

## Optimizing the Use of Google Classroom as an Integrated Learning Management System in Teaching Writing

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### Abstract

Google Classroom (GC), as one of the learning management systems (LMS), has been widely used by many educators and researched in many studies for its efficacy in assisting both teachers and students in learning a second language. This article presents a report of exploratory research about the possibilities of getting the most out of GC for educators to provide effective scaffoldings that can help their students achieve the goals of learning in writing. Referring to the concept of Zone Proximal Development (ZPD), the teaching and learning cycles (TLC), and the theories of distance learning, this article also attempts to display a model of ideal scaffoldings relevant for teaching writing in an online environment. Besides, through observations and investigations on a range of tools and materials on the internet and those discussed in different studies, this research reveals various types of potential applications that can be integrated with GC to make the lessons of writing more interactive and engaging. By reviewing other studies on the use of GC, this study highlights several technical issues and challenges to face when using the platform, particularly in teaching writing. For this reason, finding out appropriate ways and strategies on how to deal with the issues needs to be seriously considered so that the scaffoldings that have been designed can work as expected for effective online teaching and learning processes.

### Keywords

Google Classroom, Integration, Scaffoldings, Teaching writing, Tools and materials

### Introduction

Writing is one of the skills that students need to acquire and improve, particularly in today's technological and multimodal era. Adequate writing skill allows individuals to succeed in their career and education since many professional fields of work and study require them to be able to write for many different purposes. For example, staff who are good at writing correspondence on email will be more highly regarded in their workplace than those who are not. Similarly, students with sufficient proficiency in academic writing will not have any difficulty in doing tasks that are mostly carried out in written form, such as academic reports and essays. It, therefore, makes sense that writing should be considered as a priority in education and be included as one of the primary goals of learning in the curriculum. In this sense, educators then have a responsibility to ensure that the learning goal of writing can be achieved through any kinds of ways they believe will work effectively. One of the efforts in teaching writing today is the use of computer and internet technology to support students' learning processes in class, known as 'blended learning,' which has been seriously discussed by lots of educators and scholars. According to Bonk and Graham (2006), Blended learning is defined as a teaching approach that combines interactions through online media and physical classroom activities and, according to a number of scholars, is evidenced to be effective when used in teaching writing (Camahalan & Ruley, 2014; Adas & Bakir, 2013; Miyazoe & Anderson, 2010; Tomlinson & Whittaker, 2013). However, this teaching method, along with the compliments and critics it receives, seems to be challenged when the mode of learning has been shifted to fully online learning due to

the COVID-19 outbreak. Long before the pandemic, fully online learning or e-learning has also become a trend due to technological advancement. As reported by National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), for example, in 2018, there were nearly 7 million university students around the world taking online courses, and this number was predicted to increase continuously (NCES, 2019). The increase has then become so significant during the pandemic time (Weforum, 2020).

Some studies show that e-learning shares a broad range of benefits, and one of which is that it offers flexibility, rich resources, and low cost (Castro & Tumibay, 2021). In fact, with the rapid changes and development in internet use nowadays, learners can also get opportunities to explore more various features and facilities and to be able to access a wide range of materials in the clouds (the internet) very instantly. Such facilities also enable educators to choose any kinds of materials that suit their needs in teaching. Language teachers, for instance, can now find it easy to use abundant authentic materials from the country where the target language is used. Particularly in teaching writing, they may take advantage of some useful tools and applications such as grammar and vocabulary checkers to ensure accuracy and to give feedback with precise options for any writing errors made by their students. Furthermore, it is also possible for them to facilitate their students in using electronic dictionaries and thesaurus effectively to enrich their vocabulary and to enhance their competence in using different types of lexicons and grammatical patterns in writing. Nevertheless, despite the benefits found in e-learning, it is important for educators to anticipate the drawbacks of online classes that may instead lead to failure in assisting the students to achieve their learning goals in writing. According to Dumford and Miller (2018), the challenges that may hinder an online learning activity have to do with access availability and ensuring how students are really engaged in virtual classrooms. In their study, while technological tools are important in education, encouraging meaningful interactions for students' engagement should be seriously taken into account.

From the issues of e-learning as addressed by Dumford and Miller (2018), it is, therefore, crucial that educators prepare their online classes very well in advance by setting up clear and feasible goals of learning and choosing the right activities for their students. In this regard, both the goals and activities need to be explicitly managed through an appropriate system, especially for anticipating the issues and challenges faced in the online learning environment. This system is in line with the concept of scaffolding in the process of learning and teaching introduced by a constructivist, Lev Vygotsky in 1978. However, in the context of online learning, this concept needs to be adjusted to other relevant theories of learning – one of which is the distance education theory developed by a number of scholars such as Keegan (1986) and Michael Moore (1972). Distance education in the internet era must be definitely different and more possible than it used to be due to the availability of facilities and sophisticated tools with Artificial Intelligence (AI) on the internet or what is called the “clouds.” For that reason, it is not only the teaching method that matters but selecting or choosing the right tools really does for the teaching success. Google Classroom (GC) is one of the examples of tools that have been very popular among teachers not only because of the easy-use features it offers but also it is free of cost. Regarding the popularity of GC in education since its establishment in 2014 (Dara, 2014), the studies investigating the tool become inevitable, particularly in relation to how effective it is in assisting both educators in teaching and students in achieving their learning goals.

Drawing on the concept of scaffolding and distance education, this article is aimed at exploring and examining the use of GC as an integrated e-learning management system with other potential materials and tools to embed with it for its optimization. Through this study, the author, as a lecturer, from his experience of using GC in teaching writing, attempts to research the applications of the tool and how it can be optimized for more effective impacts in language education, particularly in teaching writing. From this notion, this study, therefore, tries to answer the following question:

How is Google classroom used to provide effective scaffoldings for teaching writing?

### Literature Review

Many scholars and researchers agree that writing is such a complex skill since it requires other supporting competencies that one should have and develop. Concerning the complexity of writing, Hymes (1972), one of the most influential scholars in language studies, states that writing is a medium of communication, and to be able to write, an individual needs to have sufficient 'communicative competence.' This means that in writing, understanding grammar and other structure rules is not enough as this activity requires an ability to apply the rules in appropriate contexts so that communication goals can be achieved. Hyme's concept of communicative competence then inspires other scholars to develop new frameworks that have been very useful in many research of language teaching and applied linguistics. Canale and Swain (1980) for instance, introduces a model of communicative competence that consists of 1) *grammatical competence*, 2) *discourse competence*, 3) *sociolinguistic competence*, and 4) *strategic competence*. This model is then developed by Celce-Murcia (2007), offering the latest form of communicative competence model. In this model, she addresses the importance of discourse competence as the ultimate area to acquire, among other competencies: sociocultural competence, linguistic competence, formulaic competence, interactional competence, and strategic competence (ibid, 2008). She defines discourse competence as one's ability in selecting, arranging, and sequencing "words, structures and utterances to achieve a unified spoken and written text" by using some linguistic components such as cohesion, coherence, deixis, etc. (Celce-Murcia et al., 1995: 13).

From the literature discussed above, it can be concluded that writing is definitely not easy. In other words, to be able to write well, an individual indeed need to do a great amount of learning and lots of practice. In the context of language teaching, where writing is also an important part of the curriculum, students have to be given appropriate guidance and lessons that can encourage them to effectively gain such competence and improve it when moving up to the next level of study. In relation to this issue, referring to the concept of Scaffolding in language teaching might be helpful to find out how lessons, particularly in teaching writing, are appropriately planned and managed. Scaffolding was initially introduced by Wood, Bruner and Ross (1976) through their report, "The Role of Tutoring and Problem Solving" in 1976. They argue that for effective teaching, a teacher needs to set up a temporary structure of lessons that supports a learning process until his/ her students can perform what they have learned independently. This notion was then developed by Lev Vygotsky (1978) when discovering and observing the concept of Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which has been very well-known in language teaching and in particular, on the perspective of sociolinguistics and sociocultural theory. In his study, he defines scaffolding as a certain kind of support provided by an expert to a novice for the purpose of helping the novice to reach a higher stage of learning. And this support can be carried out effectively through the ZPD, which is described as an area or gap between actual and potential development (Vygotsky, 1978). In this regard, scaffolding is designed within the ZPD to facilitate students in learning through what they can do by themselves (actual development) and what they can do with the assistance of more capable others (potential development).

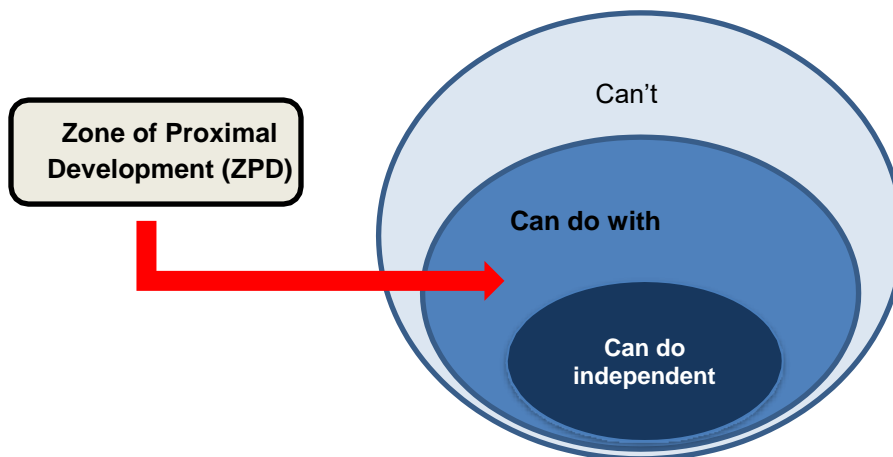


Figure 1: Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)

As seen in figure 1, when students attain new knowledge and show better performance through the given support, the actual development expands, and the ZPD shifts. The ZPD constantly changes every time students gain new knowledge and acquire new competence. In this sense, Vygotsky believes that a learning process takes place in an individual's ZPD, and providing scaffolding in the area is the key to enabling him/ her to acquire all the target knowledge and competencies. In other words, the designed scaffolding should be meaningful as it determines the learning outcomes that lead students to the next higher level. As shown in figure 1, it can also be said that as the individual's competence improves, the old scaffolding has to be reduced, and the new one is added. From this view, therefore, it is necessary that scaffolding or a sequence of activities in the ZPD is well-planned and organized. This notion is also supported by Gibbon (2015), who posits that scaffolding does not exactly occur by accident, but it is a strategic and intentional structure that requires analysis of the students' needs in order that any relevant support can be provided. In regard to designing a well-organized scaffolding, some scholars have identified the main characteristics of scaffolding that can be taken into account. Applebee and Langer (1983), for example, address the features of instructional scaffolding as follows:

1. **Intentionality:** the lesson given has a clear purpose for students' development.
2. **Appropriateness:** the tasks are comprised of activities that allow students to solve problems both with help and without help from a teacher.
3. **Structure:** All tasks and activities are organized structurally with tangible procedures to follow.
4. **Collaboration:** during the lesson, the teacher monitors students' works, records any errors and mistakes, answers questions, facilitates discussions, and gives feedback.
5. **Internalization:** as the material is internalized by students, the support and guidance for the task of learning are gradually taken out.

To follow these features, Lange (2002) discovers two main steps that can be taken when constructing an instructional scaffolding: (1) "development of instructional plans to lead the students from what they already know to a deep understanding of new material," and (2) "execution of the plans, wherein the instructor provides support to the students at every step of the learning process" (p. 1).

*Scaffolding in Teaching Writing*

When it comes to teaching writing, particularly in a second language, it is very crucial that educators provide an appropriate design of meaningful scaffolding that can effectively help their students improve their skills in writing. As discussed earlier, the scaffolding itself also has to be constantly adjusted and modified following the level of the students' attainment. In discussing scaffolding for teaching writing, it might be helpful to consider the model of teaching and learning cycle (TLC) developed by some educational linguists under the theory of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). Drawing on the concept of scaffolding and ZPD by Vygotsky, TLC involves four basic stages that teachers can carry out during the process of teaching and learning a second language. These stages are as follows:

1. Building the context of field

At this stage, a teacher focuses on his/her students' understanding of the text being discussed with its general characteristics and socio-cultural functions. The teacher encourages the students to explore the knowledge and cultures around the text through discussions.

2. Modelling the text to be discussed

In the modeling stage, students are exposed to a particular text as an example of the text discussed in the previous stage. A teacher can teach explicitly about how the text is constructed, including its linguistic features and the meanings of the language choices used. A teacher can use a text as a whole or some extracts taken from authentic resources.

3. Guided practice (or Joint construction)

This is the stage where students get the most of the overall lesson given as they apply all the knowledge they have learned from the other two former stages. At this stage, the focus is on how students compose the text with the guidance and assistance of an expert (teacher). A teacher can play a leading role in providing stimulation that enables students to think aloud about the tasks they do. Throughout this stage, students also practice carrying out important steps of the writing process, such as drafting and editing.

4. Independent construction

Having learned and practiced to compose a text together with a teacher, it is time for students to produce their own text by themselves. And yet, before moving up to this stage, it is definitely important that the teacher ensures that his/her students are ready for an independent task. At this stage, the teacher's main role is guiding the students in their process of composing the text and encouraging them to design it creatively.

(Derewianka & Jones, 2016; Humphrey, 2017; Humphrey & Feez, 2016; Gibbons, 2015)

Through these stages, students are expected to experience a comprehensive learning process to produce a text of their own. In addition, as scaffolding should consist of meaningful and purposeful activities, tasks, and interactions (Applebee & Langer, 1983), designing and providing activities and tasks carefully in each of the overall learning stages are vital. Some prominent scholars such as Nunan (1989, 1991) and Ellis (2011) also address the significance of tasks in the process of effective language teaching and learning. In addition to that, Nunan (1989) also offers six principles in designing meaningful tasks: "goal, input, activities, teacher role, learner role, and settings. (p. 11).

*Theoretical Framework of Online Teaching and Learning*

Implementing scaffoldings in teaching writing can be completely different when the mode has shifted from face-to-face teaching to full online teaching. The discussions on the theories around teaching and learning in a virtual classroom can be very helpful, particularly when trying to identify any potential issues to face and ways to deal with them. Online teaching and learning as part of distance education have been a very popular topic discussed by a number of scholars and researchers for decades. Wedemeyer (1977, 1981), known as the father of distance education, begins his studies from his critics on the conventional ways of teaching and focuses more on his attention to independent learning. He believes that an individual has a driving force to manage his/her own learning and to choose whatever ways of learning are appropriate for him/her when being separated from a teacher. He also identifies some elements of independent learning that include learner's high responsibility, the availability of various instructions and resources, different types of media and methods, individual differences, and times when to begin and stop learning (ibid, 1977, 1981). This theory is in line with another similar type of learning concept called learner autonomy introduced by Henri Holec (1979/1981). Learner autonomy focuses on the individual's self-awareness and responsibility for his/her own learning in terms of actions, strategies, and techniques for learning development.

Inspired by the concept of independent learning and learner autonomy, some other scholars then develop new frameworks of distance education. Keegan (1986, 1993), for example, after addressing the fundamental theory of distance education and its main characteristics, identifies typical challenges and problems faced during the learning process of distance education. In developing his framework of distance education, he uses other theories: theory of independence and autonomy, theory of industrialization, and theory of interaction and communication. In relation to online language teaching and learning, Keegan's framework of distance education and the other related theories mentioned seem to be the most relevant references for any further research about online learning. In line with the view of distance education by Keegan and the concept of ZPD by Vygotsky, Moore (1993) develops the theory of transactional distance that emphasizes the important roles of interactions in influencing the learners' performance during the process of teaching and learning in a distance environment. In his study, transactional distance is described as a communication space of both pedagogical and psychological relations between learners and a teacher in a distance learning environment. This theory can therefore be used to measure how strong the students connect to what they are exposed to within their distance learning environment. According to the theory, students' engagement and autonomy through class structure and dialogue are the keys of successful lessons given (ibid, 1993).

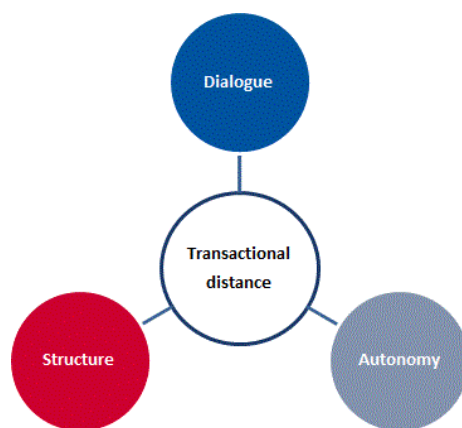


Figure 2: Transactional Distance and the Three Connecting Elements by Moore (1993)

To stimulate students' engagement and autonomy, Moore (1993) then identifies three different kinds of dialogue/ interaction that should occur in the process of distance teaching and learning: (1) interactions among students, (2) interactions between students and their teacher, and (3) interactions between students and the contents they learn. These three types of interactions seem to be appropriate and helpful when it comes to designing effective online lessons and particularly when organizing scaffoldings that allow students to get engaged in a virtual classroom. Another study held by Febrianto (2019) also supports Moore's concept in relation to different kinds of interactional patterns that occur when scaffolding is carried out during the teaching and learning process. The following is the model of interactions developed by Moore.

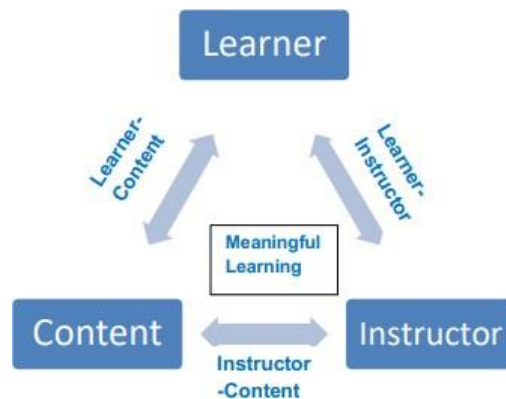


Figure 3: Types of Interactions based on Moore's Framework by Martin & Bolliger (2018)

### *Research on Online Teaching Writing*

In terms of the application of teaching writing in a distant class (online learning), some interesting studies have identified both of the positive sides and challenges that need to be anticipated by educators. As discussed earlier, Dumfired and Miller (2018), for instance, point out the important roles of teachers in ensuring the students' engagement within the process of teaching and learning as it is not easy for the teachers to control the class when they are in the distance with their students. This finding is in line with a recent study conducted by Castro and Tumiby (2021), who unveil that the advantages of online teaching can be obtained as long as the given courses are well designed, and the teachers' active roles are always present in the learning processes. In terms of the use of a learning management system (LMS) in designing writing courses, some researchers have highlighted some important findings. First of all, Ratnaningsih (2019) and Fonseca and Peralta (2019) investigate that LMS such as Google Classroom is helpful, particularly because it offers facilities for teachers in providing organized and interactive activities for their students. The interactive activities designed through an LMS can also encourage students to perform better and get engaged more than those arranged in a conventional mode (Heggart and Yoo, 2018; Sujannah et al., 2020). On the other hand, it is important that teachers do not neglect some issues that an LMS can bring about, as identified by some researchers. The first issue is that there is a possibility that students can take any works from other resources on the internet without any editing process for their writing tasks (Iftakhar, 2018). Some technical issues regarding the complexity of systems in use and accessibility also need to be anticipated (Heggart and Yoo, 2018; Iftakhar, 2018).

## Methodology

This study applies an exploratory research design in which the researcher explores and analyzes qualitative data that have been collected. The method used in the study is the library research method in which the data are taken from various resources (Young, 1983) available in the clouds (the internet) such as documents used in teaching writing, reports from previous studies, cloud materials, e-books, and some other published electronic sources. The approach chosen in the study is the descriptive qualitative approach as it enables the researcher to explore thoroughly and presents how Google classroom (GC) can be used in providing effective scaffoldings for teaching writing. In analyzing the data, the researcher conducts some investigations by following three stages below:

1. Investigate any potential activities in teaching writing (scaffoldings) that can be supported by GC to reach the goals of teaching and learning,
2. Explore different types of cloud materials and other tools that can be integrated with GC for designing meaningful lessons in online classes.
3. Examine the effectiveness of GC for teaching writing in reference to other related studies and references.

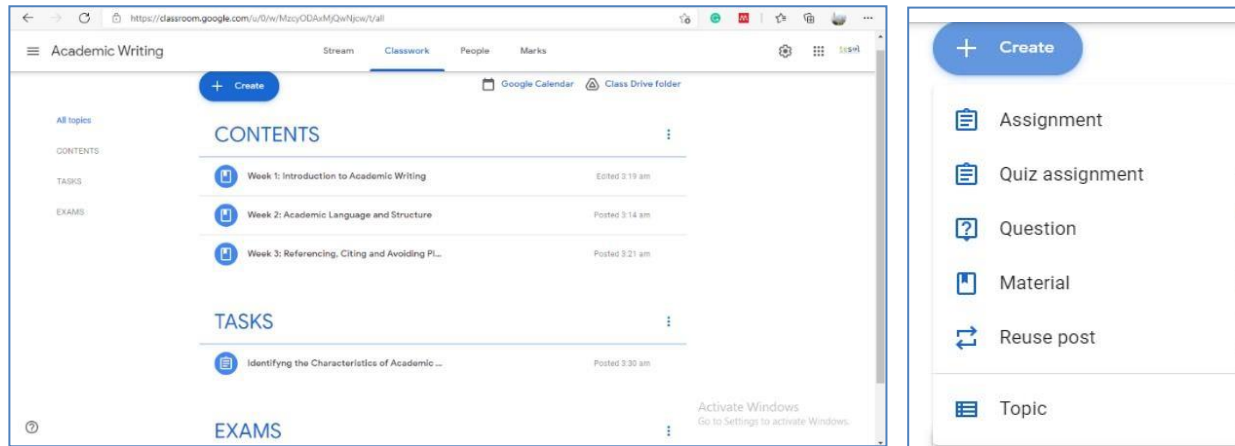
The investigations are also carried out by referring to the framework of scaffolding in online language teaching that involves the concept of teaching learning cycle (TLC), the theories of distance education proposed by Keegan, and in particular, the theory of transactional distance developed by Moore. Finally, through these overall analyzing processes, it is expected that an ideal structure of scaffoldings for teaching writing designed on GC can be created and ready to be proposed to both educators and other researchers.

## Findings and Discussions

As mentioned earlier, this study attempts to answer the research question, “How is Google classroom (GC) used to provide effective scaffoldings for teaching writing?” Referring to the stages carried out in the study, the findings are then presented in reference to three different topics: 1) Potential meaningful activities and tasks that can be scaffolded on GC, 2) Types of cloud materials and other tools that can be integrated with GC, and 3) Other empirical studies that examine the efficacy of GC.

### *Potential Meaningful Scaffolded Activities*

Before identifying the activities that can be potentially scaffolded on GC, the features of the application need to be explored first. When accomplishing this step, it is also important to consider the goals of learning set up for the given lesson. The following picture shows the most-recent look of GC features on its webpage.



Picture 1: The Webpage Look and Features  
 Note. Retrieved from <https://classroom.google.com/>

As seen in Picture 1, the GC platform may provide some helpful and easy-to-use features for teachers. Particularly in teaching writing, teachers can use the ‘Create’ menu bar to set up 6 (six) different activities for their students: assignment, quiz assignment, question, material, reuse post and topic. By clicking on the menu ‘Material,’ teachers can post material and share it with their students. They can name each of the posted materials as needed. The menu, ‘Topic’ is used for labelling each of the activities that have been published such as contents, tasks and exams as shown in Picture 1. Moreover, through these features, teachers are able to monitor their students’ progress and give feedback as necessary. More detailed feedback can also be given directly on the students’ work through Google Docs comments. By applying these features, teachers can do some other tasks, too such as designing the writing process with mini lessons, graphic organizers and other resources as well as curating and organizing the resources with Hyperdocs apps embedded (writeonwithmissg, 2020).

The other important features that might be very useful are stream, classwork, people, and marks located above the menu bar. Through ‘stream,’ both students and teachers can see any latest updates made. ‘Classwork’ menu takes them to the ‘Create’ menu discussed earlier. While the ‘People’ menu takes a teacher to the page where he/ she can invite other teachers and new students to join the class, ‘Mark’ is used to expose the scores of any assignments and exams, including the feedback to be shared to all students and parents. From these features, GC, therefore, enables teachers to interact with both students and other related parties to monitor and supervise the students’ learning progress and performances. It is also possible for teachers to facilitate discussions and interactions among students for peer feedback by using the ‘Question’ menu on the menu bar. In addition to this, GC, as a product of the world’s biggest technology company, Google, is designed to connect with the other Google products, and this is one of the advantages to gain by its users (Dara, 2014). In the ‘Material’ bar, for instance, there is a specific feature that enables teachers to create lessons and attach materials such as e-books, links to Youtube and websites, Google Drive, etc. In fact, if teachers and students want to make an appointment for a virtual meeting, they can use Google Calendar and set up a conference with Google Meet. All this information can be accessed through the Google for Education website: <https://edu.google.com/> or its official Youtube video channel: <https://www.youtube.com/googleforedu/videos>.

All the features and facilities that GC offers seem to be very helpful for guiding teachers to design organized and structured activities (Scaffoldings) for their students as identified by some experienced users and reviewers (Keelar, 2015; Dearborn Public Schools, 2016; writeonwithmissg, 2020). ‘Create’ menu bar, in particular, allows teachers to post activities that they have carefully selected and to integrate the activities

with other supporting platforms so that they can be meaningful in the process of teaching writing. As revealed in a study by Sujannah et al. (2020), it is evidenced that the writing lessons mediated by GC can be more collaborative and engaging for learners compared to those conventional ones. It makes sense since students may not find an online writing lesson boring when they are exposed to interesting related content such as videos, animations, fun games and quizzes, etc. In addition, through all the default features of GC, teachers can structurally apply the four main language teaching cycles (LTC) and embed other platforms and tools in each cycle where necessary.

Each cycle of the LTC may require more than one meeting depending on the complexity of the topic and the competence level of students, and using different kinds of supporting platforms and materials integrated into each of the cycles is indeed necessary. In relation to tasks and exams, the instructions can be easily shared along with the assessment rubrics, and both scores and feedback are provided directly on the students' work through Google Docs. The 'question' feature also enables the students to ask any questions and clarifications for the works they have done to their teacher, and in turn, the teacher responds through the same feature. As a result, it can be possible that learners' engagement and autonomy can be finally realized during the writing lesson through interactions among students, students with their teacher, and students with the given attractive, meaningful contents and scaffoldings in the online environment (Moore, 1993) facilitated by GC. In this context, the roles of teachers in creating meaningful scaffoldings, leading interactions with technological features on GC are really crucial, as discovered by Martin and Bolliger (2018) in their study.

### **Relevant Cloud Materials and Tools to Integrate**

As discussed earlier, as a product of Google, GC can be integrated with other Google products, which have also been commonly used by people, especially teachers such as Google Drive, Google Docs, Google Form, Google Spreadsheet, and Youtube. With this integration, teachers can do lots of things for creative teaching because they can link the lessons with materials from the other different products. And surprisingly, nowadays, the integration expands, and GC now works with a bunch of applications from other external parties working on education. As informed on the Google Education website, there are actually hundreds of external applications that work with GC (Edu. Google, 2021). Those applications are usually embedded with GC or operated when both parties are activated using the same single account. Such integration allows teachers to provide more attractive lessons with rich resources and fun materials for their students. Not only external applications that GC works with but many other resources in the clouds can be integrated with GC as well. Davis (2018), for example, having observed a wide range of websites, books, and journals as well as interviewing a number of GC experienced users, has collected over 100 resources and tools that can be utilized to optimize the use of GC in education. Moreover, two of the GC experts and users, Keeler and Miller (2015, 2016), as cited in Davis's study (2018), reveal 50 things that teachers can do when applying GC.

In accordance with English language teaching, particularly in teaching writing, among many applications available in the clouds, Lynch (2018) identifies 5 (five) important tools that might help teachers create interactive lessons in teaching writing when using GC: Insert Learning, Quill, Wizer, Edcite, and TES Teach. All these tools are generally installed through the Google chrome store and technically operated by using the extension feature of chrome browser to get embedded on GC. The following is some brief information about the tools that Lynch exposes on his website.

#### **Insert Learning**

Insert Learning is one of the educational tools that work with GC. This application enables teachers to design and provide structured interactive writing activities and tasks. With this tool, teachers can provide writing prompts for their students to practice jotting down ideas in writing. Comments and feedback can also be given directly on the students' work.

Quill

This platform helps students improve their skills in grammar in writing through different activities and lessons provided by teachers. This tool also serves its users with interactive features for some activities such as diagnosing the students’ initial competence, drafting, and grammar checking and proofreading.

Wizer

Wizer is an education platform specifically designed to produce a range of interactive worksheets for writing practice. Teachers can take advantage of the facilities that Wizer provides to find many kinds of writing worksheets as needed and create their own for their students’ writing assignments. Other media such as videos, audio, and images can be added to the worksheets for more attractive lessons.

Edcite

Edcite is another free application integrated with GC. It focuses on facilitating teachers to assess their students’ written works to reach the common standard of competence. Students can also use the available resources in the platform to learn and practice various exercises in writing. They can take different assignments created by teachers and get some feedback on their performance as well.

TES Teach

Formerly known as Blendspace, TES Teach is a platform that works on assisting teachers in creating interactive lessons of their own through the contents from different resources, including a webpage, Google images, Google Drive, Youtube, etc. Teachers can also upload their own content from their computers to design the lessons. Assessment instruments can be created through this platform as well.

One of the issues to be dealt with when it comes to teaching writing is ensuring that the students’ works are original or are not closely similar to other written works on the internet. To solve this problem, GC has a tool that works as a plagiarism checker, namely 'originality report.' But this tool is not for the general users of GC, which means that in order to be able to use this tool, teachers and students need to have the account of Google Workspace for Education by following some particular terms and conditions (Edu. Google, 2021). For general users, some applications that work with GC can be utilized. Unicheck platform is one of the examples. This application can be installed through Chrome extension to integrating with GC. According to Kharbach (2018), Unicheck works on checking for similarities upon the submitted documents across over 4.75 billion pages of websites, journals, open-access databases, and so on. For the issue of grammar, teachers do not have to apply other external applications since Google already has Google docs as a grammar checker that works with GC (Edu. Google, 2021). The following table shows a sample of scaffolding for teaching writing organized in TLC by using GC and other integrated applications, tools, and materials.

Table 1: Language Teaching Cycles (LTC) in Writing Lesson with GC and Other Integrated Applications

Cycles	Scaffolded Activities	Tools/Applications/materials
Building the context of field	3. Materials relating to some types of genre to compose are given to students. 4. Questions and answers about the genre being exposed.	Google Classroom, Google Meet, Videos on Youtube, TES Teach and other related websites
Modelling the text to be discussed	5. A particular type of text to compose is exposed to students. 6. Students practice reading the text. 7. Discussions upon the genre: Both teachers and students discuss the communicative	Google Classroom, Google Meet, Videos on Youtube,, TES Teach and other integrated websites

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	purpose, generic structures, and linguistic features of the text.	
	8. Discussions the steps on how to compose the text.	
Guided practice (or Joint construction)	The teacher and students work together on carrying out the steps of writing a text: outlining, drafting, editing and revising.	Google Classroom, Google Meet, Insert Learning/Wizer/ Edcite, Google Docs
Independent Construction	4. Students are asked to practice composing a similar text. 5. Students present the text they have composed and explain the communicative purpose, generic structures, and linguistic features of the text 6. The teacher ask questions about the text.	Google Classroom, Google Meet, Insert Learning/Wizer/ Edcite, Google Docs

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### Examining the Efficacy of Google Classroom

A number of research have been conducted to measure the effectiveness of GC in teaching writing for the increasing number of its users all over the world. Sujannah et al. (2020), with their quantitative study involving 53 Indonesian EFL university students, compare the use of GC in blended writing classes and classes with conventional ways. The study reveals that the writing lesson with GC is more effective than the conventional one regarding students’ performance in writing. The same results are also found in Ratnaningsih’s study (2019) that GC enables learners to improve both their speaking and writing skills. Another similar research by Fonseca and Peralta (2019) also investigates that the writing class with GC is more helpful than it is without the tool. Their study on the use of GC by 10 EFL Costa Rican students shows that the class with GC better stimulates learners’ independent and autonomous learning than the conventional one. Moreover, Heggart and Yoo (2018), in their research that includes 33 Australian university students, find out how GC can stimulate student participation and improve classroom dynamics for the possibility of creating interactive lessons that GC can offer. In fact, the class incorporated with GC also enhances EFL learners’ competence in using grammar appropriately, as researched by Haggag (2019). Some surveys also show that both teachers and students are satisfied when using GC as their assistant in writing class. The research by Heggart and Yoo (2018), for example, discovers that GC is mostly easy to use and learn for both teachers and students in terms of its accessibility and simplicity. This resonates with the findings of research conducted by Muslimah (2018) in her Bachelor’s Thesis study. In her study that involves 190 Indonesian university students, she finds that GC is useful and easy to use, and most students feel satisfied with using the platform.

Nonetheless, besides all the benefits that GC can offer, some challenges and issues are identified and need to be anticipated when using the platform. Two years after the launch of GC, Iftakhar (2016), researches on the use of GC by teachers and students in Bangladesh, addresses some potentially important issues to anticipate when using GC, particularly in teaching writing. The first issue has to do with plagiarism – in his research with other cited studies, many of the assignments given are plagiarized for the students’ possibility of taking materials from other resources on the internet without the editing process. This might be anticipated when teachers activate the feature “originality report” in checking their students' works, yet in doing so, they need to have a special account for education (Edu. Google, 2021), and not all teachers meet the requirements for signing up this account. According to Iftakhar (2016), the next challenge of using GC is the issues of accessibility and technicality. It appears that not all the tools and features of GC are well managed and easily accessed since not all teachers are willing to operate some of the features, such as the grading tool including the rubric for assessments – many teachers choose to assess manually (ibid, 2016). Regarding this issue, not all the GC features are easily understood by students, and students who do not have connections might challenging to access the tools. This becomes a crucial problem when they fail to

upload their assignments (ibid, 2016). Heggart and Yoo (2018) also addressed a similar challenge in terms of students' difficulty in using some of the GC features, such as trying to search old information and materials posted on the 'stream' or 'feed' feature when new posts are added. However, when used as a system to support teaching, Heggart and Yoo (2018) and Iftakhar (2016) agree that GC is still a very helpful tool to use, and in particular, Iftakhar suggests several strategies on how to tackle the issues and challenges discussed in his paper. Last but not least, unfortunately, in terms of engagement, still traditional face-to-face classes cannot be replaced by online learning as the former definitely offers more quality of interactions and more collaborative activities, as researched by Dumford and Miller (2018).

## Conclusion

Many studies and articles review Google Classroom (GC) as a learning management system from Google and show how the platform can positively impact education, especially in teaching writing. This article essentially affirms the previous studies by exposing some of the benefits that both teachers and students can get when GC is utilized in their learning and teaching processes. Firstly, it is possible that the most current version of GC can be operated inclusively and integrated with either other tools from Google or different applications from other parties to provide appropriate scaffoldings for more interactive and engaging lessons. However, to ensure the learning goals are achieved, the scaffoldings have to be well-organized, and all the other tools to embed must be carefully selected. Another benefit of using GC is that teachers can also include relevant, authentic materials from a broad range of resources in the integration. Nevertheless, despite the advantages of GC in teaching writing, a number of researchers have investigated several drawbacks and challenges that teachers need to anticipate and be aware of when using the application, such as the possibility of students in doing plagiarism, teachers and students' unfamiliarity of the tools and features on GC, and students' unequal internet accessibility. These issues can potentially hinder the classroom activities being handled, yet teachers may somehow perceive them as the challenges that push them to figure out other alternative approaches for overcoming them. Finally, with this article, readers and teachers, in particular, are expected to get the most out of using GC and find the best ways for their most effective online teaching. It is also essential that governments and school leaders provide teachers with sufficient training on the use of GS to obtain much better results.

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