The Effectiveness of Teacher Electronic Feedback in Asynchronous Teaching: A Case Study of Foundation Students at Sultan Qaboos University

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Abstract

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, educational systems worldwide, including Oman, were affected as this led to temporary closures of schools, colleges, and universities. In response to such closures, many countries decided to continue offering education through distance learning. Similarly, Sultan Qaboos University (SQU), the only government university in Oman, opted for asynchronous teaching through Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT). Through ERT, there is a temporary shift in instructional delivery. Its primary aim is to provide temporary access to instruction and support materials quickly and reliably during the crisis. Asynchronous teaching provides students with flexibility to access the materials posted by teachers whenever they can, leaving teachers with many challenges. One of these challenges is the ability to offer proper feedback to students. Therefore, this study aimed to examine the perceptions of both teachers and students on the electronic feedback provided in ERT. A total of 8 teachers 80 students enrolled in the foundation program at SQU participated in the study. The responses of both teachers and students were collected through online questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The findings of the study indicate that some feedback methods seemed to be more effective. The study also identified the challenges faced by both students and teachers in terms of electronic feedback. Furthermore, the study gives suggestions to improve electronic feedback methods.

Keywords: asynchronous feedback, emergency remote teaching (ERT), foundation program (FP), synchronous feedback, Sultan Qaboos University, teacher electronic feedback (TEF)

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Introduction

As the Covid-19 pandemic has spread across the world, most countries announced temporary closures of schools, colleges, and universities, and Oman was not an exception. The pandemic forced thousands of students to stay at home and attend classes remotely. Sultan Qaboos University, for example, suspended all the studies for one month before shifting to emergency remote teaching (ERT), where asynchronous teaching was adopted. At that time, the first half of the Spring 2020 semester was already over. There was no choice but to continue the remaining weeks of the semester asynchronously. One of the biggest challenges that teachers faced during ERT was to provide proper feedback and how their students comprehended and respond to it. Teachers had to give electronic feedback (TEF) asynchronously using techniques such as track changes in electronic drafts submitted by students, WhatsApp chats, and voice comments on Google Docs. In addition, issues related to student motivation, internet connectivity, lack of technical knowledge of both teachers and students, and timely responses created potential challenges for both teachers and students. Many studies have investigated the effectiveness of asynchronous and synchronous e-feedback (Fanous, 2020; Liang, 2010; Tuzi, 2004). Besides, no studies have discussed the effectiveness of teacher electronic feedback (TEF) in the Omani context during ERT. Therefore, this study aimed to explore students and teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of asynchronous and synchronous TEF. This study also aimed to identify the challenges faced by both teachers and students in this regard. The study attempted to answer the following questions:

1. What are the students' perceptions of TEF during the emergency remote teaching?
2. What are the teachers' perceptions of TEF during the emergency remote teaching?
3. Which feedback method did the students find the most useful? Why?
4. Which feedback method did the teachers find the most useful? Why?
5. What challenges did both teachers and students face in giving and receiving electronic feedback?
- 6.

Literature Review

Emergency remote teaching (ERT)

A recent report from UNESCO (2020) stated that more than 1.9 students from approximately 190 countries were forced to shift from classical face to face education to online education as a response to emergency remote teaching. Online instruction gives the flexibility of teaching and learning anytime and anywhere with unprecedented and staggering speed (Hodges, Moore, Lockee, Trust, & Bond, 2020). As a response to this crisis, most institutions worldwide had no choice but to quickly shift the delivery of their face-to-face courses to an alternate online mode known as emergency remote teaching (ERT). Nevertheless, it is essential to point out that online education and ERT are not the same. They differ in terms of design and evaluation tools (Khlaif & Salah, 2020; Shisley, 2020). Online courses are initially designed to be delivered virtually. In contrast, ERT is a quick shift of classroom teaching to an online format to respond to an immense catastrophe (Hodges, et al. 2020). Once the crisis or emergency abates, the online delivery mode will revert to the original face-to-face format. Online learning is systematic and well planned.

According to Khlaif and Salah (2020), three factors contribute to the effectiveness of e-learning, which include educational materials, digital equity, and digital privacy. In terms of educational materials, online instruction follows systematic and well-planned procedures. It usually takes 3 to 6 months to design, develop, and deliver the materials to students. On the other hand, the ERT material is of low quality and is intended for in-person-mode. As for digital equity, some students worldwide have been struggling to get access to educational resources offered at the ERT. The third factor is digital privacy, which means the protection of an individual's information and communication when using the internet. Online courses are intended for asynchronous learning, where the learning material is delivered to students at different times. Online instruction offers more flexibility more to students (Barker, 2020).

There have been several attempts to define ERT. For instance, Hodges et al. (2020) define ERT as “a temporary shift of instructional delivery to an alternate delivery mode due to crisis circumstance.” Similarly, Khlaif & Salha (2020) state that ERT is “an unplanned and sudden shift from traditional education to remote learning in response to the emergency situations like the outbreak of Coronavirus” (p. 131).

Yet, ERT has generated several challenges. According to Baker (2020), four main factors complicate ERT, which include technology, student engagement, discussions, and accessibility. Besides, in an ERT mode, teachers might find different ways to deliver their material to students. However, regular classroom interaction might be missing. According to Trust (2020), there are three concerns about ERT in terms of privacy and student data, accessibility of digital materials for teaching and learning, and the digital divide, which refers to the gap between students who can benefit from the internet and those who cannot.

Teacher Electronic Feedback (TEF)

As stated by Tom, Morni, Metom, and Joe (2013), feedback is the different techniques used by teachers to respond to their students' writing. Feedback is significant for students because it “makes them see others' responses to their writing and learn from them, then get the messages to revise their writing to be better at gaining a high-quality writing” (Wihastyangag & Lateif, 2017, p. 103). Edeiken-Cooperman and Berenato (2014) define feedback as “the information provided to a student by a professor or instructor that indicates to that student their level of performance on an assessment/assignment” (p.79).

As defined by Shute (2008), feedback is “the information communicated to the learner that is intended to modify his or her thinking or behavior for the purpose of improving learning” (p.154). Price, Handley, Millar, and O'Donovan (2010) classify feedback into five broad categories, which include reinforcement, correction, forensic diagnosis, benchmarking, and longitudinal development (feed-forward)” (p. 278).

With the emergence of technology in language classrooms, electronic feedback (e-feedback) has gained growing attention. Technology has become common in language classrooms

and is often preferred by teachers and students (Hyland, 2010). Providing feedback electronically to students has become a common practice, particularly during emergency remote teaching. Electronic feedback (e-feedback) is “computer-facilitated feedback produced by either the teacher or student peers with the help of a computer and delivered electronically to the student” (Ene & Upton, 2014, p. 82). Electronic feedback can be provided either synchronously or asynchronously (Ene & Upton, 2014).

Synchronous e-feedback is given when both students and teachers are online simultaneously (Chong, 2019). It can be provided through computer-mediated tools such as Skype, Google Hangouts, Zoom, Google Docs, and Grammarly. Synchronous e-feedback occurs when students are completing their writing texts online, and their teacher monitors them and provides instant feedback. Synchronous feedback “can be potentially beneficial to students’ writing because it conveys all the information about the target language in context (Long, 2007, p.77), which can result in a higher chance of students attending to the feedback”(Chong, 2019, p.1092). Moreover, as pointed out by Van Beuningen, De Jong, and Kuiken (2011), synchronous e-feedback proved to be effective in improving the EFL learners’ grammatical accuracy when writing the tasks. On the other hand, some other scholars (Shintani & Aubrey, 2016) stated that learners did not prefer synchronous feedback because they could not correct their errors due to their lack of proficiency in the target language.

Asynchronous feedback, on the other hand, is given to students after they submit their assignments electronically using different techniques such as track changes in Google Docs and Word, e-mails, voice comments, chats on WhatsApp and Remind, etc. It also refers to the “gap in time between the students’ responses/products and the provision of feedback” (Wong & Yang, 2017, p.292). Studies explain that learners showed preferences for asynchronous feedback as they found it to be more detailed, less threatening, and fairer, making them feel less anxious (Weirick, Davis, & Lawson, 2017).

Methods

The current study was conducted on Omani learners enrolled in the general foundation program at Sultan Qaboos University (SQU). The general foundation programs (GFPs) in Oman are study programs, which prepare high school graduates for their postsecondary and higher education studies. The GFPs implemented by higher education institutions (HEIs) in the Sultanate support students with the necessary skills and knowledge to undertake a higher education program. The HEIs are required to provide a GFP that includes four components: English language, Computing, Mathematics, and General Study Skills (Oman Academic Standards, 2010). These HEIs are required to teach and assess students and review and improve their curriculum as per the national standards (Carroll, Razvi, Goodliffe, & Al-Habsi, 2009). The Center for Preparatory Studies (CPS) at SQU is one of the leading GFP institutions in Oman. With more than 3,000 students enrolled in the GFP each year, the CPS was established to prepare students who join the SQU to achieve the required educational goals. Besides, the CPS offers English credit courses and IELTS preparation. The Center has three central academic departments, which include English for Humanities, English for Sciences, and Mathematics and IT. There are more than 250 teachers from 33 different nationalities who are teaching in the CPS. The Foundation Programme English

Language (FPEL) is the largest component and consists of 6 proficiency levels which are a continuum rather than distinct levels. Students who study FPEL register in fifteen-week courses that combine two levels each.

Instruments

A mixed-methods approach was used. Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected and analyzed. The quantitative methods included online teacher and student questionnaires. These questionnaires aimed to gather perceptions of both teachers and students on the effectiveness of teacher electronic feedback in improving the students' writing skills and self-study skills during ERT. The qualitative methods involved semi-structured interviews with four students and four teachers. WhatsApp was used to interview the students. The reason for choosing this application was because it was more convenient and more comfortable to conduct interviews with the students. The interviews with the course leader and two teachers were held through Zoom. A face-to-face interview was also conducted with one of the teachers after taking safety and social distance measures. The interviews aimed to gather the perceptions of both teachers and students on the effectiveness of teacher electronic feedback. Participants

Participants were selected based on convenience sampling. Eighty students and eight teachers agreed to participate in the study. The students were registered in FPEL 450 course in the foundation program in Spring 2020. FPEL 450 covers the general English skills of reading, writing, listening, and speaking, in addition to study skills (project and portfolio).

Figure 1. Percentage of students participating in the questionnaire

Figure one shows the percentage of students who participated in the study. Eighty-nine students responded to the questionnaire, out of which eighty students (89.9%) agreed to take the questionnaire, while nine of them (10.1%) decided not to be part of the study. Out of 15 teachers teaching the course, eight of them agreed to take part in the questionnaire.

Figure 2. The percentage of teachers who took part in the questionnaire

Findings

In this section, the findings of the study will be discussed. The findings are interpreted to answer the research questions as follows.

- Challenges of Asynchronous Teaching in the ERT Mode

A common assumption is that students have suitable devices such as computers, laptops, and smartphones that enable them to access online education easily and comfortably. However, one overlooked problem is related to technically disadvantaged students. As shown in Figure 3, access to the internet and appropriate equipment varied among the respondents. Fortunately, (66.3%) of the respondents said that they were able to access their devices either all the time or often.

Figure 3. Students' access to the internet

(22.5%) of the respondents said that they could sometimes access their devices. However, 11% of the respondents living in rural areas seemed to have problems with internet connectivity. There was one respondent (1%) who never had internet access at home. It is worth noting that even students who had internet connectivity problems could communicate with their respective teachers through WhatsApp.

Besides, the quality of the electronic feedback was also affected due to issues with internet connectivity. Teachers said that internet connectivity problems harmed the way feedback was given to students.

There were bumps, as I said. There were issues with student connectivity, and they had problems, and sometimes I was able to solve those problems myself and figure them out

... there were some students who responded better than others. I think you know there were some, there were a few students that really had problems having the technology. I mean obviously they were all connected whether be the phones, computers, etc., but literally had only the phone and the data plan that they had and there was no computer, no laptop, nothing else at their disposal. (Personal communication with teacher 1, 16 August 2020).

Technology failed us a lot. To start with Wi-Fi, connection for the students, the most important or the most challenging part for this online teaching was the Wi-Fi ... the connection. I had a student who had to drive to a special place in his village where there is a connection, where there is a signal, he can get to do his quiz. (Personal communication with teacher 2, 18 August 2020)

Another challenge was teaching and learning some language skills. There was a disparity between teachers and students in terms of the skill which presented the most challenge for them.

Figure 4 The most challenging skills to teach

According to (37.5%) of the teachers, writing and study skills were the most challenging for them to teach. (25%) of them felt that listening skills were the most difficult to teach. Surprisingly, it seems that reading was not problematic. It could be because of the nature of the reading activities as students had to do comprehension questions on Google Forms.

I did not feel as if I was teaching reading anymore. I felt completely out of that and [not clear] students were doing what was put on our Moodle page. This is for 450 obviously [the FPEL 450 course] but that they did not ask me questions about it. I think that a lot of them did not do the reading. (Personal communication with teacher 1, 16 August 2020)

Writing and the study skills, which include essay writing, project, and e-portfolio, were the most difficult to teach as they require a lot of effort and time from the teachers to explain to their students and give feedback to them. Furthermore, improving the students' writing abilities requires a great deal of attention from teachers. Some teachers did not feel at ease to teach writing. After all, it was not easy to guide the students because this skill needed face-to-face interaction with the students. In addition, it seems that teachers faced considerable challenges in teaching research skills such as paraphrasing, note-taking and summarising online. Thus, the presence of the teacher in the class is essential.

I found the study skills to be by far the most challenging...umm...specifically because a lot of what the kids are learning or the students are learning in that study skills class are...there're issues that are cultural in terms of like paraphrasing, plagiarism, and notions of ownership [...] and when you are in a classroom, you can kind of sort through some of those in a more well-defined way but when you are working on them online, you just post a video that says this is how to understand paraphrasing, for example, and now go ahead and paraphrase this [...] and they have the language issue on the top of that. (Personal communication with the course leader, 11 August 2020)

On the other hand, according to the students, the most challenging skill to learn through ERT was listening, followed by writing, study skills, and reading (27.5%, 22.5%, 18.8%, and 7.5%), respectively. However, (13.8%) of the students found all the skills difficult. In contrast, (10%) said that none of the skills was difficult.

Figure 5. The most challenging skill to study

Teachers gave various explanations for why students found the listening skills to be the most difficult. One of the reasons is that they gave more emphasis to the study skills and writing compared to the listening skill that was not given the same level of attention.

Because teachers were concerned about something like a study skills class, even that we were falling short and it was difficult to teach we probably put a lot more emphasis on explaining those aspects and the students probably [interrupted by the researcher] just understood it a little bit better whereas we can't take for granted the listening skills and we probably didn't put as much efforts as we really needed to. (Personal communication with course leader, 11 August 2020)

Teacher-student Communication during ERT

All respondents said that their teachers used to communicate with them in one way or another to give them feedback. (40%) of them said that their teachers communicated with them three to four times a week, and (33.8%) said that their teachers interacted with them every day on matters related to their studies. Only (8.8%) said that their teachers interacted with them at least once a week.

Figure 6. Students' perceptions of how often their teachers communicated with them

(75%) of the teacher respondents said that they interacted with their students between 3 hours to more than five hours every day, while (25%) said that they spent two to three hours per day with their students. As explained in Figure seven, all teachers said that they communicated with their students every day, which does not align with the students' responses.

Figure7. Teachers' perceptions of how often they communicated with their students

The responses given by teachers during the interviews confirmed the questionnaire results. Most of the teacher-student communication happened through WhatsApp. Students agreed that their teachers followed various feedback methods, including e-mails, voice comments, WhatsApp and discussions, screen recording, tracks in Google Docs, and others. According to the respondents, the most common feedback method was the WhatsApp discussions and chats (81.3%), then e-mails (68.8%), followed by voice comments (28.7%), track changes in Google Docs (13.8%), screen recording (12.5%), and other methods (11.3%), respectively.

Figure 8. Students' answers regarding electronic feedback tools used by teachers

Similarly, the teachers shared their feedback with their students using a variety of methods. The most common feedback method was through WhatsApp and Remind (100%). The second most common feedback method was through track changes in Microsoft Word (75%), followed by e-mails (62.5%), then Google forms (25%). Other methods such as Kaizena and Read and Write for Google Chrome were used by (12.5%) of the teachers.

Figure 9. Teachers' answers regarding the electronic feedback tools they used

Teachers said that they mainly used WhatsApp to give feedback because they found that their students were more comfortable using it.

I found that I preferred using WhatsApp because I found my students were more responsive on WhatsApp, so it is a way that I can communicate with them. I definitely would say that it was not my preferred method. I would much rather have something setup through Google Classrooms. (Personal communication with course leader, 11August, 2020)

Number one was WhatsApp. Number two was e-mail. Number three I did conduct....umm or tried to conduct some meetings. I scheduled them and basically each time I had one, I had one student participating and then one or two students trying to

participate but having all of these technological. So, I did not have meetings, synchronous meetings. (Personal Communication teacher 1, 16 August, 2020)

Communication was an issue at the very beginning. I thought I can manage through e-mails. I can manage through this app which is called Remind. I do not like to share my contact number with students. Then we ended up having a group on WhatsApp where the feedback was immediate, where whatever question I was asked was like an answer for everyone because I am sure they had similar questions. (Personal communication with teacher 2, 18 August 2020)

Perceptions of Electronic Feedback

Most of the student respondents (75%) found that feedback through WhatsApp and Remind discussions was the most effective. The least effective feedback methods were track changes in Google Drive (6.3%). However, only 3.8% believed that none of the feedback methods were useful and practical.

Figure 10. The most effective feedback methods according to students

As explained in Figure ten, most students (75%) found WhatsApp to be a useful feedback tool. All of them have WhatsApp and use it every day. Therefore, they seemed to be more comfortable using it with their teachers. Besides, the voice messages on WhatsApp helped them understand the comments and instructions given to them.

I think the most effective way to give feedback is WhatsApp App because WhatsApp [it] is more popular and very easy to use and when mister [the teacher] sent to me voice message, I can show [listen to] this message every time with internet and without internet. So, this is easy for me to show [listen to] this voice without any problem, without any issues... is very easy and everyone can use it without problem. (Personal communication with student 1, 5 August 2020)

I think WhatsApp discussion because we spend a lot of time in this app and it have [has] voice feature in the chat. (Personal communication with student 2, 5 August 2020).

The best way for me was a WhatsApp discussion because of sending the question and responding faster, we can discuss with the teacher to get the best answer and carefully [unclear] the information to us and make a group and discuss to [with] us any students

have questions ... we can ask and the teacher give feedback. (Personal communication with student 3, 5 August 2020)

The findings support the study conducted by Rambe and Bere (2013), who found that WhatsApp helped their students express themselves freely in a non-restrictive environment. WhatsApp has many features, including multimedia, where users can exchange videos, images, voice notes, text messages, and cross-platform engagements (Rambe & Bere, 2013).

Teachers preferred using WhatsApp as the primary means of communication because their students seemed to be more responsive and more willing to communicate through this app. They found WhatsApp to be working more effectively.

I found that I preferred using WhatsApp because my students were more responsive on WhatsApp. So, it was a way I could communicate with them. I definitely wouldn't say that it was my preferred method. I would much rather have something set up through Google Classroom where I could talk to them in a more organized way. (Personal communication with course leader, 11 August 2020).

Well, it is not the best, but it was the thing that we had at that time that was handy to everyone and friendly to use for all the students. This is the thing. I am sure that it's not the only way. There are other ways and keeping in mind that we, teachers were not prepared for what happened. So, we wanted to use any way we had that is handy to us and the students to make sure that our voices reach[ed] them, our instructions, directions, everything, but I'm s

ure it's not the only way. (Personal communication with teacher 2, 18 August 2020)

Unlike WhatsApp, the messaging app known as Remind did not seem to work very well. A lot of teachers tried using it with their students at the beginning. However, a lot of students did not seem to be responsive. According to the students, it was not user-friendly, and it was difficult to track the chats. Students preferred having WhatsApp groups.

Remind was good but we want[ed] WhatsApp because it was easier for us. Many student [s] did not know how to use Remind. (Personal communication with student 1, 5 August 2020)

Despite WhatsApp being the most preferred means of communication by both teachers and students, it has some disadvantages. Message flooding, eye strain, and time-consuming are some of these disadvantages (Gon & Rawekar, 2017). In addition, WhatsApp seems to be an inefficient platform to communicate significant comprehension points and instructions to the students. However, it could be a good tool for following up with the students and ensuring that they are on track. Additionally, WhatsApp could be abused by some students who might send messages at any time of the day without considering their teachers' privacy and family time. Also, some students were not checking their WhatsApp quite often.

Some of the students checking often enough... it was hard with some students to make sure that they knew what was [not clear] what was required, and it was frustrating because they didn't take responsibility for that... and of course when you use WhatsApp there is

the danger of them [students] abusing that connection with you and bothering or pestering you and you have to be firm and you have to establish guidelines that you stick to, but that will be hard because that is their way of connecting with you. You don't want to shut them down either. (Personal Communication with teacher 1, 16 August)

When the students abuse this method, which means that they send a message at anytime of the day forgetting that this teacher is a human. (Personal Communication with teacher 2, 18 August 2020)

On the other hand, few student respondents (6.3%) perceived track changes on Google Docs as the least effective. Nevertheless, Google Docs can be a suitable method for giving instant feedback and allows "collaboration on a student-generated text when students are online simultaneously" (Boyes, 2016, p. 229). There are other advantages of students using Google Docs, such as sharing documents with their teachers at the click of the button and being able to access their records, view, and edit them at any time from a computer, laptop, or a mobile phone (Khalil, 2018). To add, some teachers used features such as voice comments. Students did not know how to read and respond to their teachers' comments on Google Docs. They needed more training, which was not possible during the emergency remote teaching due to the difficulty of providing proper technical training on using Google Docs. Individual teachers had the freedom to use Google Docs features in the way they felt it worked better with their students. Some teachers used voice notes as one method of giving feedback on Google Docs.

Figure 11. A sample of feedback through voice notes on Google Docs

Figure eleven illustrates a sample of voice comments on Google Docs through an extension called Read and Write for Google Chrome. In addition to the voice notes feature, this extension provides other features, such as multi-color highlights and other support tools. Therefore, if efficiently used, this extension might become an excellent e-feedback tool for students.

voice comments

79 responses

feedback via emails

80 responses

feedback given through WhatsApp/Remind

80 responses

Written comments as track changes in Google Docs

79 responses

Figure 12. Students' feedback preferences on a scale from 1 to 5

Figure twelve describes students' preferences of the feedback methods on a five-point Likert scale where one is the most preferred and five is the least preferred. The most preferred tool for feedback was WhatsApp (36.3%) followed by video feedback through screencasting (21.3%), voice messages (13.9%), e-mails (13.8%), and track changes (10.1%), respectively.

As far as feedback is concerned, how students responded to their teachers' feedback is worth mentioning. As described in Figure13, (31.1%) of the students used to communicate with their teachers mainly through WhatsApp to get further clarifications on the feedback they received. (30%) answered that they used to read or listen to the comments to understand the feedback given. (22.5%) used to make the necessary changes, while (16.3%) stated that they were only concerned about their overall marks, and they did not feel that the feedback given to them was important.

Figure 13. How students responded to the teacher electronic feedback

As show in figure thirteen shows, most teachers (75%) felt that their students did not respond appropriately to the feedback given to them. This shows a disparity between the responses of teachers and students. Teachers gave various reasons for the students being unresponsive such as lack of motivation, and issues with internet connectivity, miscommunication, and misunderstanding. Additionally, some students, even after reaching the end of the semester, did not know how to use MS Word and Google drive or docs and could not send valid e-mails. Some just wanted to send all their work on WhatsApp. According to some other teachers, students ignored much of the feedback given to them, especially the one with track changes on MS Word.

Some teachers added that some of their students made a few changes but ignored most of the comments and recommendations on improvement.

Figure 14. Teachers' perceptions of their students' responsiveness to feedback

As illustrated in Figure fourteen, one of the biggest challenges for teachers was to ensure that their students comprehended the feedback given to them and acted upon the comments. As feedback was asynchronous, most of the given feedback was a one-way direction, and it was a challenge to ensure that students comprehended the feedback. Some teachers said that it was clear that some of their students did not read the feedback.

Sometimes they just clearly did not read the feedback. Sometimes they had clearly not done the work required from them for the week (e.g. essay learning/practice). So, giving comments on the work they submitted was never ending. (Personal Communication with teacher 3, 17 August 2020)

According to some other teachers, students who were responsive to their feedback made the required changes or resubmitted the assignment or the task, although they left out some comments. They added that students pay more attention to comments on grammar. They often neglect the comments on the style and organization of the writing.

In addition, as given in Figure 15, most students seemed to be satisfied with the amount of feedback they received. (91.2%) said they received good feedback from their teachers, while only (8.7%) stated that the feedback given to them was not enough.

Figure 15. Students' perceptions on the feedback received

Conclusion

The sudden shift to emergency remote teaching due to Covid-19 has created many challenges for teachers, students, and parents. Giving asynchronous feedback was one of the biggest challenges faced by teachers. The purpose of this study was to explore the effectiveness of asynchronous TEF on the foundation students enrolled in one of the courses at Sultan Qaboos University during the emergency remote teaching that took place in Spring 2020. The teachers and students' perceptions were elicited through online questionnaires and semi-structured interviews.

The findings reveal that teachers used various feedback methods, such as WhatsApp, e-mails, voice comments, track changes in Google Docs, screen recording, and others. WhatsApp was found as the most useful tool for giving and receiving feedback. However, teachers agreed that WhatsApp might not be the best feedback method as it also has some disadvantages. In contrast, track changes in Google Docs were the least effective and the least preferred by students. Students demonstrated a lack of knowledge on how to read and respond to the feedback given on Google Docs. Findings also show some disparities found in the responses of teachers and students in some areas. Though many students said that they received sufficient and adequate feedback, some teachers had a different point of view. They pointed out that their students were sometimes unresponsive to the feedback given to them. Besides, both teachers and students faced severe challenges that hindered the feedback process. Findings also reveal that both teachers and students faced several challenges, including internet connectivity, lack of technical training, and misunderstanding of the instructions. Teachers also agreed that alternative platforms should be used for giving feedback and communicating with students. To add, students seemed to be more responsive to the discussions and voice messages on WhatsApp and feedback through screen recording compared to the written comments. Findings also recommended using a mixture of synchronous and asynchronous feedback if emergency remote teaching will be the choice of education. Lastly, both teachers and students need sufficient training to manage technical issues related to emergency remote teaching.

Limitations of the Study

Although the study revealed significant findings, the limitations below need to be addressed in future studies.

1. This study focused on one group of students registered in one course in the foundation program (FPEL 450). To have more representative results, students enrolled in other classes can take part in future studies.
2. The emergency remote teaching model was implemented in the second half of the semester. So, by that time, teachers were already familiar with their students and established rapport with them.
3. There was no focus on issues related to student motivation and learner autonomy.
4. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with only four students.
5. No samples were provided on teachers' feedback and how students responded to them.

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