and only 5% illustrated that they prefer the individual work more than the collaborative work. Furthermore, the participants explained that if they chose their partners carefully and knew their classmates better they may enjoy the experience more. While the other participants stated that they found the experience interesting and they wish that online learning tools will be integrated with their study for all courses.

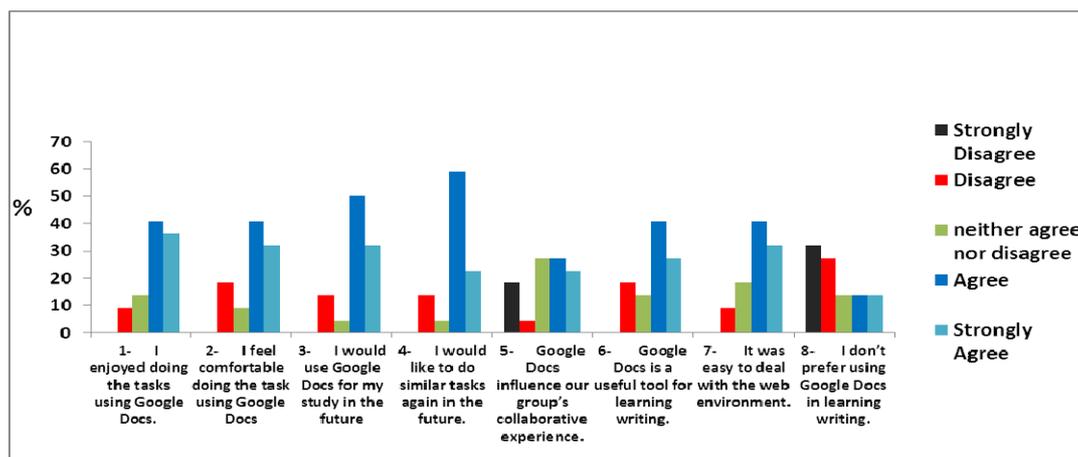


Figure 4. Mean and standard deviation for the questionnaires' statements

4.1.6 Results of the Post-Research Interview

The interview questions attempted to offer more insights into the effectiveness of integrating writing with Google Docs. The participants were asked about their responds to the post questionnaire and why they chose those answers. After submitting the last task, random participants were interviewed and asked about the experience they went through.

The results from the pre and post tasks for both individual and pair works showed that most of the participants revealed some improvement after the application of the research. Moreover, a large number of learners expressed positive feelings toward integrating writing with Google Docs. However, at the end of the application when the participants were asked about to what extent did you find Google Docs helpful and interesting, they stated that:

Sally: At the beginning, I felt like am lost and I cannot use the app correctly because it is my first time. It was not complicated so I did not take a lot of time to learn how to use it. It was helpful and interesting because I felt like we are gathering when we use the app. My colleagues can write their comments, their feedback and we can interact directly. Moreover, the documents in Google Docs show that if you are having a spelling or grammatical mistakes so you can correct them immediately.

While another participant illustrated:

Lena: Using the online tool is very interesting and save our time and effort. I think it is a better idea when we

have a lecture and we have an assignment, we submit our assignments at the same day using the online learning tools, so we do not forget what we learnt from that lecture instead of submitting the assignment the next week because we took this course once a week.

Although they had been asked to submit each task in two hours, which is the same time they had in their regular lecture, some students felt like they have more time than they used to have while using Google Docs. One participant illustrated:

Amal: I enjoyed performing the task outside the class. I take my time writing what I want, edit it, revise it then submit it when I finished, I felt comfortable and I had plenty of time to finish the task.

For the interview second question which is about if they think Google Docs is useful for collaborative homework or tasks, they participants stated:

Lena: Because we used the word document in Google Docs there were a variety of options to check the spelling and grammar so we make the necessary corrections and changes while you're writing.

Sally: While we used Google Docs perform the written tasks, we communicate with each other by left comments in comment section and give feedback about each other writing which is good because we correct our mistakes at the same time.

It is important for students to feel free while they write; they can learn writing rules while they practicing writing without hastate. If they become afraid of making spelling and grammar mistake only, they will not be able to produce an effective piece of writing.

In the interview third question, the participants were asked about the difficulties they faced while using Google Docs, they stated:

Sally: When I tried to write, I deleted parts of the question without I know and I cannot get it back until the teacher rewrite the question again.

Hind: It was difficult at the begging because it was my first time to the app and I even deleted the document then the teacher creates a new one for me. Later on, after practicing using the Google Docs I understood how to use it correctly and edit only what should be editing.

Tasneem: The documents keep logging off, it may be an internet related errors because it was a poor connection but at the end I cannot complete the task in two hour.

It is clear from the students' answers that they did not face any difficulties switching from traditional classroom and face to face instructor to computer-based learning in a virtual classroom; they only have technical problems due to internet access.

For the interview fourth question: Are you with integrating Google Docs or any online learning tools with teaching inside and outside the classroom, the participants illustrated:

Atheer: I support that strongly especially inside the classroom because our classes will not remain boring anymore.

Lena: I am totally agreed with the integrating idea. I wish that every university student try this experience. It is more fun to use certain technology or certain app to finish an academic related task; the direct feedback from my colleagues while we using Google Docs make our writing better.

Sally: Sure not only for writing but for all the skills and subjects. Doing the tasks using online learning tool was an incredible experience, it was my first time. I did not get bored and we shared many English writing rules and ideas and we practiced using them at the same time.

The last question in the interview was about the participants' opinion about using learning online tool (GD) did it help them work without fear or under pressure? Or (did it help them manage their stress), they stated that:

Tasneem: Actually, I don't feel under pressure to work because I am good at writing and the rest of English skills.

Lena: when we writ tasks inside the classroom we feel pressured, anxiety and I do not feel perfect. Even though the teacher gave us clear instruction about the tasks but I feel like we do not have time to complete the task. Using online learning tool enables us to correct our mistakes because the automatic spell-checking and we learn about spelling and grammar because it happens at the same time.

Although, real learning requires some failure, learners do not like to fail in a classroom full of their classmates. The participants stated that they felt more encouraged to explore and test their ideas using the online learning

tool more than they do in the face-to-face classroom.

4.2 Discussion

This research explores effectiveness of integrating Google Docs as an online learning tool with writing skill outside the classroom. The participants asked to do pre and post individual and pair work tasks. They were requested to fill in a pre and post questionnaire adopted from (Zhou et al., 2012) questionnaire. Furthermore, six participants were interviewed to elicit more on how integrating online learning tools especially Google Docs affected the writing process.

In this research, the participants learned to use Google Docs, a web- based digital collaborative writing tool. In spite of the fact that, online learning tools' effects on learning have been controversial (Raman, et al., 2005; Vaughan), this research's results show that Google Docs can enhance learning writing positively outside the classroom. Students interacted through the comment sections and accepted the feedback more than the face-to-face feedback. The majority of the participants rated their experience with Google Docs helpful and useful, and most of them were willing to use Google Docs in future academic related activities.

4.2.1 Discussion of the Research First Question

Is there a difference on the students' individual and collaborative work using Google Docs?

After running the SPSS analysis (Wilcoxon matched-pairs signed-ranks test) for the pre and post individual tasks, the results was statistically significant at the 0.01 level (Table 5). The mean scores of students were 5.727, these scores increased to 8.545. For the pre and post pair works tasks, another (Wilcoxon matched-pairs signed-ranks test). The results were statistically significant at the 0.03 level (Table 6). The mean scores of students were 7.546, these scores increased to 10.25. This means that the students writing abilities could be improved by integrating Google Docs with writing individually and collaboratively.

The results show that there was an effect of using Google Docs on students' writing, as measured by students' task grades. Even though, this experience was not a full semester or full course application, Google Docs did influence students writing. Some factors may have contributed to this result. First, students' task grades may not have accurately reflected the how much good they are. Second, it was not a full course experience. Further tests are necessary to determine whether learning is influenced by online collaborative writing tools. However, Google Docs change the ways that students, communicate, give feedback, correct their own mistakes, and even the way that they collaborated. For example, in our study, students claimed that, "Information, comment and feedback can be traded easily in Google Docs" and this support that using online learning tool such as Google Docs can be useful tool that allows editing and sharing in a fixable and simple as compared to the face-to-face or the traditional communication method (Morales & Collins, 2007).

4.2.2 Discussion of the Research Second Question

What are the students' perspectives towards integration collaborative work with Google Docs on English writing tasks?

By looking at (Table 5), it is clear that the overall score indicated students' positive perspectives towards integration collaborative work with Google Docs on English writing tasks. The three highest scores of the students' attitudes fell on statements no. 3, 4, and 1. That is, the students had very positive attitudes towards use Google Docs for their study in the future (50% agree and 31% strongly agree). Moreover, they expressed positive attitudes towards they would like do similar tasks again in the future. (59% agree and 22% strongly agree) and enjoyed doing the tasks using Google Docs (40% agree and 36 strongly agree). The lowest mean score of the questionnaire was statement no.5 showing that even though the students' grades increased with integrating collaborative writing with Google Docs, the students find the collaborative work is difficult outside the classroom and they prefer do the tasks individually only 27% agree and 22% strongly agree to that Google Docs influence our group's collaborative experience positively.

The Internet plays a significant role in the lives of young learners today. Young learners prefer using the internet for instance, when searching for information and when completing tests inside and outside classrooms. According to that, the results show a high level of positive attitude that supported the possibility of the adoption of Google Docs based learning in inside and outside classrooms. When the items were considered, the emphasis was the effect of using online learning too on writing ability, interacting, sharing comment feedback and ideas with the other students, promoting a collaborative learning environment. The finding was consistent with previous studies in that students perceived Google Docs as a useful tool for group work (Zhou et al., 2012; Brodahl et al., 2011).

The unexpected results were from the students' perception toward the online collaborative work. In the item no.5 from the post-questionnaire which is "Google Docs influence our group's collaborative experience positively", the participants find the collaborative work is difficult outside the classroom and they prefer do the tasks individually (Table 8). Almost, 23% of the participants chose disagree to the no. 5 statement. Because it was their first experience, they thought that the teacher could not check who works less or more and could not know how much effort they do in groups. However, the participants pair work's scores increased by using Google docs (4.1.4 Results of comparing the individual and collaborative written tasks).

5. Conclusion

As stated previously, teaching English language in Saudi Arabia has developed throughout the years. FL learners face many problems acquiring the foreign language four skills, and the most obvious difficulty they have is the acquisition of the writing skill. In order to solve this problem, a web-based tool (Google Docs) was used. This chapter presents a summary of the study findings, identify its limitations, and stress some recommendations.

5.1 Summary of the Study Findings

The main purpose of this research was to explore if integrating Google Docs as an online learning tool with students writing would make a difference. By using questionnaires and interviews with the learners, interesting findings about the use of Google Docs as a learning tool and the effectiveness of such usage were revealed. Moreover, summary of the quantitative and the qualitative results will be discussed in this chapter in order to highlight the answers of the two research questions which are (1) *Is there a difference on the students' individual and collaborative work using Google Docs?* (2) *What are the students' perspectives toward integration collaborative work with Google Docs on English writing tasks?*

Questionnaires adapted from Zhou et al. (2012) were answered by 22 Saudi female participants studying at Al-Imam University in their fifth academic level majoring in Arabic language. Students' portfolio, pre and post written tasks were analyzed, too. The quantitative and qualitative analysis of the tasks, questionnaire and the qualitative analysis of the interviews revealed a number benefits of using Google Docs as writing learning tool.

The study revealed that, students performed poorly on writing tasks. There is a list of spelling, grammar and other writing problems frequently found in students' papers due to various problems such as the large number of students in one class unable the teacher to addressing and answering the students' questions. Furthermore, the lecture time considered one of the problems because it is difficult to consider using drafts to encourage revision, the tasks' instructions cannot be repeated or given further explanation. Moreover, the language teachers' direct feedback and the way they corrects their students' mistake is a problem itself.

This research integrated the online learning tool which is Google Docs with writing tasks as attempt to avoid these problems and to encourage the students to write freely. The post written tasks in this research designed using Google Docs and performed individually and collaboratively. The students trained to use Google Docs then they received clear instructions about how to use the app and how to complete the tasks. For the pair work tasks, the students were able to communicate, share ideas, comment and gave their feedback to each other using the comment section in Google Docs. The created online learning environment encouraged the students, and they felt more confident to focus on the given topic and concentrate more in explaining their ideas.

After the data were collected and analyzed, the students score had improved in the tasks conducted and completed by Google Docs. Although, their scores in the pair work written tasks had increased by using Google Docs, 23% of the participants had a negative attitude toward using Google Docs. They thought that the teacher could not check who worked more or less, and could not know how much effort they put in groups work.

Finally, the findings of this study exhibited similarities to the findings of previous studies. First, Google Docs did enhance the participants writing ability which is clear in the pre and post tasks, their scores increased in the post tasks using Google Docs. Second, the participants showed a high level of positive attitude that supported the possibility of adopting Google Docs based learning tool inside and outside classrooms.

5.2 The Research Limitations and Suggestions

The researcher assessed students' knowledge of, and experiences with, Google Docs before and after the written tasks with three types of questions: open-ended, Likert-Scaled, and "yes" or "no." The research started with 30 participants who finished the pre-questionnaire. Later, 8 participants did not complete due to being absent from classes and due to internet access issues. The research ended up with 22 participants who finished the research application steps. There are some limitations in the present research. The first limitation is that the duration of the research application was not enough to explain the development in students' writing abilities in details. In a future work, it is better to apply such research on full semester course. The second limitation was the participants

complained about the internet access and they had difficulties to complete the online written tasks. The research suggested that every university student can receive an internet access at the same time they received their university ID from level one and it is finished the day that the students graduate to help them in their studies. The third limitation is, despite of the benefits of this online learning tool, challenges emerged while using Google Docs, such as periodic missing data from the screen, the documents cannot be accessible sometimes, accidental lag, or continues logout sometimes too. Such problems can prevent the teacher from being able of correcting the students' answers. The fourth limitation is that the students may have had problem trusting technology. When it comes to evolution, they felt the evolution will not be fair and that's why they prefer using Google Docs individually more than in groups. Teachers need to explain how the evaluation will be applied in details. The fifth limitation was the difficulty to find a large number of participants due to the administrative procedures and due the difficulties convincing the course teacher in universities and schools to apply the study in their classrooms. The teachers prefer to finish the course in her way without being distributed with applying some new tool or study even if the researcher is well prepared for the study and will help the teacher to apply it.

Finally, this study is limited to Saudi female students in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. It is also limited to students enrolled in their fifth level in the College of Arabic Language at Imam Muhammad Bin Saud Islamic University (during the academic year 2016). Hence, the study findings cannot be generalized to include students from different departments and different academic levels.

5.3 Recommendations for Future Studies

Because of the difficulty of find a good number of participant and instead of make the course teacher do all the teaching work inside the classroom, online peer tutoring (e-tutors) is a good solution to make the research participates in teaching and examine the student's development.

Another recommendation is to maximize the participants' number and divided them in into experimental and control groups to focus more on evaluating the quality of the final product in more details. Moreover, demographic characteristic can be examine in a similar future studies

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APPENDIX

Appendix A: Pre-questionnaire to Survey Students' Knowledge and Experience with Google Docs:

Please answer the following questions:

1. Do you have a Gmail account?

Circle one: - Yes - No

2. Have you used Google Docs or any online learning tool before?

Circle one: - Yes - No

If yes:

2.1) List types of online learning tools you usually use:

1.....

2.....

3.....

4.....

2.2) Have you used this online learning tool to complete a course task or what do use it for?

Circle one: - Yes - No

Please describe what you did:

2.3) How did you find it?

Please describe:

Appendix B: The Pre-Questionnaire in Arabic:

استبانة قبلية لقياس مدى معرفة وخبرة الطالبات في استخدام برنامج قوقل دوكس (Google Docs) وغيره من برامج التعلم عن طريق النت:

الاسم: العمر:

الكلية: القسم: المستوى:

الرجاء اختيار الإجابة المناسبة:

1_ هل لديك حساب جيميل (gmail)؟

ضعي دائرة حول: - نعم - لا

2_ هل قمتي باستخدام قوقل دوكس (Google Docs) أو أي وسيلة تعلم عبر الانترنت مسبقاً؟

ضعي دائرة حول: -نعم -لا

إذا كانت إجابتك بنعم:

(1-2) أذكرني وسائل التعلم عبر الانترنت التي سبق لك العمل عليها :

-1

-2

-3

-4

2-2) هل قمتي مسبقاً باستخدام هذه الوسائل لإكمال مهام مواد علمية أو غير ذلك ؟

ضعي دائرة حول: -نعم -لا

فضلاً صفي كيفية استخدامك لهذه الوسائل:

(3-2) كيف وجدتي استخدامها:

Appendix C: Post-Questionnaire to Survey Students' Evaluation and their opinion about the experience:

Please choose the appropriate response that reflects your opinion for each of the following statements:

1 = Strongly Disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Neither agree nor disagree, 4= Agree, 5=Strongly Agree

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1) I enjoyed doing the tasks using Google Docs.					
2) I feel comfortable doing the task using Google Docs.					
3) I would use Google Docs for my study in the future.					
4) I would like to do similar tasks again in the future.					
5) Google Docs influence our group's collaborative experience positively.					
6) Google Docs is a useful tool for learning writing.					
7) It was easy to deal with the web environment.					
8) I don't prefer using Google Docs in learning writing.					

9) Do you want to add a comment, suggestion or ideas to improve using Google Docs in learning?

Appendix D: The Post-Questionnaire in Arabic:

فضلا اختاري الإجابة المناسبة التي تعكس مدى تأييدك لكل من النقاط التالية كما أن الإجابة ستكون أحد الخيارات التالية:

1= أعارض بشدة 2= أعارض 3= محايد 4= موافق 5= موافق بشدة

أوافق بشدة	أوافق	محايد	لا أوافق	لا أوافق بشدة	
					1_ استمتعت بأداء المهام باستخدام Google Docs
					2_ أشعر بالارتياح عند استخدام GD لأداء المهام
					3_ سأستخدم GD لأداء المهام في المستقبل
					4_ استخدام GD أثر على عملنا التعاوني كمجموعه بشكل إيجابي
					5_ أداة مفيدة لتعلم الكتابة GD
					6_ كان من السهل استخدام الإنترنت لتعلم الكتابة
					7_ لا أفضل GD استخدام في تعلم الكتابة
					8_ لا أفضل GD استخدام في تعلم الكتابة

إذا كان لديك تعليق أو اقتراح أو صعوبات واجهتها و تودين إضافتها لتطوير هذه التجربة فضلا شاركينا بها:

Appendix E: Individual Task (One sided opinion Writing Task)

Assignment 1

Answer the following question individually.

Resources: Use your textbook, class lectures/activities and other resource you may find helpful.

Questions: The internet has made our lives better. Do you agree or disagree?

- write a paragraph with 10 – 12 sentences.
- write about what you like or dislike about the internet.
- support your opinion with an experience or a story if you have.

Appendix F: Pair Work Task (Descriptive Writing Task)

Task 2

Answer the following question in pairs.

Resources: Use your textbook, class lectures/activities and other resource you may find helpful.

Questions: Describe the city where you live. Write about the positives and negatives.

- write a paragraph with 10 – 12 sentences.
- write about what you like or dislike about this city.
- you can write about a city where you might want to live in.

Appendix G :Interview Questions:

- To what extent did you find GD helpful and interesting?
- Do you think GD is useful for collaborative homework or tasks?
- What were the difficulties you faced while using GD?
- Are you with integrating GD or any online learning tools with teaching inside and outside the classroom?
- In your opinion did using learning online tool (GD) helped you work without fear or under pressure? Or (helped you manage your stress)?

Appendix H: Interview Questions in Arabic:

- إلى أي مدى وجدتني GD مفيد و ممتع أثناء أداء المهام؟
- هل تعتقد بأن GD مفيد لأداء الواجبات المنزلية التعاوني أو المهام؟
- ما هي الصعوبات التي واجهتك أثناء استخدام GD ؟
- هل أنت مع دمج GD أو أي من تطبيقات التعلم عبر الإنترنت مع التدريس داخل وخارج الفصول الدراسية؟
- في رأيك هل ساعدك استخدام GD على العمل دون خوف (رهبة) أو تحت الضغط؟

Appendix I: Grading Rubric for task 1 and 2:

Worth: up to 15 points.

	0	1	2	3
Ideas	Writing and ideas are unclear and unfocused	Writing and ideas are difficult to identify and follow	Writing and ideas are somewhat hard to follow	Writing and ideas are clear, focused, and easy to follow (The sentence is both coherent and cohesive).
Word choice	Little attempt to choose words wisely or carefully	Inadequate use of word choice	Adequate use of word choice	Accurate, specific, powerful words are used
Mechanics: punctuation, spelling grammar and sentence structure.	Five or more mechanics errors	Three or four mechanics errors	One or two mechanics errors	No errors

Appendix J: The Referee List

Name	Abdallah Baniabdelrahman
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College	Education
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