

# Asynchronous Peer Feedback in EFL Writing

*By Rifki Irawan*

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**Abstract.** COVID-19 Pandemic encourages teachers to be more creative in varying the learning strategy in online learning. The research aims to explore deeply about the practice of peer feedback through students' asynchronous online discussion on Edmodo. By employing observation and open-ended questionnaires of 38 non-English university students as its data collecting technique, qualitative descriptive research is the method of this research. The results of the study showed that firstly, asynchronous peer feedback activity was conducted by following the steps of a scientific approach, which were observing a business letter, questioning about its format and language, finding many sources to answer the questions, and conducting the activity of peer feedback. Secondly, 58% of students responded that asynchronous peer feedback was a challenging activity to do because they were aware of the incompetence of writing a good business letter. Meanwhile, the rest said that this activity was easy to do because they felt that they could revise their peers' works and assumed that this kind of business was routine to do. Therefore, Asynchronous peer feedback can be implemented in the class where the students have sufficient language ability and confidence to give feedback to others.

## 1. Introduction

Education in Indonesia is also affected by the Industrial Revolution 4.0. The number of students who use technology in their daily live develops significantly. The proportion of students who access the internet at school is 71,65% [1]. It is a significance number of percentages if we reflect that Indonesia is a big country, which has so many rural areas. However, those percentages are not also accompanied by the big number of teachers who have Information and Communications Technology (ICT) qualification skills. The percentages of teachers who use ICT is only 10,10% at every school level in Indonesia [1].

The integration of ICT in English as Foreign Language learning has many benefits. The use of ICT for the EFL in the educational context has provided potential advantages [2]–[4]. For example, the use of ICT for peer feedback beyond writing activities provokes the learners' motivation and enthusiasm to apply technologies for improving their writing skills. On the other hand, most of the students argue that their teachers seldom use this strategy to improve their writing skills.

Traditional peer feedback successfully improves the students' writing skills [5]–[7]. In contrast, the exploration of the online peer feedback in Indonesia can be counted on the fingers, whereas learning through technology develops rapidly. As a result, those factors have an impact on the amount of research in Indonesia about the use of ICT in learning English. For this reason, this research will endeavor to enhance the quantity of research in Indonesia, especially about the use of online peer feedback in writing activities.

## 2. Literatures Review

### 2.1. Asynchronous Peer Feedback

Asynchronous learning may learners interact with each other and course material in independent time and space, for example, a discussion thread. Students can post a writing work, and several hours and days later, their friend may comment on their work that they post. Asynchronous E-Learning, generally employs e-mail and discussion board [8]. It can promote teacher and student work relations when they are not online at the same time because of its flexibility. Students are possible to learn anytime; they can learn, write, download documents or send messages to their peer and teachers. The activities can be done autonomously.

Some advantages of asynchronous learning are [9]. The first is the learners' authority to accomplish the training. The participant is permitted to determine the way, the time and the place to study. Space and period do not interrupt the learning process; students can choose their schedules. The second is respectful to one's learning. Asynchronous learning can be employed by low learning skill so they can manage their time to finish the responses and foster their higher order thinking. Next is convenient which asynchronous learning is the best problem solution for the learners who are not necessary online at a specific time. Learners are free to can interconnect with their online teacher or virtual classmates conveniently. Fourthly, it is less social obstacles. Timid and quiet learners will get benefits from this learning style because it disregards public nervousness that makes them feel protected and contented. The last is interactive, regardless of location and time barriers. Time is not significant interrupted the learning process because they are free to interact with their friends and online facilitators using discussion boards, blogs and emails.

In contrast, the drawbacks the asynchronous learning are lacks direct feedback. E-learning Feedback is necessary; it supports the learners and online facilitator subjects and misinterpretation associated with the online training progress material. Unfortunately, direct-feedback is unbearable, as the online training course is not always online. Learners perhaps discarded prized period coming up to the responses. The second is lacks private interaction. Private interaction for all people in online learning is impossible. Private interaction cannot be done for all people. It causes the default to accomplish the aim and the result of learning. Then it is lack of alive cooperation and concurrent performances. It is impossible to have real-time discussion in order to encourage motivation and interaction due to the remoteness and detached. Fourthly, it is the nonexistence of motivation. It happened due to the absence of interaction among the participant who requires reassurance and inspiration to log in, learn, read and finish the online training course.

The next drawback is involving self-restraint. The participants need to achieve the goal successfully. They need to be toughly devoted and ordered. Asynchronous learning can be done without limited distance and period independently. The participants are free to choose the subjects and act together, and then the other participants will give responses and suggestions on the work. The facilities in conducting asynchronous e-learning are email and discussion boards. The participant will support each other, yet while they are not online at a similar period. So, it is called a flexible e-learning. The six obstacles have lacked of social problems. The learners are harmless and contented because they are in isolated. This approach aids reserved students to exclude social apprehension. Lastly, it is only interactive, regardless of location and time barrier. The learner may learn at his own pace and act together with their friends and the online organizers that do not consider about the area. The media such as discussion board, blog and e-mail may be provided to make certain the communication online is effectual.

Feedback is an important element in writing classroom. It is correlated to comments confirmation, correction or evaluation action in writing. The point of feedback generally is not on formal grading, but it identifies the strengths and weaknesses of students' writing performance in order they can enhance it.

In second/foreign language writing classroom, feedback is a common feature in a process approach writing that needs increasing attention. Feedbacks are useful for both the learners who wrote the drafts

and provide them [10]. In consequences, when a learner wants to provide feedback, she/he has to be able to judge the draft based on certain criteria. For example, the appropriateness of grammar used in the draft, the structure of the text, the word choice, etc. Therefore, she/he must be critical as well as objective, the quality which, when it is transferred to him/herself, in turn, will help improve his/her writing performance. Peer feedback can be divided into two namely face-to-face peer feedbacks There are seven principles to identify good feedback practice [10] which are assisting in clarifying what good performances are (goals, criteria, expected standards); assisting in developing self-assessment and reflection; providing clear and a real information to students about their learning; supporting discussion among teacher and peer about learning; stimulating students' positive beliefs and self-esteem; offering opportunities to fill the gap between current and desired performance; offering information to teachers that can be used to make a teaching consideration.

### 3. Method

Universitas PGRI Yogyakarta was the place to conduct this research. It is located at Sonosewu Street no. 117, Yogyakarta. This place was chosen because the researcher conducted a teaching-learning process there. The data were obtained based on the researcher's teaching schedule, which held once a week. It took 2 hours each meeting during November 2019 - May 2020. The research participants were chosen by purposive sampling. The participants who could provide the best information to achieve the objective of the study will be selected. In this research, the research participants were thirty eight students of University PGRI Yogyakarta.

This research belongs to a qualitative descriptive approach. This research is focus on the study of social phenomena and on exploring the feelings and perceptions of the participants under study [11] This method investigate the teacher and students' perceptions about a phenomenon [12]. Therefore, this research explored deeply about the process of asynchronous peer feedback in EFL writing and the students' responses of the peer-feedback through asynchronous online discussion on Edmodo.

Three instruments were used in collecting data. Observation, documentation and open-ended questionnaire were the instruments in this research, Collecting open-ended, tangible information by monitoring individuals and research sites were the procedures in the observation [13]. The researcher did the observation to monitor the implementation of asynchronous peer feedback during the writing activities on Edmodo. In addition, every responses by the students were observed. Therefore, all the students' peer feedback on Edmodo discussion and their responses were examined. Because the focus of this research was on asynchronous e-learning, which was Edmodo activities, so every activity on Edmodo, especially on the students' discussion, was observed.

To record the data, the researcher captured the screen in every feedback given by the students. Because the objectives of this research explored the process of asynchronous peer feedback in EFL writing, and the students' responses about it, open-ended questionnaire seemed appropriate as a means to understand the experiences of the subjects in this research. It tried to find the freer responses from participants of some basic ideas that need to cover. Bahasa Indonesia was the language in the questionnaire. It was used to prevent misunderstanding and pursue the students' and teacher's perception towards the asynchronous peer feedback In EFL writing. To avoid inaccuracy and incompleteness data, the interview will be recorded and transcribed. The data gathered will be analyzed by using the three stages of qualitative analysis by Miles M, Huberman [14]. They are data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification.

## 12 Results and Discussions

### 4.1. The Procedures of Asynchronous Peer-Feedback in EFL Writing on Edmodo

Edmodo has many advantages implemented in teaching EFL [15], [16]. One of the advantages is it provides communicative online learning [17]. For example, a teacher posts announcements, assignments, the students can give questions, and comments related to them and have discussion with

both the teacher and their classmates. Thus, using Edmodo in teaching English can enhance the students' learning engagement.

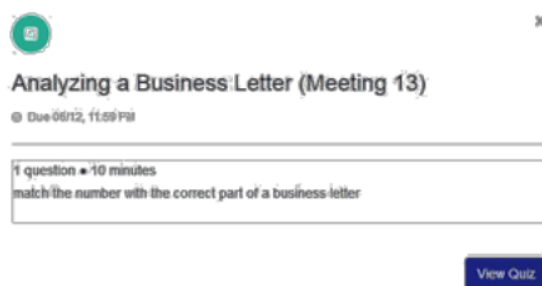
A procedure is a method or step to achieve a goal in the classroom. It is needed by the teacher when he/she teaches, so it is very important in learning. An effective procedure can help the teacher much more to improve and reinforce students' learning [18]. In conducting asynchronous peer-feedback in EFL writing activities, the teacher made some procedures based on a scientific approach which are observing scientifically, developing intellectual curiosity through questioning, constructing critical thinking, experimenting and communicating [19].

Observing signifies reading and/or listening to texts in the language learning process. The students were reading and/or listening to texts to list items they needed to know in order to understand and/or to produce texts or to communicate ideas. At the end of this step, the students had a list of items they wanted to know which generally included text, text structure, grammar and vocabulary social function [20]. In this step, the teacher gave the students an example of a business letter. It was uploaded on Edmodo as their learning source. He took it from the credible learning reference. They had to read it from the beginning to the end of the letter.

Then, the students asked the students about the parts, format, and language of the letter; also, the questions about the difference between a business letter, and a personal letter which belonged to the questioning step. Questioning is a form of learning which is achieved by asking the students some questions about the lesson in order to achieve the learning objective [21].

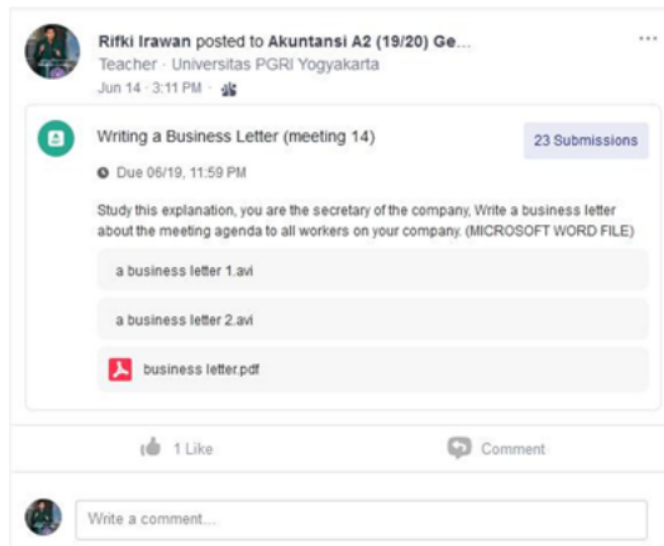
In the experimenting, the students gained a real or true learning; experiments are necessary. Students might read other documents or collect additional knowledge in many ways, such as observation and interview [22]. In this step, the students discussed in a group and explored many sources such as books and articles on the internet. They discussed the distinction between a business and a personal letter then identified the name of every part of a business letter.

In the associating step, the students tried to answer what the questions asked before. The results of their works were uploaded on Edmodo as the assignment like in figure 1. Students evaluated data / information in this step to address their questions, and to draw conclusions. With or without the help of teacher, students sorted out, defined and identified patterns for answering their questions. The students must yield answers to their questions at this stage [23].



**Figure 1** the Activity in an Associating Step

In the communicating step, the students had to convey the results that had been obtained after analysing it. This activity fosters honesty, conscience, tolerance, courtesy, systematic thinking, can express opinions briefly and clearly, and develops language skills properly and correctly [24]. By using information that had been collected from experimenting activities, the students tried to write a business letter. They had to consider the layout and the content of letter that were supplying or requesting information precisely, and building good customer relations. In figure 2, all materials had been uploaded and attached on these tasks both the explanations in the written and spoken form. To create a good business letter, the teacher gave five days for them.



**Figure 2** Assignment of Writing a Business Letter

After communicating step, peer-feedback activities began. The teacher facilitated the students to give feedback based on two criteria, which were grammar and business letter format. As an figure 3, before the students started giving feedbacks to their peers, the teacher had uploaded the video of how to give feedback. Then, he downloaded all the students' business letters and re-uploaded them on Edmodo. The teacher divided the students' works into three assignments to make them simpler for students giving peer-feedback, which was allocated for one week.



**Figure 3.** Teacher's explanation about how to give feedback

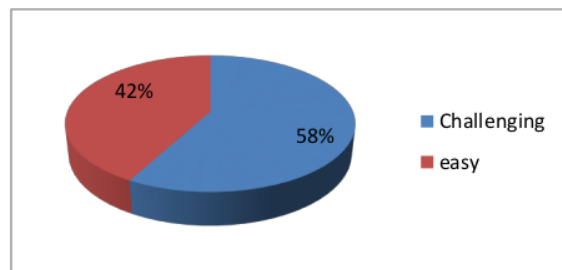
#### 4.2. *The Students' Responses of the Asynchronous Peer-Feedback in EFL Writing on Edmodo*



**Figure 4.** Asynchronous peer feedback

During seven days of this task, the students participated actively to give feedback asynchronously to their peers' works. They read one by one their peers' business letter to find something wrong both grammar and the letter format. If the students found them, they wrote the error on the assignment column and gave the correct one. The peers' feedback as a figure 4, then read by the writer of the letter and became the consideration to revise their works. Meanwhile, the last students' revisions were the final work, which were ready to assess by the teacher.

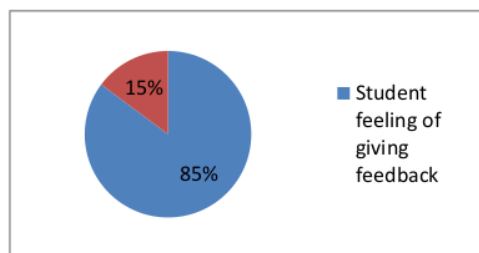
After the activity of asynchronous peer feedback, the teacher gave them a questionnaire with the main question was how difficult the process of asynchronous peer feedback. Figure 5 describes that 58% students (from 38 students) said that the activity was difficult, while the rest assumed that it was easy. Both responses had different reason why they got difficulties and eases in following this kind of activity.



**Figure 5** Students' responses about asynchronous peer feedback

The students who said that giving asynchronous feedback was challenging activity had several factors. The first factor was they felt that they lacked writing skill, and another was the system. As figure 6, the feeling of having a low writing skill was the highest factor that the students faced when giving feedback to their peers. Most of the students admitted that although the teacher had taught them how to write a good business letter, they still needed more practices to make them more understand about this material. Consequently, they felt doubtful about their feedback, thought that too many works that should be revised, and their post lag behind their peers who had similar feedback. It was supported that the reviewer get difficulties in giving peer feedback because they knew their own linguistic constraints [25], [26] and furthermore, several students had had problems with the peer feedback because they thought like they did not know how to give correct feedback [27].

Meanwhile, the problems of the system contributed 15% of the difficulties responses. This factor happened because the quality of students' internet signal was bad. COVID-19 made the students went back to their hometown. Sometimes, their hometown was in the highlands or in the mountainous area where there was no internet provider who could serve a good internet signal. In addition, some parts of the letter were lost due to the problem when re-uploading files to Edmodo. On this matter, the problem could happen when the teacher forgot to choose the file or one of the files was lost during the uploading process. It is in line with the collaboration between Web.2 technology and the teaching-learning process faces a range of challenges, such as internet connection requirements [28]. Also, slow-speed internet connection is a problem for students to follow the tasks on LMS platform and they tend to look for the place where provide high-speed one [29].



**Figure 6** Factors cause asynchronous peer feedback was difficult

Different from the students who got difficulties in giving feedback, the factor caused the students got eases was only one, which was aware of good writing competence. All students had felt that they knew how to give feedback based on the teacher guidance both explanation through the video and the text. Moreover, giving feedback by only showing the peer's error and mistake and revise them was regarded as an easy activity for them. Some of them assumed that it was a routine activity and they were already familiar. Peers qualified to comment on each other's L2 writing also brought about further meaning-based improvements[30].

## 5. Conclusions

This research reports asynchronous peer feedback in EFL Writing. Several results are described as follow. Asynchronous peer feedback activity was conducted by following the steps of scientific approach, which were observing a business letter, questioning about its format and language, finding many sources to answer the questions, answering them and conducting the activity of peer feedback. 58% of students responded that asynchronous peer feedback was a challenging activity to do because they were aware of the incompetencies of writing a good business letter and the problem of system resulted in this factor more significant. Meanwhile the rest said that this activity was easy to do because they felt that they could revise their peers' works and they assumed that this kind of activity was routine to do.

With regard to the above conclusions, the implications of this research can be formulated as follows. The procedures of asynchronous peer feedback in EFL writing has implication for the other teachers and researchers before conducting a similar activity, they can adobe or adapt the steps to their class to make the asynchronous peer feedback run effectively. Finding out the students' responses of the asynchronous peer feedback activity can be a consideration for the teacher to evaluate how suitable LMS-Edmodo with the implementation of asynchronous peer feedback, and how appropriate this online discussion with the students' writing ability.

Some recommendations are suggested to the following parties, based on the conclusions and implications above: This research gives benefits to English Foreign Language (EFL) teachers in adding insight into the online discussion, specially asynchronous peer feedback. They can be aware that peer feedback is useful to vary the online learning activities during COVID-19 Pandemic. The



students can be more active to participate in the peer feedback activity although they got difficulties because their responses will be discussed by others. Future research should investigate the benefit of peer feedback based on the students' perception and the favourite media to conduct peer feedback activity.

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