

# EFL Students' Response on the Impact of Online Peer Feedback on Their Writing Performance

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## ABSTRACT

Due to pandemic covid-19, the process of teaching and learning is conducted virtually with all of the deficiencies; one of them is students' lack of feedback on their task due to a distance between teacher and students. In this context, peer feedback can be a solution to ameliorate the deficiency, for it is a technique to improve students' performance in writing. This study is significant to investigate EFL students' response on the impact of giving and receiving online peer feedback on their writing task. The method used in this research is qualitative research design, and the data was collected through questionnaire from 25 EFL students and interview from 5 EFL students who have experienced peer feedback in a writing online classroom. The finding reveals that peer feedback motivates students to create better writing. Besides, the feedback given and accepted makes students more aware of the issues in their work. While they are taught to be a critical student through comprehending new insight in reading feedback from peers. In addition, they made efforts to give qualify feedback by enriching knowledge in writing.

**Keywords:** *EFL students' response, online peer feedback, writing performance*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Due to pandemic current situation of covid-19, the process of teaching and learning is conducted virtually. Compared to normal classroom, students experience lack of feedback on their task. Feedback can be provided by teacher or peers, while teacher's feedback for EFL students' task is really necessary (Hyland & Hyland, 2006). However, the feedback given by teacher on students' task is commonly accepted in the last stage of learning due to the large number of students. It could make students fail to create qualified writing since they may focus on the last section of writing, only as teacher's instruction (Seow, 2002). In this context, peer feedback can be a solution to fulfill the deficiency. Peer feedback is a way to involve students in the process of sharing ideas, providing and receiving constructive feedback to improve their writing skills (Farrah, 2012). Moreover, it has been pedagogically determined as an effective method to develop students' writing performance. The comment that peer can provide on students writing is in the aspect of content, organization, grammar, vocabulary and style (Abeywickrama & Brown, 2010).

Furthermore, in EFL writing classroom, peer feedback can help students to engage their confidence

and promote their critical thinking skills through the comment accepted and given where they learn more to comprehend their friends' work (Bitchener & Ferris, 2012). Some previous studies (Wooley et al., 2008) declared that students who extended explanations on the feedback given would significantly increase not only better in their own writing but also useful to defiance students to offer an explanation. Nicol, Thomson, and Breslin (2014) concluded that, peer feedback established students to create mental processing, the new concept of knowledge which will be a personal capital that they apply and adapt in finding a new learning context.

Meanwhile, a study by (Fei, 2006) discovered that students considered peer feedback doubtful due to the quality of their knowledge in delivering comment, which they hesitated to accept peers' revision and chose to ignore it. In addition, Panadero and Alqassab (2018) declared their finding that not all students utilized the feedback that they got from peers to improve their writing task. It can be caused by low quality of the feedback so it is not helpful enough for students to increase their work (Jonsson, 2012). It has been investigated by Carson and Nelson (1996) that Chinese students showed reluctant and vulnerability feeling to peers' feedback, they feel disagree with peer comments.

Nelson and Carson (1998) also investigated that students preferred to get teacher's comment than students' comment due to the consideration of ineffective peers' comment.

Finally, several studies have identified the weakness and strength of peer feedback (Bitchener & Ferris, 2012; Carson & Nelson, 1996; Nelson & Carson, 1998; Tsui & Ng, 2000) whose the results reported that peer feedback conquered with students' center learning, it not only upgrades their writing ability but also creates students' awareness of their own text and raises their metacognitive skills in realizing their own mistakes on writing. Meanwhile, In the situation of pandemic covid-19, peer feedback can be conducted virtually by two students or more via chats or web conferencing, beside students can communicate to give and accept feedback in an offline way such as via E-mail, Google classroom, what's up comments, and so on (Sayed, 2010).

However in this context referring to some studies (Carson & Nelson, 1996; Nelson & Carson, 1998; Tsui & Ng, 2000) peers' ability to provide feedback is sometimes considered doubtful, especially on their writing task, teacher is considered more acceptable by students. Therefore, in this situation, teacher's feedback is more dominant to give than peer feedback in writing classroom. On the other side, writing has a difficult and complex construction (Wang, 2015) From that issue, one way to measure the effectiveness of peer feedback is through students' perception, therefore it is significant to identify how EFL students' response on the impact of online peer feedback on their writing performance. This study tries to investigate (1) how students' response the process of giving and receiving peer feedback and (2) how students explain the effect of giving and accepting peer feedback.

Writing is a challenging work due to its complexity of structure and complexion idea. Writing process must pass several stages such as thinking, planning, writing, revising, and editing, in order to reach improved final draft of writing goal. A strategy offered to intensify students' performance in writing is peer feedback. Besides teacher's feedback, peer feedback can be a solution to improve students' writing skill in order to ameliorate students' need to learn any further. Yol, (2019) stated peer feedback is an essential component of writing classes to polish and improve students' writing skills by producing revisions on students' task. In addition, peer feedback facilitates them to sort out their ideas by editing, revising and improving the quality of their writing before being submitted (Susanto, Soengkono, & Assalma, 2019). The feedback on students writing task covers some aspects such as content, grammar, organization, vocabulary and style (Wang, 2015).

Meanwhile, a study showed that feedback could lead students to enhance their writing with the focus on

content, because students who receive feedback focus on content spend more time to write, so they practice more to create a qualified writing (Aridah, 2003). In the process of giving peer feedback, the focus comment can be divided into some drafts. Where the first draft may focus on content, then the focus of the last draft on grammar, punctuation (Keh, 1990). On the other side, using peer feedback may give a lot of advantages due to measuring their level of knowledge development through learning about writing by other students' papers. However, if students do not have the correction skill, Peer-feedback will be slow and less effective, which in turn can lead to a common problem of unintelligibility between the reviewers and those reviewed (Susanto et al., 2019).

Peer feedback is crucial, due to a way for students to learn how to construct meaning from the feedback received and to be a good feedback producer (Nicol et al., 2014). Meanwhile Kaufman and Schunn (2015) found out that students have negative perceptions on peer feedback, it is caused by the matter of the comment of writing that only provided by peers not the instructor. So Kaufman and Schunn (2015) suggested that students who give and accept peers feedback still need teacher's feedback for teacher is an obligation to clarify their peers and give sufficient comment on their work.

The success and failure of peer feedback could be measured through students' perceptions (Nelson & Carson, 1998). If students do not consider peer feedback as valuable and profitable process which can build up their writing performance accordingly, it seems that they will not thoroughly commit to the process. Students' perception is a learner's attitude towards a crucial role to maximize the outcome of learning and teaching output, besides it is an accumulation of feelings concerning to the intended target of teaching and learning technique implemented (Ahmed, 2016). In addition, measuring the perception has an important role to analyze students' behavior to a model in supporting the success of teaching and learning applied at class (Sabah, 2013).

In this context caused by covid-19, writing class is conducted virtually. Peer feedback is really beneficial to foster students' need of revision on their writing task. However, seen from students' perception, some experts argued that peer feedback is not useful for their task due to the quality of feedback given by peers (Jonsson, 2012). Hence, to know the success of peer feedback implementation in writing virtual classroom is essential to identify in this condition. If the students have a positive response, it can make peer feedback be more promoted being implemented in every school in Indonesia. Therefore, this study is significant to investigate EFL Students' Response on the Impact of online peer feedback on their writing performance.

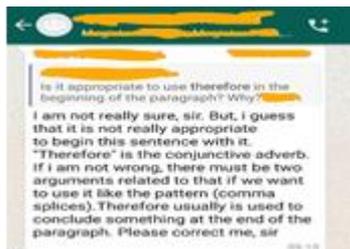
**2. METHODS**

**2.1. Research Design**

This study implemented a case study and it was conducted based on the case found (Creswell, 2013). In this case, this study examined EFL students' response on the impact of giving and receiving online peer feedback to their writing task. The data were collected through questionnaire and interview in order to gain the construct validity of the study.

**2.2. Participant**

Participants are 25 EFL students studying writing for research-based paper in a state university during the pandemic of covid-19. The class was conducted through what's up group to deliver peer feedback and discussion on peers' writing, and google classroom as the platform to assemble the writing assignment. The example of peers' comment in writing classroom conducted in WAG is shown in Figure 1.



**Figure 1** The example of peers' comment in writing classroom.

In addition, the feedback also was given by using comments on students work in Microsoft word. They give and accept feedbacks in every online class meeting. All participants fill the questionnaire with ten closed-ended questions, and five students participated in interview with seven questions and ten question from questionnaire to gain deeper information of close ended question.

**2.3. Data Collections**

The first step to obtain the data, questionnaire was spread via WAG, there were 25 students participating to fill the questionnaire. The questions consisted of ten close-ended questions related to the peer feedback impact that they experienced during the class conducted. The second step, the interview section was conducted. There were five students willing to have interview section. Then, the interview was conducted after spreading the questionnaire. Participants were given 10 questions as they had chosen to strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, and strongly agree. The reason to interview why they chose five scales on questionnaire

was to gain deeper information and strengthen the reason of participant to have it as their response. In addition, the second interview as conducted to obtain the information about students' utility and effect on peer feedback by asking them 7 questions related to the conception process of giving and receiving peer feedback, students' utility, desirability, and effect of giving peer feedback.

**3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

**3.1. Students' perception on the process of both giving and receiving peer feedback**

**Table 1.** Students' response (question 1)

| Items   | Response 1 | Response 2 |
|---|------------|------------|
| 1. Was it more useful to make comments to peers (1) or to get comments from peers (2) | 16%        | 84%        |

For item 1 in Table 1, there are 84% or 21 participants consider that getting comments from peers is more helpful. The result was contrast with the finding of Cho and MacArthur (2010) students learned more by giving than receiving the feedback. From the interview; giving comment to peers did not really impact to their writing. Different from accepting peer feedback, it makes them realize their errors. Then, they try not to repeat the errors.

Positive response was found in item2 from 96% or 24 participants to the statements Getting comment on their work from peers helped them improve their writing task (see Table 2). While from the interview; peers involved to observe all over their work to find out what's wrong with their writing, then they got some points that they do not realize to their lack of skill.

Then, 80% or 20 participants gave positive response to item3 and 20% or 5 participants neutral. From the interview they said that giving comment to peers' writing should have prior knowledge related to the points. It makes them need to learn deeper the aspect of writing and how a good writing should be.

While, Item4 got positive response from 68% or 17 participants and 20% or 5 participants neutral to the statement number 4. Before they accepted feedback, they still redrafted their work before uploaded on Friday to make sure not to miss something important. But it was not as deeper as they have got comments from peer, they only changed it based on their insight about writing.

Then, item5 got positive response from 80% or 20 participants and 16% or 4 participants neutral to the statement number 5. Students redrafted a revision, a reconstruction regarding to the comments given by three peers, and made the retouch all over writing to make

sure the writing qualified based on the feedback and the insight accepted. It is as Cho and MacArthur (2010) found out students receiving feedback from multiple peers made more improvements to the quality of their draft assignments than receiving feedback from a single peer or a single teacher.

Item6 got positive response from 64% or 16 participants and 32% or 8 participants neutral to the statement number 6. the participants said when they gave the comment to their friends' work, automatically they realize something less with their own writing, so they made a revision and redrafted before uploaded it via google classroom.

Item7, positive response was achieved from 64% or 16 participants and 32% or 8 participants neutral to the statement number 7. They argued that peers and instructor feedback are really helpful for their writing, both complete each other. Instructor added some feedbacks that peers delivered to make it more qualified and perfect our work. Then, sharing opinion from some different views makes them comprehend more about how to make their writing better. Farrah (2012) stated that the way of peer feedback in involving students in process of sharing ideas afford to improve their writing skills.

**Table 2.** Students' response (question 2-8)

| Items   | 1      | 2       | 3       | 4       | 5       |
|---|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 2.The opportunity of getting comments on my work from my peers helped me improve my writing assignments   | 8<br>% |         |         | 60<br>% | 36<br>% |
| 3.The opportunity of giving comments to my peers on their work helped me improve my own writing assignments   |        |         | 20<br>% | 60<br>% | 20<br>% |
| 4. I usually made changes (redrafted) to the assignment I posted on Friday before printing and handing it in on Tuesday   |        | 12<br>% | 20<br>% | 60<br>% | 8%      |
| 5. I usually made changes (redrafted) to the assignment I posted on Friday before printing and handing it in on Tuesday because of the comments I received            | 4<br>% |         | 16<br>% | 64<br>% | 16<br>% |
| 6. I usually made changes to (redrafted) the assignment I posted on Friday before printing and handing it in on Tuesday because of the comments I made on peers' work |        | 4%      | 32<br>% | 60<br>% | 4%      |
| 7. The comments I received from my peers were just as helpful as those I got from the instructor  |        |         | 32<br>% | 56<br>% | 8%      |
| 8. The comments I made on other people's assignments help me when I write my own  | 4<br>% | 4%      | 16<br>% | 60<br>% | 16<br>% |

Item8, positive response was achieved from 76% or 19 participants and 16% or 4 participants neutral to the statement number 8. From the interview, the feedback given is based on their comprehension, they try to improve their comprehension to give the best comment to peers which automatically the comprehension influenced to their writing. Because low quality of the feedback is not helpful enough for students to increase their work (Jonsson, 2012).

**Table 3.** Students' response (question 9)

| 9. What do you focus on most when you make comments? | Response |
|--|----------|
| Content  | 92%      |
| Organization   | 40%      |
| Grammar  | 56%      |
| Vocabulary   | 16%      |
| Style  | 8%       |

Item 9 in Table 3, comment and content become the first rank that they consider to give comment to peers, there are 92% or 23 participants chose content as the focus. For the reason, content is really important for a research paper writing. In addition, for master degree students, something that needs to be improved more is the construction idea, their writing should be acceptable related to the issue and theory. Meanwhile, grammar, organization, vocabulary and style can be followed for only a few errors that no need to discuss further (Table 4).

**Table 4.** Students' response (question 10)

| 10. What do you focus on most when you write compositions? | Response |
|--|----------|
| Content  | 72%      |
| Organization   | 56%      |
| Grammar  | 36%      |
| Vocabulary   | 24%      |
| Style  | 24%      |

Meanwhile, when they write the composition, they make content as the focus, but all aspects considered important for cannot be separated from one to another. Then, writing a paper needs to make sure that all of the aspects include in our writing. They relate each other in every paragraph written to reach the writing standard of publication.

**3.2. The students' utility, desirability, and effect of giving and accepting peer feedback**

In response to questions about the most useful kinds of comments received both from peers and instructor. Students reported that the first comment that is really useful to give and accept was content, for it is the core of writing. In addition some students have difficulties to deliver a good idea, which is suitable with the topic chosen. Sometimes some opinions needed to build

qualified content. Beside when touching the area of content, that means similar to all over the aspect of the writing. Every student has different side related to comprehend the content, when reviewing the content, automatically it is related to the vocabulary where we need to make suitable word choices to build coherence and cohesive meaning. Then automatically grammar, organization also will follow. As one of participants said

*“Content is number one in writing so it needs more comment both from peers and instructor because it is something that we need to review many times. I got more impact to my writing when I got comment on the area of content because it covers all”*

Then, following by grammar, organization, vocabulary puts as the last choice to deliver as the feedback. Grammar becomes the second rank to give and accept feedback, for grammar influences the quality of the writing for making it easy to understand and grammar error may deliver misunderstanding in delivering the content. As one of the participants reported

*“The useful comment that I got from my lecturer is how to conclude the information from quoting expert writing through paraphrasing.”*

In addition most of students reported all about content in the first rank which impact to their writing performance. For in writing a research paper, the title and the content should be coherence and cohesive. If there is a sentence not connected to the topic, it is really useful to have comment on that point. As the reason students sometimes do not realize to write the information which is not related to the topic, so it ruins the meaning for each paragraph. So that’s why content becomes the main point which gives useful impact on students’ writing performance. As one of participants reported

*“I like to give comment to peers about the content of their writing for example: the writer has clearly introduced the topic of the research at the beginning of the paragraph. Then she has elaborated the keywords of the research in the next following sentences. However, there is a keyword that is not visibly defined by the writer which is the pedagogical content knowledge. The introduction does not obviously present a literature review for defining the keyword of pedagogical content knowledge.”*

Students with higher writing ability have more ability to give comment on writing content or organization to revise their own writing and their peers writing, which means that students afford to transfer their knowledge to their peer writing which delivered in the form of feedback. So it can be concluded that the participants here have higher quality of writing so that they prefer to focus more on content than other aspects.

In addition, students dislike to give and accept comment is caused by the anxiety to deliver the comment with a good way, and they were asked to give the comment about the material that they don’t know the theory, for who knows the framework well only the owner. Then, the comment that they seldom gave to peers was related to style and grammar because they feel that to comment their paraphrasing is hard enough. They consider the one who deserved to give comment on the use of writing style and grammar is the instructor because he is expert on it.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, the result of this research shows that peer feedback gives positive impact on students’ writing performance. It impacts on their ability to revise and rebuild their own writing by learning from the comments given and accepted. In other side, due to a good quality of comments given by peers, they experience peer feedback improving their ability to create idea construction and cohesive content of writing. Besides, in accepting and giving comments, they experience critical thinking and individual self-learning improvement. Overall the perception is really positive because students really think hard to create qualified idea for their friends’ better writing. In addition, it was found out that students are at level of higher writing performance ability due to their preference on giving and accepting feedback in the aspect of content which needs high knowledge to do it.

However, they still consider that instructor’s feedback is deeper and more helpful but they show a great utility to interact with each other, they accept peers’ comments positively. In this research also was found that the results contradict with some previous research showing negative result of peer feedback and support some theories that peer feedback is needed and helpful to be implemented in writing classroom. So it can be concluded that online peer feedback is significantly positive and constructive.

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