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The how and why of written corrective feedback modalities in translation training

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Abstract:

Although feedback processes play a fundamental role in formative assessment, empirical studies on the topic are still sparse. The goal of the present study is to describe the modalities of corrective written feedback that are employed by a group of eleven teachers of either general or specialized translation in a university-level translation training programme, with attention also paid to how these teachers justify their use of one or the other modality. Data was gathered from these teachers by means of in-depth interviews, which were then transcribed and analysed. The results show that these teachers fully recognise the important role of feedback in the training of future translators and thus employ a variety of feedback modalities: grading, directive correction, colour-coding, symbols, letter-coded rubrics, overall comments, and specific comments. Regardless of the modality employed, however, the focus of feedback as employed by this group of professionals continues to be on pointing out errors in a finished product and therefore cannot be regarded as dialogic in nature. Therefore, the results of the study point to the need to rethink the pedagogical practice related to written feedback to make it more formative.

Keywords:

Assessment, feedback modalities, translation, translator training

1. Introduction

Although research into translation training is characterized by its interdisciplinarity, the focus continues to be on the quality of student work (Han, 2020). The present study, instead, revolves not so much around the analysis of a particular student product as around the process of teaching and learning translation, regardless of language combinations. In formative assessment*, i.e.* the one that "is used normally as a final measure of how much trainees have learnt and whether they have achieved the expected learning outcomes" (Way, 2023, p. 130), feedback plays a crucial role as it facilitates students' development and task improvement (Carless & Boud, 2018). Although feedback can come from different agents, this study will focus on feedback provided by translation teachers, who almost always play a key role in assessing and providing feedback on students' written work.

This work is situated in an empirical and constructivist line of research (Kiraly, 2000, p. 2012) and adopts a qualitative approach. The main goal will be to describe the beliefs and feedback practices of a group of teachers from one particular context and, more specifically, to identify the modalities of feedback employed by these teachers in the courses they teach and their reasons for choosing these specific modalities.

2. Assessment and feedback

Though the two words assessment and grading are often used synonymously in the field of education, this confusion about what are actually two separate concepts should be regarded as an error (Chiappe et al., 2016). While the two are certainly related, they can be clearly distinguished by their temporal framework, modality and purposes (Hortigüela Alcalá et al., 2018). There is currently consensus regarding the importance of integrating assessment into instruction given that the two are parts of a single process (Lantolf, 2009). From this perspective, assessment must have a

clearly formative component whose primary purpose is to improve learning, not merely to grade or audit it (Wiliam, 2011). Nevertheless, as pointed out by Yan et al. (2015), the success of assessment as a formative tool depends on how teachers perceive it and implement it in their classrooms. Therefore, it is essential to explore in depth the assessment practices of translation teachers to detect the strengths and weaknesses therein. Only thus will it be possible to progress in improving how future translators are taught their craft.

To identify gaps between learning goals and the actual output of students it is also necessary to orient students so that they can achieve the intended objectives. The communicative, orienting, and dialogic function of formative assessment is achieved primarily through feedback. Carless and Boud (2018, p. 1318) define it as the "process by which learners make sense of the information they receive from different sources and use it to improve their work and/or learning strategies". Feedback is thus a specific form of pedagogical assistance whose goal is to facilitate students' construction of knowledge and self-regulation of their own learning (Espasa & Meneses, 2020). Given that self-regulation depends on the metacognitive processes that are activated, Echeverri (2015) suggests that, in the context of translation training, if feedback is constructive and specific and is coupled with reflective practices, it can substantially enhance the quality of learning.

3. Modalities of feedback in translation training

As previously noted, feedback plays a key role in formative assessment. As Hattie (1992, p. 9) puts it, "the most powerful single modification that enhances achievement is feedback". However, not all teachers and researchers understand the term 'feedback' in the same way (Evans, 2013). For the field of translation, Dollerup

(1994) argues in his pioneering study that, to be truly formative, feedback must include three components: written corrective feedback (henceforth WCF) on student translations, oral commentaries about possible solutions for errors and a personalized performance report detailing strengths and weaknesses of student's work. Dollerup placed particular importance on the relationship between the personalized performance report and metacognition, since "when students compare these feedback forms (…) they can pinpoint their own problem areas and do something about them" (Dollerup, 1994, p. 11). In the same theoretical perspective and the Spanish context, it is worth noting the "Achilles' heel sheet" (AHS) proposed by Way (2003, 2009, 2023). This tool has proved to be effective in "stimulating self-reflection, pinpointing possible strengths and weaknesses and to consider and discuss possible remedies before, during and after each translation module" (Way, 2023, p. 133).

Given that how feedback is provided to students can vary considerably[1], it is obvious that the findings that will be presented are not generalizable; rather, the intention is simply to describe in detail the specific practices of a group of teachers in a specific institutional context. The degree to which what is being described is common practice elsewhere will be left for future research.

Despite the paucity of empirical research on feedback in translation, a certain consensus seems to have been reached within the field regarding the formative value of feedback (Bergen, 2009; Göpferich, 2013; Shreve, 2006; Massey & Brändli, 2016). Only recently have studies begun to be published that delve specifically into

[1] 'Feedback occurs in particular cultural, institutional, and interpersonal contexts, between people enacting and negotiating particular social identities and relationships and is mediated by various types of delivery' (Hyland & Hyland, 2006, p. 11).

feedback provided by translation teachers. Neunzig and Tanqueiro (2005) highlight the importance of offering feedback in online translation training that is both personalised and immediate. Also working on virtual education, Wang and Han (2013) explore the topic of peer feedback, a modality that has received less attention in translation education. Similarly, Pietrzak (2014, 2017) emphasises the value of peer-to-peer co-assessment in the development by students of the critical skills they need to subsequently self-assess their own translations.

Distinguishing between positive and negative feedback, Fishback et al. (2010) discuss the cognitive and affective effects of each. They argue that information about either the strengths or the weaknesses of their work can allow students to adjust and direct their efforts towards the intended goals of learning. Mention should also be made of a study by Južnič (2013) which detected discrepancies between the perceptions of students and teachers regarding feedback: while teachers pretended to offer frequent positive comments, students believed that the feedback was focused exclusively on the negative aspects. In a similar vein, Andújar and Cañada (2021) analysed student beliefs as revealed in 46 interviews and found that, for feedback to be meaningful, the students felt that it should not merely identify errors but should also offer explanations for what had caused those errors. Many students are reported elsewhere as stating that, while they feel that positive feedback plays a key role in their learning process, the translation marking system they experience is essentially based on penalising errors (Hattie & Timperley, 2007).

The potential usefulness of WCF in in-person teaching contexts is the subject of Washbourne (2014). The author offers a taxonomy in which he no longer simply contemplates directive feedback but also defines and illustrates categories of indirect and metalinguistic feedback. Conde (2016) examines the feedback offered by a

group of evaluators with diverse profiles in a corpus of student translations and notes the relatively slim presence therein of positive feedback. From a more teaching-oriented perspective, Massey and Brändli (2016) frame their study within situated learning and place more importance on feedback to foster the consolidation of competence in professional translation. Finally, Haro Soler (2022) explores the relationship between two variables, the type of feedback provided by the teachers and students' self-efficacy beliefs She concludes that constructive feedback can favour self-regulation and self-efficacy on the part of students whereas unidirectional, error-centred feedback hurts student self-confidence.

All things considered, even though the bulk of feedback provided in translation training tends to be orally delivered in classroom discussions about alternative translations for a particular text (Colina, 2015), WCF by the teacher—whether intended for grading purposes or not—also plays a decisive role in training.

As can be seen in this overview of the literature, although some research in translation education has touched on WCF, few empirical studies are focusing on this issue in the Spanish context. As Kelly (2005, p.67) points out, there is a considerable amount of written material on the learning content of translation, but empirical research on the teaching/learning process is scarce. It is for this reason that the research presented here fills a knowledge gap in the context studied. In a previous study, Andújar and Cañada (2020) analysed a corpus of more than a thousand student translations that had been revised and graded by translation teachers at a Spanish university. An inductive method was applied to typify the different modalities of feedback provided by 16 teachers. The most important contribution made by this study is the delimitation and categorisation of the various modalities of WCF. Since this study proposes a comprehensive description of

feedback modalities, the analysis of the interviews will be based on this classification to characterize their possible use in the context studied. The set of categories will be presented briefly below.

a) Grading: the grade or mark awarded to students for their translation is noted.
b) Directive correction: not only is the error identified but different solutions are put forward.
c) Colour-coding: strong and weak translated elements are highlighted in different colours, whose number and meaning may vary across teachers.
d) Symbols and other graphic tools: strengths and weaknesses are indicated using underlining, circles, boldface, emoticons, or other symbols.
e) Letter-coded rubric: feedback is given using the translation correction rubric developed by Hurtado Albir (1996, 2015); errors are broken down into those that bear on meaning, issues related to the target language or the pragmatic dimension of the translation; letter coding is also used to point to successfully translated elements.
f) Overall comments: annotations of varying lengths are generally added before or after the translation which evaluate the translation as a whole.
g) Specific comments: notes that focus on specific aspects of the translation and offer explanations, suggestions, alternative solutions, and so on.

Having presented the theoretical framework for this work and summarised previous work that bears on the research goals, the methodology used will be described in the following sections.

4. Methodology

As noted above, this study adopts a qualitative and interpretative approach. The participants were eleven university teachers at the Faculty of Translation and Interpreting of a Spanish university where students work with two B languages (English and French and six C languages [Arabic, English, French, German, Greek and Italian]. Courses are semestral and may have large-group or small-group formats, depending on the total number of students enrolled. The number of teachers assigned to a particular subject varies according to the number of teaching hours required of each teacher. Thus, the design and assessment of each subject may be the responsibility of one or more teachers.

The eleven teachers interviewed responded to an invitation to participate in this research in the first trimester of the 2022–2023 academic year. Although gender is not a variable considered in this study, it should be noted that men are over-represented in the sample, as most translation teachers in Spain are women.

After the goals and methodology of the study were explained to them, the teachers signed a form giving their informed consent to participate and to be recorded doing so. Table 1 shows the features of the participants in terms of sex, educational credentials, and professional rank. They also differed regarding years of teaching experience. Some participants were full professors with a long academic career while others were teaching associates with relatively little translation teaching experience.

Table 1. Participant profiles

Pseudonym	Sex	Highest degree	University rank
Alberto	M	PhD	Part-time associate lecturer[2]
Carolina	F	PhD	Senior lecturer
Estela	F	PhD	Full professor
Ignacio	M	MA	Part-time associate lecturer
Joaquín	M	PhD	Part-time associate lecturer
Jaime	M	PhD	Full professor
José	M	MA	Part-time associate lecturer
Paula	F	PhD	Senior lecturer
Tamara	F	PhD	Senior lecturer
Vega	F	MA	Part-time associate lecturer
Rosario	F	PhD	Part-time associate lecturer

[2] In Spain, the term "part-time associate lecturer" (profesor asociado) refers to a professional translator (or interpreter or editor…) with the main job outside the university and teaching only part-time as a university trainer.

The instrument by which data was gathered was the qualitative in-depth interview (Holter et al., 2019), a modality that enables one to discern the subjective and most significant values held by the interviewees. Della Porta (2014) defines this tool as a fundamental one for generating empirical knowledge by asking people to talk about certain themes. Although these interactions apparently take the form of a conversation, they are characterised by several opposing features: they are interactions with a purpose (Burgess, 1984/2002), there is an asymmetry between the participants, and the interviewer does not seek particular data, but rather aims to create the conditions for it to emerge (Woods, 2011). Therefore, no (semi)structured script was followed, but the in-depth interviews were aimed to cover the following three topic areas:

1. Introduction: the interviewee's training, teaching experience, and participation in course design.
2. Assessment: the goals of assessment and the means employed by the interviewee to achieve them.
3. Feedback: the interviewee's concept of feedback, the use they made of it and the modalities they employed.

The fact that the researcher who conducted the interviews was external to the institution in question facilitated the request for clarification and complementary information from the interviewees. The final corpus of recorded interviews had a total duration of 11 hours and 44 minutes. The contents of recordings were transcribed verbatim and the resulting transcript was subjected to content analysis (Krippendorff, 2019) with the help of Atlas. Ti v23 software (ATLAS.ti Scientific Software Development GmbH). The first step consisted of an inductive coding process whereby the transcript data was broken into fragments and then organized

into recurring categories. This coding process was carried out by two researchers working independently. The results were then compared and any discrepancies in the designation of categories were discussed until a consensus was reached. Given that, as noted above, the data were not intended to be representative of any particular population, the coding procedure adopted may be regarded as sufficiently reliable (Krippendorff, 2019).

Once the set of categories had been agreed upon, the full corpus was annotated by linking each element with the relevant category to form relationships the interpretations thereof will be offered in the next section. Only those transcript excerpts that correspond to the coding used to identify the various modalities of feedback employed by the interviewees will be addressed. It is worth mentioning that the interviews were conducted in Spanish and that the fragments presented have been translated into English for a better understanding.

5. Results

The interviews show that the eleven translation teachers were fully aware of the important role played by feedback in translation training. As a result, they reported providing feedback both in writing on all student assignments that could be graded and orally, whether in the classroom or during their office hours. A quotation from the interviewee Tamara reveals this shared goal: “I make comments about everything, whether longer, shorter, in writing, in class, or during meetings with students in my office”; these words fit in with the general trend emerging from the interviews conducted in this research. In accordance with the goal of this study, the analysis will be focused on WCF, although on occasion it will be necessary to refer to other forms of feedback. The data analysis will be presented according to the

feedback modalities described above; no mention will be made of the category "Symbols and other graphic tools" since none of the informants referred to it.

5.1 Grading

In Spain, university professors are obliged to award the student a final numerical mark which is derived from various assessment instruments, which may or may not include an examination. Teachers are aware of this fact as well as the importance of this mark in the student's academic record, as shown in another quote from the interview with Tamara:

> Evaluating students and giving them a mark is a real headache for me because, in addition, I think it is important because of its impact on them […] Because in the end, of course, you can't evade reality, because that number [the mark] must appear. [Tamara]

This is an institutional obligation that requires teachers to give a grade from 0 to 10 at the end of each subject[3]. The teaching staff is aware that the student's mark average will or will not allow them to obtain certain scholarships, access external internships, be admitted to post-university studies, etc. It is in this sense that Ignacio states:

> I have talked about this so many times with Tamara: we mark because the university forces us to mark, because I must put a number in the... in the XXX [computerised grading system] report. For me, a translation is either

[3] All subjects of the degree are semester-long and correspond to 6 to 9 ECTs. The degree is spread over 4 academic courses (240 ECTs in total). The number of students in the different subjects depends on linguistic combination: for English and French, the groups are larger than for the other C languages. The teaching is entirely face-to-face.

> apt or not apt. You can either give it to the client or you can't give it to them. [Ignacio]

The terminology used at this Translation Faculty distinguishes between 'assignments', which are awarded a numerical mark which will be considered for the final grade, and 'tasks', periodic translations which are commented on jointly in class and which individually may or may not receive a separate mark, depending on the teacher. For example, Tamara notes that 'tasks make up 15 per cent of the student's final grade, and to get this 15 per cent the student must have turned in all of them'. Nevertheless, all the teachers tended to express concern about being objective in their grading, as can be seen below:

> But, in fact, I use it in that way a bit like... like… in a general way, because, of course, at the end of the day it's a translation. It's very subjective. It's not a mathematical formula [Rosario].
>
> How can you explain to a student "'cause this doesn't sound very oral"? Sometimes it's very... or they interpret it as very subjective. One tries to reduce subjectivity to a minimum. [Paula].

The attempt to be objective when marking translations is a recurrent topic among teachers in this discipline, as has been discussed in previous work (Cañada & Andújar, 2023).

5.2 Directive correction

Directive correction was not among the interviewees' favourite modalities, mainly because of the amount of time it required. In the words of Alberto, "I used to do this [provide a solution for each translation error], but then I got tired of it [laughs]." In

addition, teachers felt that providing explanations and alternative solutions for translation errors was unnecessary because it would be done orally later, to the class:

> And I write it in the margin of the paper. Regarding [the translation for] 'coat', for example, I write 'jacket' (…) And then if they come to ask me about it, I say, 'Look, it's something that keeps you warm.' But I don't (…) I think that's more instructive than telling them, 'Here, here's the answer. Now you know… I've explained it here…' No. [José]

The commentary of the translation in class allows the teacher to be more synthetic and not to include explanations that will be provided later if the student asks for them.

5.3 Colour-coding

Some teachers reported using colour coding in their written feedback. As occurred with other modalities of WCF, the meaning of each colour could be explained, commented on and even practised in class so that the students understand how the coding works (this was what Vega and Ignacio reported doing, for example). Various systems of coding were employed: different colours to distinguish among error types in the target text (e.g., spelling, grammar, vocabulary, etc.) or more elaborate systems, combining error type with degree of seriousness:

> I use colours to some extent in my correction, right? Sort of a colour-based scheme (…) so I usually highlight the most serious mistakes in red, like contrary or erroneous meanings, and so on. Then I use yellow for mistakes that are more… I mean, they're errors, but they're less serious, they don't affect the translation that much, let's say, in terms of the meaning. And then I highlight in green items where the translation is very good. [Vega]

Teachers often linked colour-coding with the numerical grade such that points were subtracted from it depending on the type of error:

> I personally subtract a lot from the mark for wrong meanings because I think this is very serious in 300-word text, [or] a spelling mistake or not complying with style norms. Grammatical errors, half a point. Errors related to style, usually a quarter point. [Rosario]

As can be seen in Vega's comments above, colours are sometimes—albeit less often—used to point out strengths in the translation. Like Vega, Ignacio reported that sometimes he would use green to highlight a segment of the student's work that was very competently executed.

Finally, in some cases, teachers used colours to distinguish aspects related to the specialised field of translation from issues of a general nature. For example, Alberto used one colour for general linguistic issues and another for issues that were more specifically related to the focal area of the translation course—in this case, comic books:

> For me, the 'boring' part, which is all about syntax, grammar, or what is perceived to be boring, let's say, right? That part I highlight with one colour, such as blue. And then there's all the part related to the comic, which I highlight, for example, in purple. [Alberto]

5.4. Correction rubric using letter codes

As noted above in section 3, the correction rubric used by some of the teachers (Tamara, Ignacio and Paula) was based on the one developed by Hurtado Albir (1996, 2015). Teachers also mention Gamero Pérez (2005), where the rubric has been adapted for German-to-Spanish translations, one of the informants having used this

version when working for a translation company. Interviewees often resorted to the rubric system as a way to be objective and at the same give the student translator precise information about the errors they had committed. One of the features of this modality is that the rubric stipulates a particular numerical penalty for each type of error, as explained by Rosario in the excerpt shown above. Rosario also reported that, before using the rubric when marking, she would take time in class to explain how it worked:

> So, I present it to the students, I explain what each section of the rubric means, because if they want to go over their translation with me later, they'll see, they'll see that I have written 'CM' [contrary meaning], 'GR', right? for a grammar issue, and then for them the… 'SP' for spelling, right? And I note separately how many points I'm going to subtract. [Rosario]

However, the teachers were not necessarily inflexible in their use of the rubric to penalize and indeed regarded this quantification of errors as one of the drawbacks of the rubric modality. They seemed to feel that the rubric was excessively error-oriented and punitive in a way that did not coincide with their own expert judgment. Joaquín stated the view that the rubric was only useful up to a point: "I like having a rubric as a point of reference, but in the end, I have to grade according to my own judgment." Indeed, one of the recurring points raised by the interviewees was that the strict application of the rubric generated an excessively low overall grade which did not correspond to the teacher's holistic assessment of the translation. As Ignacio put it, "I think that (…) if you apply a rubric like this, practically every translation would end up getting a zero."

Furthermore, besides generating unrealistically low marks, interviewees felt that the rubric did not reflect other contextual elements that the teachers routinely considered

such as, for example, whether the translation course in question was a first-year low-level course or a fourth-year advanced-level course. "If it's the first text that a student has ever translated," noted Joaquín, "the error should be penalised far less than if it's the last translation of their degree." The individual's level of knowledge should also be considered. Rosario observed:

> There are student texts that are very, very well done, and, I don't know, the formatting has disappeared in the process of sending it to me so that the margins are no longer justified, but then otherwise the student has just made a minor error, and I think, 'Heck, it isn't fair that this girl gets a mark of 8 or 7 [out of ten] when the text is actually excellent. [Rosario]

In nearly all cases, the teachers seem to be inclined to award marks that favoured the student, either by not applying the rubric strictly, by modifying the weight of each rubric item (this was the view of Jaime and Rosario) or by assessing holistically the student's work:

> Often you see the translation and maybe the student has made a lot of silly mistakes (…) or relatively minor ones, and this [according to the rubric] should lower the mark a lot, but you assess the translation overall (…) Then, later, after coming up with a numerical mark, I assess the translation holistically and put… and raise the mark a bit. [Estela]

Finally, Estela reports, there are other occasions on which the rubric seems to be quite inapplicable:

> For example, in the translation of a legal document, if a number related to an inheritance is missing a zero, well, this is really a major… Then suppose you [referring to the rubric] say, 'This is a "wrong meaning" so I

> should subtract a point', you subtract a point, and the student ends up a with 9, but in my view, however, the translation should be a 'fail'. [Estela]

In fact, in certain types of translation assignments, such as professional simulation of a sworn translation, the severity of the error must be taken into consideration with respect to the function of the translation in the target culture. In these cases, the rubrics designed for general translation are not operational.

5.5. Specific comments

Several interviewees alluded to the large number of specific comments that they wrote on student translations, among them Tamara ("They're going to see a lot of comments"). Similarly, Ignacio admitted that he wrote abundant comments in order to give the student translators as much information as possible so that they could understand their mistakes and thus improve their competence.

> I am really nitpicky and write a whole lot of comments unless the translation is absolutely brilliant (…) In my corrections, I even note things that, though not really wrong, I think there are other possible alternatives or that are… that perhaps improve the text (…) in terms of style. [Ignacio]

Teachers also reported complementing their focused comments by means of colour-coding. Vega, for example, said that "in my case, comments are always accompanied by colour-coding". Thus, one modality is used to indicate the error, while the other allows the lecturer marker to offer advice or suggestions, give instructions and so on. These comments are intended to enhance the student's learning:

> Sometimes it [my comment] is just a word (…) because, I don't know, they have omitted an accent mark. Then I just write in the margin, 'This is missing an accent'. (…) Or maybe, in a legal translation, they sometimes

> use, I don't know, the passive voice in Spanish, when it would be more appropriate to use a reflexive passive and so on, so I write, 'Careful! Better to use a reflexive passive' or 'This changes the meaning of the sentence' and so on. [Tamara]

5.6. Overall comments

However, nearly half the interviewees mentioned using this modality to give students feedback about their translations' goals or focus. For instance, in addition to writing specific comments in the margin at various points in a student text, Vega said she always returned corrected translations with a mark and a 'general comment'. Joaquín also reported systematically using the overall comment modality to report not only errors but also the translation's strengths: "I don't just give them a numerical mark or … I always like writing a commentary at the end of the translation in which I highlight its strengths and weaknesses." Tamara showed an interest in giving personalised feedback while being at the same time aware of the importance of giving the student a holistic judgment:

> (…) I always offer an overall assessment of the translation, which always begins by noting positive aspects: 'In this translation it is evident that you have done thus and such. Nevertheless, you could have …' and so on. In other words, I always start out with the positive. [Tamara]

However, other interviewees seemed to be less systematic about including overall comments:

> Sometimes I write a general comment about the student's translation. I tend more to write a general comment when the translation is awful or when there is something about it that really doesn't work, or maybe with

> a good student I write, 'So-and-so, what happened to you here? There is something which… Come talk to me about this in my office hours' […] And sometimes, when the paper is very good, then in general I write, 'Very good translation' or 'Very…'. But no, I don't [write an overall comment] systematically. I don't know what it depends on, exactly. [Paula]

It is seen, then, that overall comments seem to be intended to assess the student's translation as a whole, especially its quality as a finished product, although on occasion such overall comments will address the translation process or include advice regarding a specific phase of that process:

> Above all, I want the student to check the aspects of their work that… that I regard as the weakest, or they should go over the translation as a whole text, because they often fail to do that. [Paula]

6. Discussion and conclusions

The goal of this research was to describe the feedback modalities employed by a group of teachers from a Spanish university's Faculty of Translation and investigate their reasons for choosing them. To meet this goal, data was obtained by giving in-depth interviews to a group of eleven translation teachers at that institution. Then, based on the typology of WCF modalities proposed by Andújar and Cañada (2020), the modalities of WCF provided by these teachers were identified and their justifications for using them were explained.

The data showed that these teachers are fully aware of the formative possibilities of feedback, and therefore make use of all the opportunities available to them (whether WCF, classroom interactions, assistance during office hours, etc.) to try to give their students the information they consider useful to improve their translation skills.

Therefore, how teachers provide feedback to students corresponds to two of the characteristics that Tillema et al. (2011) consider necessary for quality feedback: extensive and detailed. However, it would be necessary to take into consideration the students' perspective on whether they find it transparent, as this is an essential feature for feedback to be learning-oriented.

We have seen that the quality and frequency of the WCF are directly related to the context in which feedback is provided, what Yang and Carless (2013) call the 'structural dimension' in which teaching-learning activities take place. Thus, these lecturers offer rich WCF when they assess what they call 'assignments', which form part of the body of translations that counts for summative evaluation, but when the work they are checking is in the 'task' category, then the feedback they provide—or the lack thereof—depends on the individual teacher. In fact, teachers are obliged to respect the percentages that correspond to each item in the summative assessment of subjects, but they are free to choose the type of feedback they will give. Their choice often depends on the experiences - positive or negative - they have had during their training or on the tradition prevailing among teaching teams, which are often constituted according to the languages into which they translate.[4]

The importance that teachers place on feedback as a formative tool in a way determines the modality they employ. For example, although they include a mark on the student translations they assess, given that they are required to do so, they

[4] This excerpt from Jorge's interview can represent the practice in this particular context: "I have shared it [the way of giving feedback] with some people. A colleague of mine who passed away, we corrected very similarly, and we provided [feedback] very, very, very similarly. And then, with some colleagues, especially those who come to substitute or share a module, I tell them: 'Look, this is how I do it. If you like it, I'll give you the scheme I use, and you can use it', and sometimes some colleagues have used it. [Jorge]

never simply leave a mark because they view the mark as just one part of the information they must give the student. However, given the well-known propensity of students to focus on marks, it could be argued that a more learning-oriented approach focused on helping the student improve would be to delay telling them the numerical mark until after they had read and assimilated the commentary (Butler & Nisan, 1986).

On the other hand, directive correction is not favoured particularly by teachers, even though it is a very common modality in translation teaching (Washbourne, 2014). This may be because it is a very time-consuming modality from the teachers' perspective, or because it is perceived as not helping the students to sharpen their analytical skills. What we see, then, is a use of feedback that does not coincide with what is described elsewhere in the literature and that may be specific to the context under study here. The teachers interviewed opt for feedback modalities that allow the provision of more information to the student than the mere correction of errors, such as colour-coding, letter-coded rubrics and comments, whether general or focused. Regarding colour coding, Veiga-Díaz (2023) maintains that it is one of the modalities that has proved successful in helping students retrieve knowledge about their work. However, her conclusion is based on a study in which students had to analyse the feedback received or prepare a second version of the translation, which is not the case in this academic context.

The data show therefore a constructive use of WCF in which explanations are combined with elements more reminiscent of what Hill and West (2020) call 'feedforward', feedback given by teachers which focuses on enhancing a student's future performance or feedback given after the activity with specific instructions about how suggestions should be applied in subsequent tasks. Colour-coding is of

little use for providing this sort of learning-oriented component, since learners only get information about the errors made and their importance, about eventual successes and, at most, about what kind of error it is. Thus, it is questionable to what extent the feedback they receive is comprehensible, since, as Way points out (2023, p. 132), "Trainees are less likely to complete any task or activity (successfully) if they are not given clear instructions or if they have doubts about its usefulness or authenticity."

The use of these modalities gives the teacher the perception of being objective, as demanded by the students (Andújar & Cañada, 2021). One can see here that the teachers' expertise in the field, through both training as well as experience, causes them to modify the result yielded by the strict application of a rubric, an instrument that they regard as of limited utility for assessing all the aspects of a student translation that bear on its quality. In all cases, the penalizations stipulated in the rubric are diluted to produce a more favourable mark for the student.

Parallel to the use of directive correction alluded to above by a minority of these teachers, one notes that none of the interviewees require their students to actively work with the feedback in a way that would stimulate reflection, inquiry, or metacognition. For example, the students are not allowed to apply the feedback received in a second draft. In this sense, it could be said that no attempt is made to activate a dialogic feedback loop (Boud & Molloy, 2013). Here there is a certain margin for improvement if the feedback is to play a truly meaningful part in the student's learning.

Finally, the data make it clear that WCF continues to be centred on the identification and penalization of errors, a situation noted previously in Galán-Mañas and Hurtado Albir (2015). If, by contrast, both strengths and weaknesses were systematically

noted in feedback, this would give the students precise information about their Zones of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, 1987). Positive feedback is well known to play a key part in learning because it reinforces self-esteem and strengthens the commitment of students to the feedback they receive (Conde, 2016; Pitt & Norton, 2017), whereas negative feedback has the opposite effect. However, as noted by Rojo and Ramos Caro (2016, p. 124), "corrective feedback and plain criticism may have negative consequences for low resilient translators but may work wonders with high resilient personalities who may still manage to focus on producing an accurate translation". It would seem, therefore, that the impact of the two types of feedback on the learning process of trainee translators remains an open question.

This study indeed has certain limitations. The data come from a limited number of participants at a single institution and using a single data collection method. However, the authors' knowledge of different Spanish centres allows us to affirm that the beliefs and practices described in this work are extensive to other contexts, to a greater or lesser extent (Cañada & Andújar, 2023). The degree to which what has been described is common practice elsewhere will be left for future research, through other instruments to collect data from a larger sample, for example, using questionnaires. In any case, the findings represent an attempt to remedy the dearth of empirical studies on feedback in translation training (Yan et al., 2015).

The results point to the importance of developing a line of research centred on teacher feedback literacy, defined by Carless and Winstone (2023) as a teacher's capacity to design and facilitate effective feedback processes. This line has yet to be explored in the context of translation training in Spain but is currently one of the goals of the research group to which the authors pertain. A qualitative and exploratory study such as this one cannot claim to generalise results, although it is

likely that the way of evaluating and providing feedback described above will take place in other contexts. For this reason, the pedagogical implications arising from this research go beyond a particular context. Even though almost 20 years have passed since Kelly's (2005) publication, in the authors' opinion, her proposals for action aimed at improving the teaching/learning of translation have not been sufficiently implemented. The Spanish university system does not sufficiently promote or value teachers' reflection on their performance in the classroom, and research on translation didactics occupies a modest place in Translation Studies. Unfortunately, as Kelly (2005) points out, "teacher training is still a pending subject in Spanish universities in general, despite some interesting initiatives" (p. 70). This paper aims to provide some food for thought to encourage such training.

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