


## The influence of nonautonomous online collaborative writing on EFL learners



 **Khaled Beshar Albeshar**

Department of English Language and Literature, College of Languages and Humanities, Qassim University, Saudi Arabia.  
Email: [kbshr@qu.edu.sa](mailto:kbshr@qu.edu.sa)



### ABSTRACT

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Web-based collaborative writing has received significant attention in the twenty-first century. This study aims to investigate students' attitudes toward nonautonomous online collaborative writing. A mixed methods approach was employed in this study, using both quantitative and qualitative methods. The quantitative aspect involved the administration of a questionnaire, while the qualitative component involved conducting interviews. The participants comprised 42 male Level 3 English language students from Qassim University in Saudi Arabia, aged 20 and 22. The findings indicated that nonautonomous online collaborative writing assisted students in efficiently completing written drafts and improved writing speed, fluency, and organization. It encouraged learners to write by guiding them through brainstorming ideas, generating an outline, and addressing spelling, grammar, and punctuation errors. According to the interviews, online collaborative writing required the teacher's supervision and support to provide comments, share drafts with peers, and receive feedback from others. The teacher's guidance focused on how students create their essays, such as acquiring relevant ideas and organizing material, resulting in much-improved writing. The teacher provided students with clear directions and instructions, including what to do and what not to do at the start of the task. He also reviewed students' assignments, wrote encouraging notes, and praised them for their accomplishments.

**Contribution/Originality:** The study seeks to determine students' perceptions of nonautonomous online collaborative writing in the English language classroom with the assistance of teachers. In other words, how do EFL students feel about combining Google Docs with collaborative writing in English with the teacher's guidance?

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Collaborative learning refers to the process of working together to achieve a common goal and complete a text within context (Graham, 2005). The process involves gathering, preparing and developing ideas, composting, rewriting, and proofreading (Rice & Huguley, 1994). Several studies examined various topics related to collaborative writing, such as how novices and advanced learners cooperate (Lee, 2004) and how students collaborate using Google Docs (Kessler, Bikowski, & Boggs, 2012). Other studies have shown that working together on written assignments improves students' interpersonal and overall writing skills (Elbow, 1973; Graham, 2005; Noël & Robert, 2003; Storch, 1999, 2002; Storch, 2005, 2007; Williams, 2003).

Moreover, researchers have looked at how online collaborative activities affect English writing ability. Kessler et al. (2012) investigated the dynamics of second-language learners' participation in collaborative writing activities using Google Docs and found that they focused more on meaning than form. According to Zhou, Simpson, and

Domizi (2012), Google Docs is effective both in and outside the classroom. In a study by Bikowski and Vithanage (2016), 95 second-language learners were randomly allocated to either an experimental group who wrote together or a control group who wrote independently. Even though all participants enjoyed technology, the online collaborative writing group performed significantly better than the others.

When thinking about online collaborative writing, it is critical to show how significant teacher actions are. Using sociocultural theory, teachers can lead the activity in a way that encourages students to work together (Rojas-Drummond & Mercer, 2003; Webb, 2009; Yoon & Kim, 2012). When students work in small groups, teachers must provide guidance and assistance (Algasab, 2015). Martin-Beltran (2012) showed that even when instructors strongly pressed students to cooperate, they refused to cooperate on their own. Chiu (2004) reported that some of the children requested intervention from the instructor. The instructor encouraged them to think about their mistakes instead of giving direct feedback.

In Saudi universities, writing skills have become increasingly important over the past few decades. However, EFL learners have difficulty with academic writing both inside and outside of the classroom. Teaching English using traditional methods might not provide effective instruction for writing skills. Collaborative writing improves students' social skills and writing strategies (Elbow, 1973; Graham, 2005; Noël & Robert, 2003; Storch, 1999, 2002; Storch, 2005; Williams, 2003). Students in Saudi Arabia could benefit from online collaborative activities that use Google Docs to learn writing and enhance their achievement.

To increase students' overall achievement, it is possible to use online collaborative writing in English to teach writing to EFL students in Saudi Arabia. In this study, the researcher aims to combine online learning (Google Docs) with collaborative writing in the English language focusing on the role of the teacher. The study's purpose is to discover how EFL students feel about combining Google Docs with collaborative writing in English with the teacher's guidance. EFL learners' feelings about integrating Google-based collaborative writing supervised and monitored by a teacher have not been studied. The following are the study's research questions:

1. What are EFL learners' views on nonautonomous collaborative writing with teacher assistance?
2. How do EFL students feel about using Google Docs in English writing classes with teacher assistance?
3. Does the teacher's presence have a positive impact on EFL students' completion of writing tasks?

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Small groups are often the focus of communicative methods of second language learning, which encourage and facilitate students' use of the target language (Storch, 2002). Storch (2019) defines collaborative writing as "an activity that requires the co-authors to be involved in all stages of the writing process, sharing the responsibility for and ownership of the entire text produced." In collaborative writing, writers work together in smaller groups to develop a single piece of writing. Ballard and Clanchy (1992) asserted that learners of English as a second language (ESL) and learners of English as a foreign language find it challenging to participate in collaborative writing since it requires them to share work, react to others' work, and take criticism seriously. In the view of Elbow (1973), collaborative writing is both beneficial and essential in the classroom, since a person should chat with another person if they become stuck. The author maintains that "two heads are better than one because two heads can make conflicting material interact better than one head usually can." In earlier research, Storch (2002) found that collaborative writing enabled ESL learners to share responsibility for decisions related to content, organization, and language. The benefits of collaborative writing for students extend from the initial stages of brainstorming and discussion to the last stages of editing and evaluating one another's work (Storch, 1999, 2002; Storch, 2005).

Collaborative writing enhances students' writing abilities (Albeshier, 2012; Dobao & Blum, 2013; Elola & Oskoz, 2010; McDonough & Sunitham, 2009; Shehadeh, 2011; Storch, 2005; Zeng & Takatsuka, 2009). The impact of collaboration can extend beyond the text's correctness to the quality of the text, as Storch (2005) indicates. The level of fluency, accuracy, complexity, and organization of group works is higher than the level of fluency, accuracy,

complexity, and organization of individual works. Shehadeh (2011) examined students' attitudes toward collaborative writing and concluded that it improved students' speaking abilities. Furthermore, Albeshir (2012) conducted research with 48 adult English language learners in Saudi Arabia. Twenty-three students were assigned to compose in groups, while the remaining 25 worked independently. Students who wrote together learned to create coherent essays that were free of typos and grammatical errors. On the other hand, time commitment was considered a barrier to collaborative writing (Zhai, 2021).

Using technology to help with writing could make a big difference in how well learners write (Braine, 1997). Through collaborative activities and technology-based learning tools, students can successfully enhance their writing abilities. Several studies have examined whether online collaborative writing is effective in developing students' skills. Several studies have examined independent learning and the quality of group work (Elola & Oskoz, 2010; Kuteeva, 2011; Li & Zhu, 2017). Collaborative writing activities facilitated by technology enhance the organization and ideas of the learners (e.g., (Abrams, 2019; Bikowski & Vithanage, 2016; Elabdali & Arnold, 2020; Strobl, 2014)).

The Google Docs app, which is part of Google Drive, allows users to create a wide range of documents (Hedin, 2012). The learner-centered instructional strategy that Google Docs developed allows students to collaborate on their projects (Oxnevad, 2013). On the other hand, various studies claim that the instructor affects the capacity of learners to work together (Abrams, 2019; Algasab, 2015; Bikowski & Vithanage, 2016; Kessler, 2009; Lawrence & Lee, 2016). Suwantarathip and Wichadee (2014) stated that one online resource that teachers can use to help their students learn to write for the 21st century is Google Docs. According to Perron and Sellers (2011), Google Docs is a service on the Google server that allows users to quickly and easily share files, collaborate on projects, and update existing documents. It increases productivity by allowing teams to collaborate on multiple assignments in one central location. Google Docs' unique feature of synchronous editing allows users to make changes to their written work at the same time, which makes it a unique tool for collaborative writing (Sharp, 2009). According to Lawrence and Lee (2016), the use of Google Docs has been demonstrated to facilitate students' involvement in recursive writing activities, enabling them to focus on the structural elements of their writing. Because of the input from their peers, their final papers can be refined and altered from the original.

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

A mixed methods approach is required to obtain reliable and strong evidence (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011; Greene, Caracelli, & Graham, 1989; Torrance, 2012). This study uses a quantitative approach (a questionnaire) as the main technique and a qualitative approach (a semi-structured interview) as supplemental material to investigate students' views regarding nonautonomous online collaborative writing with the teacher's guidance.

A total of 42 male students, with an average age of 21 and who were second-year English majors enrolled in Level 3 English language courses at Qassim University in Saudi Arabia, were selected as participants for the study conducted in October 2023. The following criteria affected the choice of participants: 1) These learners had less writing experience than other students in their third or fourth year since they were classified as lower intermediate, and 2) they learned how to write a variety of essays in their academic writing course, including argumentative, comparative, and cause-and-effect essays.

In this study, the questionnaire is utilized for three reasons: 1) To respond to the research questions for the study, 2) Using the questionnaire has several advantages, including saving time, money, and effort (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010), and 3) The environment of the study allows participants to provide truthful responses. According to Dörnyei and Taguchi (2010), the questionnaire design should be carefully chosen, and clear written instructions in plain, intelligible language should be given.

As shown in [Appendix A](#), the researcher modified some of the questions from previous studies and developed others based on his experience teaching English as a second language. Students were asked how they felt about the following: 1) nonautonomous collaborative writing with the teacher's guidance rather than alone; 2) utilizing Google Docs in writing sessions; and 3) the impact of the teacher on the completion of writing tasks for EFL students. All parts of the questionnaire used the Likert scale. The closed-ended responses on this scale ("strongly agree," "agree," "undecided," "disagree," and "strongly disagree") allow respondents to reply explicitly ([Dörnyei, 2007](#)).

The semi-structured interview questions focus on students' experiences after participating in the study (see [Appendix B](#)) to obtain more detailed information about how students feel about writing collaboratively in Google Docs with instructor assistance. Three participants were selected for the interview based on their final exam results (one at the top, one in the middle, and one at the bottom).

Regarding the study procedure, the participants met weekly for two hours for six weeks. During the initial week of the research, the participants were provided with guidance on learning essay composition skills through the utilization of the writing process method. This approach encompasses the pre-writing, drafting, revising, and editing phases of writing, along with the corresponding activities linked to each stage. During the second week, the participants were provided with guidance on how to effectively carry out these steps in a collaborative manner, with the presence of the teacher for support. During the third week of the course, the subjects were instructed to install the Google Docs program on their cell phones and received a training session on the utilization of Google Docs, encompassing tasks such as uploading, revising, and editing. In the fourth week, participants were instructed to engage in online writing activities within small groups consisting of four to five people under the supervision and guidance of the teacher for a period of three weeks. The students were assigned an argumentative topic and instructed to compose a three-paragraph essay using the Google Docs platform.

To determine the frequency and mean score for each item of the questionnaire, descriptive statistics were used for data analysis. According to Trochim (20), statistics provide a thorough comprehension of the participants and the measurements. In terms of the interviews, the researchers employed thematic analysis ([Boyatzis, 1998](#)) as a methodological approach to investigate the students' views and opinions regarding the impact of nonautonomous online collaborative writing with the instruction of the teacher.

## 4. RESULTS

The findings from the questionnaire were reviewed using frequency, which presents percentages by arranging numbers in ascending or descending order. In addition, descriptive analysis data was used to calculate the mean. The students responded on a 5-point Likert scale (5 for strongly disagree, 4 for disagree, 3 for undecided, 2 for agree, and 1 for strongly agree).

### 4.1. Research Question 1: What are EFL Learners' Views on Nonautonomous Collaborative Writing with Teacher Assistance?

As shown in [Table 1](#) and [Figure 1](#), students' thoughts on writing with other people in front of the teacher can be broken down into three factors:

- *Increasing students' writing abilities and test performance*

This sub-factor is addressed in questions one and six. For question one, the mean score was 4.2, and 71.4% of the students agreed that working in groups is an effective strategy for improving their writing abilities. On the other hand, the mean score for question six was 3.7, and 64.2% of the students indicated that collaborative writing helped them improve their writing exam grades.

- *Promoting students' writing by helping them brainstorm, plan, and correct spelling, grammar, and punctuation*

Questions two and five were considered for this factor. For question two, 80.9% of the students thought that collaborative writing under the teacher’s supervision motivated them to write, with a mean score of 4.1. Similarly, question five showed that the majority of the students (90%) were in agreement with the statement “Collaborative writing helped me develop ideas, make an outline, and check for spelling, grammar, and punctuation mistakes,” with a mean score of 4.4.

- *Students’ satisfaction with writing collaboratively*

Questions three, four, and seven addressed students' feelings about writing collaboratively or individually. For question three, more than half of the students (51.3%) disagreed with the statement “Working alone, without the assistance of others, is very important to me,” with a mean score of 2.0. For question four, only 14.2% felt embarrassed to share their writing with others, whereas 69% did not; the mean score was 2.2. Finally, 69% of the responses showed that students were satisfied when collaborating with others, with a mean score of 3.9.

Table 1. Students’ perspectives on collaborative writing.

No.	Item description	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)	Subtotal D+SD	Subtotal SA+A
1	Working in groups is an effective strategy for improving my writing ability.	1 2.3%	1 2.3%	5 11.9%	15 35.7%	20 47.6%	2 4.6%	30 71.4%
2	Working in groups under the teacher’s supervision motivates me to write.	2 4.6%	2 4.6%	4 9.5%	14 33.3%	20 47.6%	4 9.5%	34 80.9%
3	Working alone, without the assistance of others, is very important to me.	18 42.8.0%	14 33.3%	4 9.5%	3 7.1%	3 7.1%	32 51.3%	6 14.2%
4	I feel embarrassed to share my writing with others.	15 35.7%	14 33.3%	7 16.6%	3 7.1%	3 7.1%	29 69%	6 14.2%
5	Collaborative writing helped me develop ideas, make an outline, and check for spelling, grammar, and punctuation mistakes.	0 0%	1 2.3%	3 7.1%	18 42.8.%	20 47.6%	1 2.3%	38 90%
6	Writing in groups assisted me in improving my writing exam scores.	4 9.5%	3 7.1%	8 18.6	12 28.5%	15 35.7%	7 16.6	27 64.2%
7	I am more satisfied when I collaborate with others than when I write alone.	2 4.6%	2 4.6%	9 21.4%	15 35.7%	14 33.3%	4 9.5%	29 69%

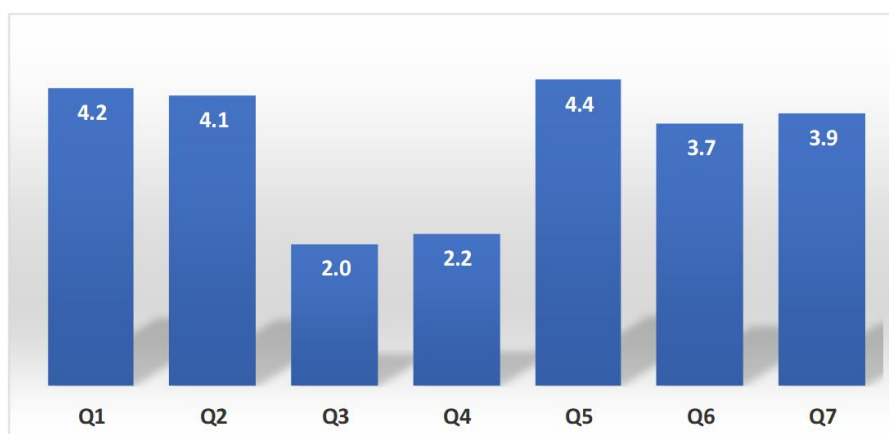


Figure 1. Students’ perspectives on collaborative writing.

Based on the results of the first question, students thought that nonautonomous collaborative writing under the teacher’s supervision motivated students to write, develop ideas, make an outline, and check spelling, grammar,

and punctuation mistakes. Moreover, nonautonomous collaborative writing was an effective strategy for improving students' writing abilities with high satisfaction.

#### 4.2. Research Question 2: How Do Saudi Students Feel About Using Google Docs in English Writing Classes with Teacher Assistance?

As seen in Table 2 and Figure 2, the second study question is concerned with students' feelings about using Google Docs in English writing classes and is divided into the following factors:

- *Individual versus group writing using Google Docs:*

47.6% of the students disagreed with statement eight: "Writing my essay in person was better than typing it in a group using Google Docs," whereas 23.8% agreed with it, with a mean score of 2.6.

- *Feeling confident in Google Docs:*

47.6% of the students indicated that they were not sure. In contrast, 30.9% disagreed, and 21.4% agreed with statement 9: "I felt more confident writing the essay in Google Docs," with a mean score of 3.

- *Using Google Docs to contribute, learn, and interact with team members:*

This factor was addressed in questions 10, 11, and 15. A total of 64.2% of the students agreed that they had the ability to contribute to team members when writing using Google Docs, whereas 23.8% showed disagreement, with a mean score of 3.6. For question 11, 80.9% of the students indicated that they had learned from their team members when using Google Docs, with a mean score of 4.1. Regarding statement 15, 90.4% of the students clarified that Google Docs facilitated interaction with each other, with a mean score of 4.3.

- *Preference to continue using Google Docs for further assignments:*

With a mean score of 3.7, 64.2% of the students indicated a preference to complete additional assignments using Google Docs, as shown in statement 13: "I'd like to do more assignments with Google Docs in the future," whereas only 16.6% disagreed.

- *Using Google Docs to revise and submit a quality final essay:*

It was clear from the findings that more than half of the participants agreed with statements 12 and 14 (57.1% and 52.3%, respectively). On the other hand, 23.8% showed disagreement with both statements, with average scores of 3.6 and 3.4.

**Table 2.** Perceptions of learners on the use of Google docs in English writing.

No.	Item description	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)	Subtotal D+SD	Subtotal SA+A
8	Writing my essay in person was better than typing it in a group using Google Docs.	12 28.5%	8 18.6%	12 28.5%	4 9.5%	6 14.2%	20 47.6%	10 23.8%
9	I felt more confident writing the essay in Google Docs.	5 11.9%	4 9.5%	20 47.6%	9 21.4%	4 9.5%	9 21.4%	13 30.9%
10	I was able to contribute to my team members when writing using Google Docs.	4 9.5%	6 14.2%	5 11.9%	15 35.7%	12 28.5%	10 23.8%	27 64.2%
11	I learned from my team members when using Google Docs.	1 2.3%	3 7.1%	4 9.5%	16 38%	18 42.8.0%	4 9.5%	34 80.9%
12	Google Docs assisted me in writing a better final essay.	4 9.5%	4 9.5%	10 23.8%	12 28.5%	12 28.5%	10 23.8%	24 57.1%
13	I'd like to do more assignments with Google Docs in the future.	4 9.5%	3 7.1%	8 18.6%	14 33.3%	13 30.9%	7 16.6%	27 64.2%
14	Writing in groups on Google Docs taught me how to revise my essay.	4 9.5%	6 14.2%	10 23.8%	12 28.5%	10 23.8%	10 23.8%	22 52.3%
15	Google Docs facilitated my interaction with others.	0 0%	1 2.3%	3 7.1%	20 47.6%	18 42.8.0%	1 2.3%	38 90.4%



**Figure 2.** Perceptions of learners on the use of Google Docs in English writing.

To summarize the results for the second question, Google Docs facilitated contributions and interactions among the students. Writing using Google Docs was more useful when completing essays in groups rather than individually. Students preferred completing other tasks using Google Docs.

#### 4.3. Research Question 3: Does the Teacher's Presence Have a Positive Impact on EFL Students' Completion of Writing Tasks?

As indicated in Table 3 and Figure 3, the third research question refers to the effect of the teacher's assistance on the completion of students' writing. It was addressed using several elements. Depending on the factors' specific nature, they are categorized as follows:

- *Instructor assistance with writing in Google Docs:*

This factor was answered in question 16, which showed that 90.4% of the students agreed with the statement "My teacher helped me more when writing using Google Docs," with a mean score of 4.2.

- *Receiving online comments from peers while the teacher is watching:*

When students answered statement 17, 80.9% indicated that they liked getting online comments and feedback from their classmates while the teacher watched.

- *The teacher's assistance enhanced the writing:*

A total of 71.4% of the students agreed with statement 18, "The instructor's presence enhanced my writing significantly," with a mean score of 3.9.

- *Google Docs facilitates teacher comments:*

For statement 19, "Google Docs makes it easy for teachers to leave comments on papers," 57.1% of the students showed agreement, and 16.6% disagreed, with a mean difference of 3.6.

- *Reminding students to keep working together as a team:*

For statement 20, 66.6% of the students agreed that "Students are reminded by the instructor of the ground principles for working together effectively and maintaining group cohesiveness," with a mean score of 4.0.

- *Focusing on collecting ideas and planning the text:*

The majority of students (64.2%) thought that the teacher's presence focused on how students complete their essays, such as collecting appropriate ideas and planning the text. This is shown in statement 21, with a mean score of 3.8.

- *Providing immediate feedback on form and content errors:*

With a mean score of 2.0, 71.4% of the students who answered statement 22 said that the teacher doesn't give immediate feedback on grammatical and content errors.

- *Recommending writing resources:*

Half of the participants disagreed with statement 23, "The instructor recommends many resources for writing," with a mean score of 2.5.

The findings of the third research question show that the teacher's guidance significantly improved students' writing using Google Docs. The teacher was able to provide feedback and remind students to work together efficiently after integrating Google Docs with collaborative writing. The teacher's guidance primarily focused on the way the students collaborated to plan their text and gather ideas. However, the teacher was unable to offer resources for writing with Google Docs or to promptly correct grammatical errors in the work.

**Table 3.** Students' perspectives on teacher assistance.

No.	Item description	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)	Subtotal D+SD	Subtotal SA+A
16	My teacher helped me more when writing using Google Docs.	1 2.3%	2 4.6%	1 2.3%	20 47.6%	18 42.8.0%	3 7.1%	38 90.4%
17	I liked getting online comments and feedback from my classmates while the teacher was watching.	1 2.3%	1 2.3%	6 14.2%	16 38%	18 42.8.0%	2 4.6%	34 80.9%
18	The instructor's presence enhanced my writing significantly.	2 4.6%	3 7.1%	7 16.6%	16 38%	14 33.3%	5 11.9%	30 71.4%
19	With Google Docs, my instructor can easily comment on my papers.	3 7.1%	4 9.5%	11 26.1%	12 28.5%	12 28.5%	7 16.6%	24 57.1%
20	Students are reminded by the instructor of the ground principles for working together effectively and maintaining group cohesiveness.	0 0%	4 9.5%	10 23.8%	12 28.5%	16 38%	4 9.5%	28 66.6%
21	The teacher's presence focuses on how students complete their essays, such as collecting appropriate ideas and planning the text.	1 2.3%	3 7.1%	11 26.1%	14 33.3%	13 30.9%	4 9.5%	27 64.2%
22	The instructor provides immediate feedback on grammatical and content errors.	16 38%	14 33.3%	7 16.6%	4 9.5%	1 2.3%	30 71.4%	5 11.9%
23	The instructor recommends many resources for writing.	11 26.1%	10 23.8%	12 28.5%	7 16.6%	2 4.6%	21 50%	9 21.4%



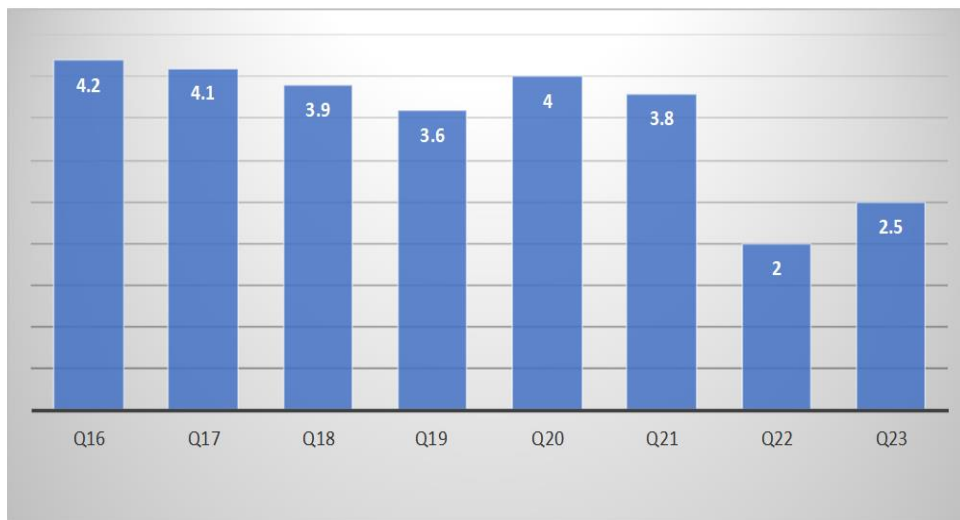


Figure 3. Students' perspectives on teacher intervention.

#### 4.4. Interview Results

The interviews were carried out to supplement the questionnaire and obtain further information on the students' perceptions of nonautonomous online collaborative writing with the teacher's guidance. Three students were selected for the semi-interview based on their previous exam results: the first student had the highest score, the second student had an average score, and the third student had the lowest score. Table 4 presents the findings from the thematic analysis of the interviews that were transcribed.

Table 4. Themes exploring EFL student views on the influence of nonautonomous online collaborative writing with teacher guidance.

Theme	Answers
Online collaborative writing	Respondent A perceived online collaborative writing as beneficial and valuable for enhancing his writing proficiency. Respondent B believed that completing individual writing tasks required a significant amount of time, so collaborative writing using Google Docs is crucial. Respondent C advocated for collaborative essay writing, suggesting that students should engage in group work to facilitate effective editing, revision, and rewriting of their essays.
Using Google Docs in writing	Respondent A believed that his Google Docs teammates helped him check grammar, organize essays, and finish his essay quickly. Respondent B felt that individual use of Google Docs is pointless because it includes group work features such as discussions and note-taking. Respondent C felt that Google Docs enhanced his writing exercises, organization abilities, composition speed, and fluency.
Teacher's presence	Respondent A claimed that the teacher helped students finish essays, left notes reminding them to respect each other, read their work, and gave feedback when needed. Respondent B reported that the teacher inspired him to keep working and get better at writing. Respondent C appreciated the teacher's clear directions and assistance in organizing his writing. The teacher pushed students to read and comment on each other's writing as a way to interact with one another.

The following is a detailed description of the three interviews:

##### 4.4.1. Respondent A

Respondent A mentioned that online collaborative writing was helpful and useful for developing his writing abilities. He thought that Google Docs should be used in groups rather than individually because it includes useful

features, such as editing and highlighting. He added that team members in Google Docs helped him check grammar efficiently and organize essays with each other effectively. He believed that writing in Google Docs helped him complete his essay easily.

Regarding the teacher's presence when students are involved in online collaborative writing, Respondent A thought that the teacher helped with completing essays. This was done by collecting appropriate ideas and planning the text. He said, "We would not have known what was appropriate and inappropriate without the teacher." He also said, "The teacher left notes reminding us to treat each other with respect, to read each other's work, and to give feedback whenever it was needed."

#### 4.4.2. Respondent B

Respondent B said, "Before my involvement in collaborative writing using Google Docs, individual writing was boring for me and required a lot of time to finish the task." He added that Google Docs has no benefit if it is done individually because it includes features designed for group work, such as discussions and keeping track of comments and notes.

In terms of the teacher's presence, while students participated in online collaborative writing, Respondent B added some notes. He said, "Because the instructor reviews our work, I believe it is crucial. When he compliments us, it makes me pleased. When he writes favorable feedback, I am delighted, and it motivates me to continue working and improving my writing over time." He also added, "I don't always rely on my classmates' feedback since some of my group members are not qualified in English. If the instructor is present, I believe he can provide great comments because he is our teacher."

#### 4.4.3. Respondent C

Respondent C thought that Google Docs improved his composition speed, fluency, organizational skills, and writing exercises. He mentioned: "I learned how to structure my essays, regulate my writing speed, and know what my weak point is." He thought that students should work on their essays in groups and use Google Docs to help them edit, revise, and rewrite their essays well.

Regarding the teacher's presence during online collaborative writing, Respondent C said, "It is difficult to correct each other's mistakes because, as classmates, we might argue over or deny each other's editing since we're all students." If the teacher is present, he has the authority to correct our errors. In addition, Respondent C appreciated the teacher's clear directions and assistance in organizing his writing. He stated that the teacher had provided him with instructions regarding what to do and what to avoid at the start of the task. He mentioned, "Because we wish to contribute, our instructor encourages us as students to communicate with one another by reading and responding to one another's writing."

## 5. DISCUSSION

The study investigated students' attitudes toward nonautonomous online collaborative writing. A quantitative strategy (a questionnaire) was used as the primary method, while a qualitative approach was utilized to gather extra information (an interview). Three different individuals were interviewed to validate the results obtained from the questionnaire. The most significant takeaway from this paper is that there is potential for nonautonomous online collaborative writing to be positively changed with the assistance of teachers. The findings of the study demonstrate that nonautonomous online collaborative writing was helpful to the vast majority of students who took part, and most were open to using it in their academic writing tasks. The research conclusions may be summarized as follows:

### *5.1. Students' Feelings about Collaborative Writing with Teacher Assistance*

In answering the first research question, it is obvious from [Table 1](#) and [Figure 1](#) that students have a positive perspective on the use of collaborative writing in the English language in the presence of an instructor. Students noticed that collaborative writing was an effective strategy for improving their writing abilities. In addition, collaborative writing under the instructor's supervision inspired the students to write. It assisted them in developing ideas by helping to outline and check for errors in spelling, grammar, and punctuation. This finding is consistent with the study by [Phipps, Phipps, Kask, and Higgins \(2001\)](#). This research discovered that getting students to collaborate on written tasks was an effective strategy to push them to perform to the best of their abilities.

### *5.2. Students' Perceptions of Google Docs in English Writing Classes*

[Table 2](#) and [Figure 2](#) show the students' opinions on the use of Google Docs in English writing. They prefer to use Google Docs collaboratively rather than individually. This became increasingly clear when they indicated that using Google Docs had improved their writing, interaction, or comprehension. In addition, the results show that the students had learned from their teammates and could contribute to their work while utilizing Google Docs. Moreover, it facilitated interaction with each other and assisted them in revising and submitting essays. They also expressed their preference to complete additional assignments using Google Docs. This finding is consistent with [Morales and Collins \(2007\)](#) and [Alsubaie and Ashuraidah \(2017\)](#), who stated is that Google Docs is better than speaking to someone in person or through any other conventional form of communication. However, the study results revealed that approximately half of the participants are still unsure about their confidence in writing essays based on Google Docs. This is because it is an unfamiliar experience, which requires more time for students to become familiar with it.

### *5.3. The Teacher's Assistance in Completing Students' Writing*

In answering the third research question, which was about the effect of teacher assistance in completing students' writing, the teacher's presence helped students by offering comments, sharing drafts with peers, and gaining feedback from others. According to [Alghasab, Hardman, and Handley \(2019\)](#), teachers' movements when students are involved in online collaborative writing facilitate shared meaning and form development, and their praises help to build an inviting, secure, safe, and supportive place for discourse.

Moreover, students were willing to be watched and commented on by their teacher when writing collaboratively using Google Docs. [Lawrence and Lee \(2016\)](#) noticed that even though students may work together on tasks with their classmates, a teacher is still required to be present to guide them.

In terms of the teacher's role, his presence concentrated on how students compose their essays, such as gathering relevant ideas and organizing the content, so their writing was significantly enhanced. This is in line with [Alharbi \(2020\)](#), who found that both instructor and peer feedback concentrated on global concerns, such as content, structure and coherence, as well as local concerns, such as language and conventions.

Another role of the instructor is to remind students of the fundamental concepts of effective teamwork and group cohesion. This finding agrees with [Donato \(2004\)](#); [Mangenot and Nissen \(2006\)](#); and [Alghasab et al. \(2019\)](#), who stated that the teacher should occasionally remind the students of the lesson plan and encourage them to talk about the assignment instead of other things that have nothing to do with it.

### *5.4. The Interviews on the Students' Perceptions of Nonautonomous Online Collaborative Writing with the Teacher's Assistance*

The purpose of the interviews was to obtain additional data on students' impressions of nonautonomous online collaborative writing and complement the responses provided in the questionnaire. According to the interviewees'

responses, it was useless if the functions of Google Docs, such as interactions and the ability to keep track of comments and notes, were used individually rather than collaboratively. Moreover, students preferred completing the essay draft in a group with the help of the teacher to make sure that everyone's work was carefully looked over, changed, and rewritten. It was found that members of a team on Google Docs were able to look at each other's essays and give each other feedback on their grammar and essay structure. This is in line with Alharbi (2020), who found that Google Docs is good for giving and getting feedback. Google Docs helped students improve their writing speed, fluency, and the ability to organize their work.

Regarding the teacher's role, he guided students through the process of collaborative writing, helping with tasks such as brainstorming and outlining. This finding is in agreement with the study by Bikowski and Vithanage (2016), who concluded that web-based collaboration enhanced participation in the writing process. These web-based writing activities for the classroom help students think, plan, and revise their writing together. In addition, the teacher reminded the members of the class to be nice to each other, read and comment on each other's work when they had time, and treat everyone with respect and fairness. The instructor gave students very specific guidance and instructions, including what to do and what not to do at the beginning of the task, as well as how to order their writing so that there were no misunderstandings. The teacher encouraged the students to talk to each other, and he told them to read and comment on each other's writing. Therefore, it was crucial to have the teacher on the team because he helped in reviewing the students' work, wrote favorable feedback, and complimented their achievements.

The interview results are in line with Lawrence and Lee (2016), who found that less adept learners depended on their teacher's comments only when they began contributing to their first draft. In the final draft, students could contribute to their own writing and their friends' scripts without much instructor interaction.

## 6. CONCLUSION

It was previously reported that EFL students had trouble writing academically both inside and outside the classroom despite Saudi colleges emphasizing writing instruction. Because traditional methods of teaching English are used, their writing skills are not greatly improved. To teach writing to EFL students in Saudi Arabia and raise their achievement levels, online collaborative learning (e.g., collaborative writing using Google Docs) in the English language may be an effective method. However, students may have difficulty making effective use of technology in writing classes since it is not common practice. Because of this, teachers may be able to guide and help students become better writers through their actions.

The main findings of the study are that Google Docs enhanced students' writing, collaboration, and understanding, enabling them to benefit from their peers' insights and actively contribute to their collective work, and it assisted them in reviewing and submitting quality essays.

The teacher assisted students by offering feedback, and the students benefitted from exchanging drafts and receiving feedback from their peers. The instructor emphasized the importance of collaboration and unity within the group, urging students to engage in discussions regarding the assignment. The conclusion provides a concise overview of the findings, limitations, suggestions, pedagogical implications, and recommendations for future studies.

### 6.1. Summary of the Findings

The study sought to determine students' perceptions of nonautonomous online collaborative writing in the English language classroom with teacher assistance. The quantitative and qualitative findings confirm that nonautonomous online collaborative writing in the presence of a teacher improves learning among EFL students.

The majority of the students' responses to the questionnaire suggest that online collaborative writing helped them effectively complete their written drafts. Google Docs enhanced their writing speed, fluency, and organizational skills. Collaborative writing encourages students to write by guiding them in brainstorming ideas,

creating an outline, and correcting spelling, grammar, and punctuation. The students confirmed in the interviews that online collaborative writing benefits from teacher oversight and assistance. They believe that writing online with a teacher's assistance helped them succeed by providing comments, sharing drafts with classmates, and receiving feedback from others. The teacher's assistance focused on how students produce their essays, such as gathering pertinent ideas and arranging information, resulting in dramatically improved writing. The instructor offered students explicit directions and instructions, including what to do and what not to do at the beginning of the assignment. He also taught them how to sequence their writing to avoid ambiguities. He examined the students' assignments, wrote positive feedback, and praised them for their successes. Online collaborative writing takes a lot of effort and cooperation from everyone on the team; therefore, the instructor plays a critical role in directing, intervening, and encouraging them.

### *6.2. Research Limitations and Suggestions*

The students were given the questionnaire after the research; however, a pre-questionnaire could be used to track changes in students' responses both before and after participating in the study. In addition, the sample only comprised male students in Level 3 of the English Language Department at Qassim University. As a result, the findings cannot be applied to all EFL students.

The results suggest that collaborative writing is useless without training. Students would be unable to contribute to their groups if their teachers did not provide practical instruction on collaborative engagement. Training improved the students' performance in peer reviews, increasing their confidence and encouraging them to comment on their mistakes. Moreover, students should know that working together means supporting each other, sharing responsibilities, talking to each other, and trusting each other. Because of the high number of students in English language writing classes and the time required to correct and discuss their mistakes, some EFL teachers may be reluctant to correct and comment on their students' writing. Consequently, using online collaborative writing in the presence of teachers may enhance students' ability to offer feedback to one another. Peer feedback helps students to be more self-aware, engage in self-reflection and self-expression, and contribute to decision making (Ferris, 2003).

### *6.3. Pedagogical Implications*

Even though online collaborative writing has many advantages in education, its shortcomings are important to consider. The study's findings revealed that, regardless of how long students took to complete their writing assignments, the teacher did not immediately address grammatical or content errors. Moreover, students noticed that their teacher was unable to suggest different sources for writing. This conclusion contradicts Alghasab et al. (2019), who discovered that the instructor's actions in offering resources describe a learning discovery that helps students to discuss and solve problems for themselves. In addition, almost half of the students are still unclear about their confidence in using Google Docs to write essays.

### *6.4. Recommendations for Future Studies*

As the students were pleased with online collaborative writing in the English language with the assistance of the instructor, future research should focus on quantitative, longitudinal, comparative, and experimental studies that compare the results before and after receiving the teacher's assistance. To justify the amount of progress in learners' results, the researcher intends to quantify the collaborative behavior observed in students' responses and revisions to the text. This will enable the study of students' collaboration.

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**Transparency:** The author states that the manuscript is honest, truthful, and transparent, that no key aspects of the investigation have been omitted, and that any differences from the study as planned have been clarified. This study followed all writing ethics.

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**Appendix A. Questionnaire of students' online collaboration with teacher assistance.**

Please show your level of agreement with each statement by checking the appropriate box (5 = strongly agree, 4 = agree, 3 = neutral or undecided, 2 = disagree, and 1 = strongly disagree). Your responses will remain anonymous.

No.	Item description
1	Working in groups is an effective strategy for improving my writing ability.
2	Working in groups under the teacher's supervision motivates me to write.
3	Working alone, without the assistance of others, is very important to me.
4	I feel embarrassed to share my writing with others.
5	Collaborative writing helped me develop ideas, make an outline, and check for spelling, grammar, and punctuation mistakes.
6	Writing in groups assisted me in improving my writing exam scores.
7	I am more satisfied when I collaborate with others than when I write alone.
8	Writing my essay in person was better than typing it in groups using Google Docs.
9	I felt more confident writing the essay in Google Docs.
10	I was able to contribute to my team members when writing using Google Docs.
11	I learned from my team members when using Google Docs.
12	Google Docs assisted me in writing a better final essay.
13	I'd like to do more assignments with Google Docs in the future.
14	Writing in groups on Google Docs taught me how to revise my essay.
15	Google Docs facilitated my interaction with others.
16	My teacher helped me more when writing using Google Docs.
17	I liked getting online comments and feedback from my classmates while the teacher was watching.
18	The instructor's presence enhanced my writing significantly.



No.	Item description
19	With Google Docs, my instructor may easily comment on my papers.
20	Students are reminded by the instructor of the ground principles for working together effectively and maintaining group cohesiveness.
21	The teacher's presence focuses on how students complete their essays, such as collecting appropriate ideas and planning the text.
22	The instructor provides immediate feedback on grammatical and content errors.
23	The instructor recommends many resources for writing.

**Appendix B. Interview.**

- Describe your experience of collaborative writing using Google Docs.
- Do you think that Google Docs is beneficial to individuals or groups? Why?
- Do you think that writing on Google Docs helped you to complete your essay?
- Would you like a teacher to be on your team when you write together online?
- How useful did you find the teacher's presence throughout your teammate interactions?
- What are the disadvantages of having a teacher in Google Docs?
- During your interactions with your team members, did you like the teacher's presence or not? Why?

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