

Examining Technical Students' Feedback and Perceptions on the Use of Microsoft Teams in Asynchronous Language Learning

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Introduction

Student feedback is an invaluable tool for enhancing the teaching and learning process. It not only serves as a mechanism for students to engage with the course material but also provides instructors with insights for improving instructional design. Kutasi (2023) classified feedback as written, oral, online, and peer feedback, and the significance of formative assessment within the educational system lies in its ability to facilitate effective feedback between educators and students. Lim et al. (2020) found that personalised feedback helps students refine or strengthen important forethought processes of goal setting and reduce procrastination. Continuous communication between students and instructors promotes interactive learning environments, which will contribute to better learning outcomes.

To support students' learning, the choice of platform plays a role in enhancing interactions and engagements (Majid & Salam, 2023). One of the common

platforms that allow students for continuous communication and collaboration in an educational context is Microsoft Teams. This application serves as a digital hub that offers workspace chat and video conferencing, file storage, connection with learning communities and synchronisation with Office application. Much research showed that the use of Microsoft Teams enhances student engagement and facilitates collaborative learning experiences (Logroño & Costelo-Abrea, 2023; Purba, 2021). As this application can offer both asynchronous and synchronous learning, it provides more flexibility for educators to select the most appropriate mode for their students. Furthermore, this application helps in promoting self-learning skills (Al-Shboul, 2024), provides user-friendly learning experiences (Ismail et al., 2022) and facilitates teachers in managing content and resources (Zamora-Antuñano et al., 2021). As educational institutions continue to adapt to digital technologies, the use of Microsoft Teams might remain relevant for more years to come.

For this study, the focus is on the implementation of asynchronous learning through Microsoft Teams. Although the asynchronous model of learning provides some advantages in terms of allowing students to engage with content at their own pace, maintaining motivation and engagement can be challenging in this mode (Allen & Seaman, 2017). The use of collaborative platforms such as Microsoft Teams has the potential to mitigate these challenges by offering interactive features that enhance engagement. In asynchronous classes, particularly during Substitute Blended Learning (SBL) for language learning, engagement can be challenging. One of the features in Microsoft Teams that can enhance students' engagement is the conversational feature, which allows students to post and reply to comments. Because this feature is quite new for students to utilise in the learning environment, this study aims to examine students' feedback on using the comment feature in Microsoft Teams and their perceptions of the platform as a language learning tool during asynchronous classes. Thus, this study would like to seek the answers to the following questions:

1. What is the students' feedback on using the comment feature in Microsoft Teams for language learning?
2. What are students' perceptions of Microsoft Teams as a platform for asynchronous language learning?

Methodology

This qualitative study used a thematic analysis approach to explore students' feedback on using Microsoft Teams during asynchronous English classes. Participants included diploma students from three faculties from a technical university and Microsoft Teams was used as the primary platform for asynchronous language learning over 5 weeks during the SBL period as in Figure 1. Among the respondents who had completed the survey, 39.7% were females and 60.3% were males. Ethnicity statistics show that 80.8% were Malays, 12.8% were Chinese, 5.1% were Indians, and 1.3% were others. A total of 100 % of the respondents were Malaysians. Open-ended questions were administered through Google Forms, and 78 students participated in the study. Data were collected via open-ended survey questions and students were asked to reflect on their experiences using Microsoft Teams for language learning activities. Then, a thematic analysis was conducted on the student responses. The data were analysed for recurring themes related to students' feedback and perceptions of the use of Microsoft Teams for language learning purposes. Coding categories were developed based on the raw data and the transcripts were reviewed multiple times to ensure the accuracy of the analysis.

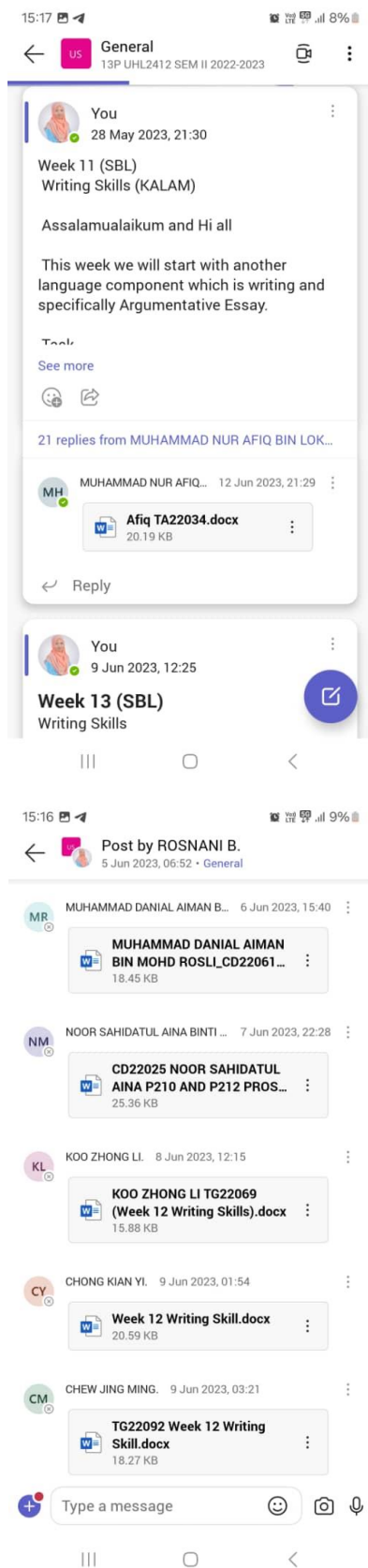


Figure 1: Asynchronous Language Learning during the SBL period

Findings and Discussion

This section presents the analysis of students' feedback on using Microsoft Teams, specifically focusing on the platform's comment feature and their overall perceptions of the platform for language learning in asynchronous classes.

Students' feedback on using the comment features in Microsoft Teams during language learning session

The students' feedback was thematically categorised into five: (1) Learning from Mistakes, (2) Generating New Ideas, (3) Enhancing Comprehension, (4) Developing Critical Thinking, and (5) Enforcement for Task Completion.

Theme 1: Learning from Mistakes

One of the most prominent feedback items from students was the ability to learn from mistakes through Microsoft Teams' comment feature. Students reported that comparing their responses with those of their peers allowed them to identify errors in their work. For instance, one student mentioned, "It helps because I can check my answer and understand where I went wrong." Another noted, "I can refer to my friends' answers, which helps me correct mine if it's wrong." This form of peer-to-peer feedback enabled students to gain a better understanding of the correct answers and avoid repeating mistakes. As a result, the process not only reinforced their learning

but also built their confidence by reducing the fear of making mistakes in future assignments.

Theme 2: Generating New Ideas

Students also reacted positively to the way Microsoft Teams facilitated idea generation through peer interaction. By reviewing responses from other students, they were able to gain new insights and perspectives that they might not have considered independently. One student expressed, "Sharing answers helps because I can see a variety of opinions, making me more open-minded." Another commented, "I can get ideas from other friends, especially in group work, and it helps me understand different ways to approach a problem." This collaborative environment helped stimulate creative thinking, as students learned from the diverse viewpoints presented in their peers' contributions. This is particularly beneficial in language learning, where exposure to multiple perspectives and interpretations can deepen understanding.

Theme 3: Enhancing Comprehension

A key finding was the way the comment feature helped students improve their comprehension of the course material. Students frequently referred to the benefit of being able to view how others approached tasks, which aided in clarifying their own understanding. One student remarked, "When I don't know how to complete my task, I refer to other answers, and it helps me to understand better."

Others highlighted how peer comments provided explanations that were sometimes more accessible than the materials provided. The asynchronous nature of the platform allowed students to take their time reviewing peers' contributions, which further enhanced their understanding of complex topics.

Theme 4: Developing Critical Thinking

Students highlighted that the comment feature facilitated critical thinking by allowing them to compare their answers with those of their peers. This comparison encouraged them to reflect on their responses, analyse different approaches, and evaluate the correctness of their answers. One participant commented, "I can check the answers given with my own and reflect on them." Others pointed out that by seeing a variety of answers, they could evaluate multiple perspectives on the same question. This process of comparing and contrasting helped students develop stronger analytical skills, as they critically assessed the validity of their responses in relation to others' work.

Theme 5: Motivation for Task Completion

The data also showed that the comment feature on Microsoft Teams served as a motivational tool for students to complete their assignments. Many students reported that seeing their peers post their work acted as a prompt for them to finish and submit their own tasks. One student

shared, "The notifications from my peers' comments reminded me to complete my work." Others echoed similar sentiments, stating that the collective participation in sharing answers fostered a sense of accountability and encouraged them to stay on task. Additionally, students acknowledged the utility of the platform's reminder features, which supported their ability to manage deadlines in an asynchronous learning environment.

The findings indicate that students responded positively to the use of Microsoft Teams' comment feature, which helped create a collaborative learning environment. The ability to learn from mistakes by comparing answers with peers aligns with the broader literature on formative feedback in online learning environments. Winstone and Carless (2019) highlight the importance of feedback in promoting self-regulated learning, a concept supported by students' responses in this study. The generation of new ideas through peer interaction underscores the value of collaborative learning in fostering creativity. Enhanced comprehension and improved memory retention are critical benefits of asynchronous platforms like Microsoft Teams, where students have the opportunity to revisit peer feedback at their own pace. This is consistent with Kang (2016), who found that repeated exposure to material in a collaborative setting enhances both understanding and retention. Finally, the increased motivation

for task completion and the development of critical thinking through peer comparison highlights the platform's effectiveness in promoting accountability and reflective learning. Nicol and Kushwah (2023) discuss how peer comparison can encourage deeper analysis and critical engagement, a sentiment echoed by many participants in this study.

Students' perceptions of Microsoft Teams as the main platform to carry out language learning activities in asynchronous classes

Students' overall perceptions of Microsoft Teams for language learning in asynchronous classes were categorised into five themes: (1) Ease of Use, (2) Enhanced Engagement, (3) Collaboration and Feedback, (4) Task Management, and (5) Learning Independence.

Theme 1: Ease of Use

Students widely perceived Microsoft Teams as a user-friendly platform that was easy to navigate. Many participants praised the platform's simple interface, which made it accessible for students with varying levels of technological proficiency. One student noted, "It's easy to use, and I can find all my tasks in one place." Another added, "The platform is simple and clear, so I don't have to waste time figuring out where things are." This ease of use contributed to a positive learning experience, as students could focus more on the content rather than technical difficulties.

Theme 2: Enhanced Engagement

Many students indicated that Microsoft Teams contributed to greater engagement, particularly through its comment feature. The ability to interact with peers and instructors in an asynchronous environment provided a sense of participation that kept students motivated. One participant commented, "Even though it's an online class, I still feel like I'm part of a group because I can interact with everyone through comments." This sense of involvement helped counteract the potential disengagement that can occur in asynchronous settings, where real-time interaction is limited.

Theme 3: Collaboration and Feedback

Students also recognized Microsoft Teams as a platform that facilitated effective collaboration and feedback. They appreciated the opportunity to receive feedback not only from their instructor but also from their peers, which enhanced their learning. One student remarked, "I like that we can share our answers and get feedback from both friends and lecturers. It helps improve my work." This peer-to-peer feedback loop was seen as a valuable component of the learning process, enabling students to benefit from diverse perspectives.

Theme 4: Task Management

A significant number of students appreciated the platform's ability to help them manage their assignments and

deadlines effectively. Microsoft Teams' features, such as notifications and task reminders, were noted as key tools that helped students stay on track. One participant mentioned, "The notifications from Microsoft Teams keep me organized and remind me when my tasks are due." Another added, "I like that I can see all my assignments in one place, which helps me manage my time better." This organizational support is particularly important in asynchronous learning, where students must often manage their schedules independently.

Theme 5: Learning Independence

Finally, students valued the independence that Microsoft Teams provided in the learning process. The asynchronous nature of the platform allowed them to engage with the material at their own pace, revisit resources, and take control of their learning. One student explained, "I like that I can access the material anytime, which gives me more flexibility to complete my tasks." This flexibility was especially appreciated by students balancing other commitments, such as part-time work or family responsibilities. The platform supported self-paced learning, which is essential in accommodating different learning styles and schedules.

Students' perceptions of Microsoft Teams as a platform for asynchronous learning were overwhelmingly positive, particularly in terms of ease of use,

engagement, and task management. These findings align with research by Martin and Bolliger (2018), who found that ease of navigation and user-friendly features in online platforms significantly contribute to student satisfaction and engagement. The collaborative nature of Microsoft Teams, especially through its comment feature, was crucial in fostering engagement. This supports the work of Valero Haro et al. (2022), who identified that peer feedback in online settings promotes a deeper understanding of course material and strengthens student interaction. Moreover, the flexibility of the asynchronous format, combined with the collaborative tools provided by Microsoft Teams, allowed students to take ownership of their learning process. Means et al. (2020) suggest that online platforms that offer autonomy, combined with structured collaboration, create an optimal environment for student learning, a sentiment reflected in the feedback from participants in this study.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study explored students' feedback to the use of the comment feature in Microsoft Teams during asynchronous language learning sessions and their overall perceptions of the platform itself. The results indicated that students had overwhelmingly positive feedback on the comment feature on Microsoft Teams. It facilitated learning through peer interaction, enabling students to learn from mistakes,

generate new ideas, and enhance comprehension. The collaborative environment fostered by the comment feature also supported the development of critical thinking, as students analysed and compared their responses with those of their peers. The feature further acted as an effective tool for task completion, encouraging students to stay on track and engage actively in the asynchronous learning process. Furthermore, students perceived Microsoft Teams as an effective and user-friendly platform for asynchronous language learning. Its features, such as the comment section and task management tools, were highlighted for enhancing engagement, promoting collaboration, and providing flexibility in managing tasks.

Future research should expand on the findings of this study by exploring the use of Microsoft Teams and other similar digital platforms in different educational contexts, such as in face-to-face or blended learning environments. Additionally, studies could investigate the impact of these platforms on specific language skills, including writing, speaking, listening, and reading, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of their effectiveness across various areas of language acquisition. Comparative studies between synchronous and asynchronous modes of learning would also offer valuable insights into how timing and real-time interaction influence student engagement

and learning outcomes. Finally, integrating advanced analytics and data-driven insights from learning management systems, such as Microsoft Teams, could provide a deeper understanding of student behaviour and learning patterns, facilitating more targeted interventions and support strategies.

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