

# TEACHERS' FEEDBACK AND TRAINEES' CONFIDENCE: DO THEY MATCH?

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## **Abstract**

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, traditional face-to-face learning was suddenly replaced by online learning in universities all over the world. This sudden switch posed a wide variety of challenges to teachers and students. This paper focuses on one teaching practice, teachers' feedback, and on a students' form of self-perception, self-efficacy beliefs, both inherent to the teaching-learning process, whether it occurs in the classroom or a virtual environment. An action-research mixed-method study was performed to analyze how teachers' feedback can impact translation students' self-efficacy beliefs in three educational modes: face-to-face lessons, blended learning and online learning. This study was performed in two phases. Firstly, a quasi-experimental field study was performed before the outbreak of the pandemic in three groups of the same course: one offered traditional classes, whereas the other two included blended learning. Following the essence of action-research, the results of this first phase were implemented in an online translation course during the pandemic. After comparing and contrasting the results obtained in these two phases, we can conclude that indirect, elaborate and dialogic feedback fostered the students' self-efficacy beliefs, irrespective of the educational mode.

**Keywords:** translator education, online learning, blended learning, teachers' feedback, self-efficacy beliefs

## **1. Introduction**

In the last few years, e-learning has experienced a potential rise helped by the development of information and communication technologies (Area and Adell, 2009; Biju, 2010). E-learning can be defined as “instruction delivered on a digital device that is intended to support learning” (Clark and Mayer, 2016, p. 7) and includes two educational modes: blended learning and online learning. Online learning takes place through a virtual campus or software, asynchronously or synchronously, and does not involve face-to-face meetings between the students and the teachers. In blended learning, online learning (be it synchronous or asynchronous) is combined with onsite learning (Biju, 2010), that is, blended learning

integrates face-to-face lessons with activities and/or lessons carried out virtually (Area and Adell, 2009).

Despite the growth experienced by e-learning in Higher Education before the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the resulting sudden switch from face-to-face learning to online learning posed a challenge to both teachers and students in many universities world-wide (Czura and Baran-Łucarz, 2021; Hawkins, 2021; Tivyaeva, 2021). To contribute to overcoming this challenge, the empirical study presented here was performed on two constructs that are intrinsically related to the teaching-learning process: teachers' feedback and (translation) students' self-efficacy beliefs.

Teachers' feedback is understood as information provided by teachers on aspects of the students' performance or understanding which aims to fill the gap between what is achieved and what is aimed to be achieved (Hattie and Timperley, 2007). Feedback is thus an inherent practice to the teaching-learning process (McKimm, 2009) and one of the most powerful tools to facilitate this process (Hattie and Timperley, 2007).

Self-efficacy beliefs represent a self-perception of one's ability to successfully complete a particular task, in our case, translation (Bandura, 1986, 2006; Haro-Soler, 2018b). In other words, translation students' self-efficacy beliefs represent the confidence they have in their ability to translate (Haro-Soler, 2017). Self-efficacy beliefs have been widely studied in Education (Torre, 2007) because of the benefits they can bring for students: they can influence motivation, decision-making, persistence during a task and the control of emotional states, such as anxiety, which may hamper successful performance (Bandura, 1986, 1997). However, further empirical studies are needed on self-efficacy beliefs in translator education, where they only started to be researched about a decade ago<sup>1</sup>. Special attention should be paid to the identification of teaching practices that allow students to develop realistic self-efficacy beliefs (Atkinson, 2014; Atkinson and Crezee, 2014; Haro-Soler, 2018a; Way, 2009).

This study aims to analyze the impact that different types of teachers' feedback, provided in three different educational modes (face-to-face, blended and online learning), can have on translation students' self-efficacy beliefs. This would allow us to shed light on how teachers can effectively use feedback, not only to facilitate the teaching-learning process, but also to help their students develop realistic self-efficacy beliefs, irrespective of the degree to which digital devices are used.

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<sup>1</sup> See Atkinson (2014); Dam-Jensen and Heine (2009); Haro-Soler (2017-2021); or Yang, Guo and Yu (2016), among others.

## 2. Self-efficacy beliefs and feedback: how distant are they really?

According to Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986, 1997), where self-efficacy beliefs play a major role, this self-perception is the result of human ability for self-reflection, that is, the ability to analyze one's own thoughts, to evaluate them according to the results of one's performance or to information provided by others, and, if necessary, to modify said thoughts. In this sense, achievements can increase individuals' confidence in their ability to perform the task they have successfully completed, whereas failures can reduce it (Bandura, 1997). As for the information provided by others, in vicarious learning the results of the actions performed by others, who the individual perceives as models, can be interpreted by the individual/observer as the results of their own actions (achievements or failures). Verbal persuasion, that is, comments by others about one's ability through which they try to convince the individual that s/he has the ability to successfully complete the task, can also foster self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1997; Lunenburg, 2011). Finally, negative physical (tiredness) and emotional (anxiety) states that the individual experiences during the task can be perceived as a sign of vulnerability and therefore reduce self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1997).

Nevertheless, individuals do not only limit themselves to analyze their actions or the information provided by others to create their self-efficacy beliefs through self-reflection, but they also have the ability to self-regulate their performance. Through self-regulation individuals establish criteria against which they evaluate the results of their actions, and plan the necessary changes so as to meet these criteria in subsequent situations (Bandura, 1986). Once they modify their performance through self-regulation, they can attain achievements and, as previously explained, increase their self-efficacy beliefs.

Self-regulation can also be applied to the educational field, where learning self-regulation can be defined as follows:

[A] self-initiated and cyclic process through which students self-represent a task, plan how to carry it out, monitor and assess whether its execution is adequate, cope with difficulties and emotions that usually arise, assess their performance and make attributions concerning the cause of the outcomes. (Panadero, Tapia and Huertas, 2012, p. 806)

According to this definition, to self-regulate their learning students must assess their results against certain (assessment) criteria. This comparison allows them to identify and learn what they need to modify to meet assessment criteria in subsequent tasks, that is, to improve their performance. And here is where (teachers') feedback comes into play, as its main function, as explained above, is to provide information to close the gap between attained and desired performance (Hattie and Timperley, 2007). More specifically, teachers', peers' or internal feedback can help students identify which aspects they need to improve and offer information on how to do so to satisfy the established criteria (Hattie and Timperley, 2007). The achievements attained after self-regulation, where

feedback plays a central role (Butler and Winne, 1995), can finally positively influence their self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1997).

However, to facilitate learning self-regulation feedback must be effective. McKimm (2009) and Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006) explain that effective feedback does not only focus on mistakes (negative feedback) but must also analyze achievements (positive feedback) and include suggestions for improvement. In other words, to be effective feedback must be constructive (Huxham, 2007). Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006) also recommend providing feedback not only on the product, but also on work in progress to facilitate learning; and Brookhart (2008) and Huxham (2007) recommend providing feedback soon after the completion of the task, so that it is not too late to be useful. Brookhart (2008) and McKimm (2009) also highlight that feedback, be it individual or collective, must be personalized and take into account the specific needs of the student(s) it is targeted at so as to facilitate self-regulation. Furthermore, several experts in (translator) education (Dollerup, 1994; McKimm, 2009; Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick, 2006; Pietrzak, 2014; Washbourne, 2014) underline the fact that, to be effective and thus to facilitate self-regulation, feedback provided by teachers must encourage dialogue around learning with the students, as this guarantees the comprehension of the feedback provided to them. For this, mutual trust and respect must exist between teachers and students (McKimm, 2009).

Before moving to the next section, it is relevant to clarify the terminology referring to different types of feedback. As explained in previous paragraphs, positive feedback praises the achievements attained, whereas negative feedback only focuses on mistakes (Atkinson, 2014; McKimm, 2009; Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick, 2006).

Through direct feedback, frequent in teacher-centred approaches, mistakes are identified and replaced by the correct solution, whereas through indirect feedback some hints are given to students to help them find an adequate alternative themselves. In this respect, Washbourne (2014) warned of the dangers of only providing students with direct feedback:

I would suggest that direct feedback, a holdover from models of teacher-centredness in translation practice, has limited potential as a far-transfer strategy: how can the trainee know how a term was arrived at, why it may be effective in a given instance or what similar circumstances may call for it? [...] The key is that the focus be not necessarily on providing error corrections only, but rather on expanding meta-discussion and indirect feedback in order that students retain their autonomy as learners and as authors of translations (Washbourne, 2014, pp. 249-251).

As for simple or elaborate feedback, the former can be considered to be equal to direct feedback, as simple feedback points out correct and incorrect solutions and replaces the incorrect ones by an adequate alternative. Elaborate feedback usually includes hints or questions to help the student find appropriate solutions, as

indirect feedback, but elaborate feedback also includes strategies for improvement (Neunzig and Tanqueiro, 2005).

Constructive feedback includes positive and negative feedback, as well as suggestions for improvements and hints, such as explanations or questions, to help the students find the adequate solution (indirect and elaborate feedback) (Huxham, 2007). Destructive feedback is that which, apart from focusing only on mistakes, is inconsiderate in tone (Baron, 1988) and may even denigrate the students (Brookhart, 2008). This is the binomial used in the study presented below. The first reason for this refers to the fact that constructive feedback embraces other types of feedback described (positive, negative, indirect and elaborate). The second reason for this decision relates to the fact that students should understand what they were asked about and what they were talking about when participating in this study. In this sense, in previous research (Haro-Soler, 2018b) performed with students of the same institution, the terms “constructive feedback” and “destructive feedback” were the ones students used to refer to different types of feedback provided by teachers.

### **3. An action-research study**

This study can be classified as action-research, as it derives from a problem or difficulty identified in translator education and seeks to find solutions for this situation, finally improving the educational context (Nunan, 2007). More specifically, this study derives from and seeks to find solutions for two difficulties in translator education. One of them is the need to empirically identify teaching practices that allow teachers to help their students develop realistic self-efficacy beliefs during translator education programmes (see Section 1). Another is the challenge posed by the sudden switch to online learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

This study aims to analyze the influence that (different types of) teachers' feedback, provided in three different educational modes (face-to-face, blended and online learning), can have not only on learning self-regulation, but also on translation students' self-efficacy beliefs. Therefore, this study aims to shed light on how teachers can use feedback effectively to facilitate self-regulation and to positively influence self-efficacy beliefs, irrespective of the degree to which digital devices are required.

This study was performed in two phases. The first phase constitutes a quasi-experimental field study performed in three groups of a translation course: one of which followed exclusively face-to-face lessons, whereas the other two included blended learning. This first (sub)study was performed before the outbreak of the pandemic and adopted the techniques of classroom observation, interviews, focus groups and a survey. Following the essence of action-research, whose final aim is to incorporate improvements in (translator) education (Nunan, 2007), the results and recommendations to which this first phase led were implemented in an online

translation course during the pandemic. At the end of this course, data were collected through (virtual) classroom observation, the survey and the focus group. Therefore, in both phases a mixed-method approach was adopted, following Glackin and Hohenstein (2017), who highlight that “to achieve a more complete and comprehensive picture of [...] self-efficacy [beliefs] it is essential that traditional quantitative approaches are better triangulated and integrated with other sources of data (Glackin and Hohenstein, 2017, p. 271).

#### **4. First phase: pre-pandemic education**

This first (sub)study, performed in the academic year 2016-2017, followed a quasi-experimental design based on the comparison between three groups of a semester-long specialized translation course of the Degree in Translation and Interpreting offered at the University of Granada (Spain).

This (sub)study can be classified as a quasi-experimental *field* study. However, to design and perform a quasi-experimental field study, especially when it takes place in the (translation) classroom, is not an easy task (Nunan, 2007). The fact that feedback is a practice inherent to the teaching-learning process (see Section 2) made it impossible to find a (control) group where feedback is not provided. Another option was to perform our study in a different environment (outside the classroom), but this was discarded due to the fact that if a study aims to offer results that can contribute to the improvement of translator education, it needs to be performed in the environment where learning takes place (Nunan, 2007). Consequently, following Nunan’s (2007) and Spada’s (1990) work, the traditional quasi-experimental design was adapted to the limitations imposed by the educational setting. Instead of comparing a control group with one or more intervention groups, the three groups of the course where our study was to be performed would be compared with each other. This would allow us to analyze and interpret whether there were differences or similarities between the groups regarding the students’ self-efficacy beliefs and the type of feedback provided by the teacher responsible for each group. To this comparison we must add methodological triangulation, both of which were essential to obtain rigorous results.

#### **4.1. Method**

The mixed-method approach adopted was based on the triangulation of the following techniques:

- Interviews with the course teachers. Before the beginning of the course a semi-structured interview was conducted with each of the three teachers responsible for the three groups of this study. The interviews were moderated by the author using the script available in Haro-Soler (2018a) and later transcribed by her. They lasted approximately an hour and

allowed the author to start collecting information about the type of feedback each teacher provided and the environment(s) where it was provided (face-to-face presentations, through online software, etc.), as well as the educational mode followed (face-to-face or blended learning).

- Classroom observation. All the lessons in the three groups were observed by the author (twelve hours per week over 15 weeks). The Observation Sheet (Haro-Soler, 2018a) was used to register all aspects related to the provision of feedback (type, environments and activities in which it was provided, remarks delivered by each teacher) in detail. Classroom observation also allowed the author to contrast and complete the data collected through the interviews.
- Survey. This materialized in two questionnaires, one distributed to the students at the beginning of the course and another at the end. Both questionnaires included the Translator's Self-efficacy Beliefs Scale (Haro-Soler, 2018a, 2022/forthcoming), one of the very few instruments currently existing to specifically measure self-efficacy beliefs to translate. Moreover, the start-of-course questionnaire included sociodemographic questions, whereas the end-of-course questionnaire included questions to discover the students' perception of the influence that constructive and destructive feedback had had on their self-efficacy beliefs during the course. Both questionnaires underwent a validation process based on a panel of six experts and on a pilot study with 21 students. Furthermore, the Spanish version of the Self-efficacy Beliefs Scale (Haro-Soler, 2018a) was piloted with 176 students and the English version (Haro-Soler, 2022/forthcoming) with 125. Both versions proved to be highly reliable (Spanish version:  $\alpha = 0.81$ ; English version: 0.89). The Cronbach's Alpha test was applied again in this study and the reliability rate was high too ( $\alpha = 0.83$  at the beginning of the course;  $\alpha = 0.88$  at the end).
- Focus groups. These were organized at the end of the course in the three groups in this study. The aim of the focus groups was to understand the reasons why (different types of) teachers' feedback had influenced (or not) their self-efficacy beliefs during the course. It must be noted that the aim of this technique is not to generalize results, but to understand the participants' opinions on a particular topic (Krueger, 1991).

It must be noted that the participant teachers and students signed a consent form in which they all agreed to voluntarily participate in this study, which would include classroom observation, questionnaires, and (group) interviews where audio would be recorded. They were also informed that the data collected would be exclusively used for research purposes and always anonymously.

## 4.2. Participants

Three teachers participated in this study (T1, T2 and T3). T1 was responsible for Group 1, T2 for Group 2 and for the first half of the course in Group 3 and T3 was responsible for the second half of the course in Group 3. Moreover, 39 (18 in Group 1, 13 in Group 2 and 8 in Group 3) students fully completed both questionnaires. Most of them were women (79.5%) and all students were aged between 19 and 22 years, except for one (in Group 2) who was between 23 and 26 years old.

In the last lesson of the course, once the final questionnaire had been completed and after obtaining permission from T1, T2 and T3, the author recruited volunteers to participate in focus group sessions. A total of 14 students volunteered in Group 1, 6 volunteered in Group 2 and 4 in Group 3. According to their availability and to the recommended size of a focus group (a maximum of ten participants if its aim is to understand a complex phenomenon, such as self-efficacy beliefs (Krueger and Casey, 2016), the volunteers in Group 1 were divided into two focus group sessions, with 6 and 8 participants, respectively.

The four focus group sessions were held in the Faculty of Translation and Interpreting of the University of Granada in January 2017. They were moderated by the author using the semi-structured script available in Haro-Soler (2018a). Each session lasted about one hour and a half and the audio was recorded and later transcribed, reduced and analyzed by the author.

## 4.3. Results

### 4.3.1. Interviews and classroom observation

The information collected through the interviews conducted with the teachers is summarized in Table 1:

**Table 1.** Results of interviews conducted with teachers.

	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	
Teacher	T1	T2	T2 (first half of the semester)	T3 (second half of the semester)
Type of feedback (constructive and destructive)	Constructive, as teachers declared that they attempt to use feedback to help students improve their performance			
Educational mode depending on degree of digital devices	Face-to-face lessons	Blended learning		Face-to-face lessons



Environment where feedback is provided	Feedback on the product: in classroom presentations by students of translation projects collaboratively prepared <sup>2</sup>	- Feedback on the product: in classroom presentations by the teacher, where T2 shows different solutions adopted by the students in the translation projects they had collaboratively prepared - Feedback on work in progress (through Google Drive)	Same as Group 1
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Classroom observation allowed us to confirm that, after the interviews, no changes were implemented in Group 1, 2 or 3 regarding the educational mode or the environment where feedback was provided. However, we detected that, although T1 and T3 used classroom presentations by students as a time and space to provide feedback, the type of feedback provided and the pedagogical approach followed in the presentations were radically different in Group 1 and Group 3 (second half of the semester).

In Group 1, during classroom presentations by students of the translation projects they had collaboratively prepared in teams, the classroom became a student-centred collaborative learning environment where both the team responsible for the presentation and the other students were the protagonists. In this collaborative environment T1 provided the students with constructive feedback, where both achievements (positive feedback) and mistakes (negative feedback) were identified, and where strategies for improvement were offered (elaborate feedback)<sup>3</sup>. Moreover, T1 asked the students questions in order to encourage reflection on and discussion about the (in)adequacy of their solutions (indirect feedback). This is why presentations lasted about 120 minutes. The following is an example of a piece of feedback provided by T1:

- T1 asks the students what they would do in the professional market if they found a mistake in the source text. The students presenting the project explained that they would talk to the client. The other students shared this view. T1 confirms that this is a good idea and suggests talking to the client with respect, explaining to him/her the consequences of keeping the same mistake in the target text.

In Group 3 (second half of the semester), however, presentations by teams of students were presided by a teacher-centred approach. The team responsible for the presentation shared their projects very briefly, almost without interventions by other students or by T3. After about 30 minutes, the students presenting took their

<sup>2</sup> To receive feedback on work in progress students could attend tutorial sessions with T1 and T3.

<sup>3</sup> Suggestions or strategies for improvement could include, for instance, the provision of reliable documentary sources, of extra materials with which the students could acquire necessary specialized knowledge on the topic, or guidelines and sheets to help the students identify translation errors in the revision phase.

seats and T3 occupied their place at the front of the class to begin with the correction of the project. This correction mainly consisted of the replacement of the mistakes by adequate solutions, without offering suggestions for improvement or without analyzing the causes of the (in)adequacy of the decisions adopted. In other words, although T3's feedback was not destructive (as it was not inconsiderate in tone, Section 2), it could not be classified as constructive, but as ineffective, since it was mainly negative, simple and direct. To illustrate this statement the following remarks by T3 are listed:

- T3 adds "Spain" to the address.
- The team responsible for presentation has kept "CIF" in Spanish in the target text. T3 replaces it by Spanish fiscal ID.

In Group 2 and during the first half of the course in Group 3, presentations by the students were not organized. Instead, T2 provided the students with feedback on the product during presentations that s/he prepared after reviewing the translation projects that each team of students had collaboratively prepared. In these presentations T2 included examples of the translation solutions that the students had adopted in their projects. Therefore, through these presentations T2 encouraged reflection on and dialogue around the (in)adequacy of certain translation decisions. T2 never revealed to which team each solution belonged, but the team members could easily identify their solution(s). Feedback presentations by T2 were then a way to provide collective feedback to all students in Group 2 and Group 3 and to the team responsible for the solution. They also allowed T2 to provide individual feedback when the solution presented had been proposed or especially defended by one of the team members. There is no doubt that T2's feedback was constructive, as it identified both adequate (positive feedback) and inadequate solutions (negative feedback), analyzed the reasons for their (in)adequacy and suggested strategies for improvement (indirect and elaborate feedback). Moreover, as in Group 1, the discussion on different alternatives and thus the dialogue on the provision of feedback were guaranteed. The following remark constitutes an example of T2's feedback:

- The metaphor "*razones de peso*" appeared in one of the source texts. T2 presents some adequate solutions adopted by the students ("key facts", "a matter of weight" or "principles of weight") and encourages reflection on and discussion around their adequacy. Moreover, T2 and the students discuss the inadequacy of the solution "worth its weight in gold".

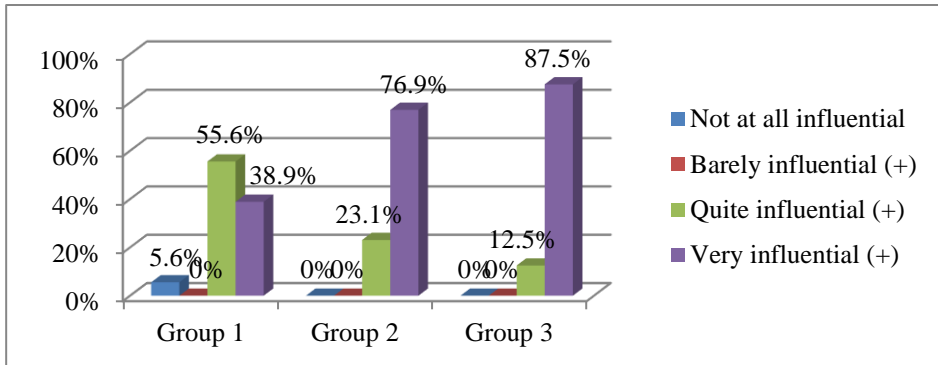
T2 did not only provide feedback on the product, but also on work in progress. In the blended learning environment followed in Group 2 and Group 3 (first half of the semester), the only compulsory face-to-face lessons were those in which the

feedback presentation by T2 took place, as it was carried out in the classroom and collective oral discussion was encouraged there. During the other lessons, as well as outside the lesson schedule, the students had to work in teams to collaboratively prepare several translation projects. They did so through Google Drive, following the instructions of T2. In this blended learning environment, each team had to share the documents associated to each translation project with T2, so that T2 could supervise the translation process and insert comments to provide students with constructive feedback on work in progress, which constituted a form of scaffolding. The following is a comment inserted in the glossary of a team by T2 through Google Drive to help them understand that they needed to include not only the abbreviation of the term, but also the full term: "Would it help to add the term too? If you ever need to order the terms by subject - which is quite possible - then it might be easier to use alphabetical order".

#### *4.3.2. Final questionnaire and focus groups*

All the students indicated in the **questionnaire** that the feedback they had received in Group 1, 2 or 3 was constructive. The fact that no students indicated that they had received destructive feedback coincides with the results obtained through classroom observation (4.3.1). However, T3's feedback registered through observation could not be classified as constructive, but as ineffective. Why then did students in Group 3 indicate that they had received constructive feedback? Triangulation of the results of the questionnaire with those from classroom observation and focus group sessions (as will be explained later) allowed us to understand this: since the questionnaire did not distinguish between T2's and T3's feedback in Group 3, the students in this group referred to the constructive feedback provided by T2 in the questionnaire. It must be noted that 4 students out of 8 (50%) in Group 3 participated in the focus group session and that they all agreed on the fact that only T2 provided constructive feedback. To this we must add the records kept through classroom observation, where no constructive feedback was provided by T3. In other words, thanks to triangulation it can be stated that the constructive feedback to which students in Group 3 referred to was delivered by T2.

As for the influence of constructive feedback on the students' self-efficacy beliefs, most of the students in Group 1 (94.5%) and all students in Groups 2 and 3 indicated in the questionnaire that constructive feedback by the teacher had positively influenced their self-efficacy beliefs a lot or quite a lot:



**Graph 1:** Influence of constructive feedback on students' self-efficacy beliefs.

We will continue presenting the results of the **focus groups**, which allowed us to understand the students' opinion of the reasons why constructive feedback by T1 and T2 positively influenced their self-efficacy beliefs, as well as to understand the students' opinion of the type of feedback provided by T3 and of its influence on their self-efficacy beliefs.

All participants (14) in the two focus groups organized in **Group 1** stated that T1's feedback was always constructive (as registered through observation) and that this had positively influenced their self-efficacy beliefs, as they also indicated in the questionnaire. Among the reasons for this influence, all participants explained that, since T1's feedback helped them reflect on and understand the reasons for the (in)adequacy of their translation solutions, it allowed them to self-regulate their learning and attain achievements in subsequent tasks, which increased their confidence as translators:

There are situations in which I said: "I made a mistake here, but as T1 explained to me why this was a mistake, I now know why I should not adopt the same decision, I know what to do". And you know, when you see that you have less and less mistakes and that you know why and that you know how to do things, your confidence to translate improves (Participant A, Group 1).

Two participants also explained that T1's feedback had helped them adjust (increase) their confidence as translators because "T1 does not only mark the errors, but s/he also highlights what you are doing right" (Participant B, Group 1). This means that the positive approach adopted by T1 in the provision of feedback allowed the students to become aware of their achievements, which constitute one of the sources of self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1997, Section 2).

One participant also explained that T1's questions (indirect feedback) during classroom presentations helped him/her detect his/her own mistakes, understand

their causes and avoid them in future projects through learning self-regulation, thus improving his/her performance and, with it, his/her self-efficacy beliefs:

The teacher's questions helped me become aware of an error I had committed. This helped me in subsequent projects, as I understood why I had made that error and took this into account. Sometimes you are even able to anticipate these questions and improve your work from the beginning. And you gain confidence too (Participant C, Group 1).

The 6 participants in the focus group session organized in **Group 2** and the 4 participants from **Group 3** declared that T2's constructive feedback positively influenced their self-efficacy beliefs, as they also indicated in the questionnaire. For feedback on the process, 2 participants from Group 2 and 1 from Group 3 explained that the comments that T2 inserted in their projects through Google Drive helped them gain confidence as translators because, by taking T2's suggestions and hints into account, they "were able to find appropriate solutions" (Participant B, Group 2) and "finally realized that they had been able to successfully complete the translation" (Participant C, Group 2). In other words, T2 prevented them from feeling lost or frustrated during the translation/learning process through scaffolding, in the form of constructive feedback, which facilitated the successful completion of the task. Note again that achievements are one of the main sources of self-efficacy beliefs (Section 2).

As for the influence of T2's feedback presentations on their self-efficacy beliefs, most participants (5 out of 6) from Group 2 and the four participants from Group 3 declared that these presentations helped them understand the reasons for the (in)adequacy of several solutions, and thus self-regulate their learning and improve their ability to translate, which finally led them to improve their confidence in this ability too:

Presentations by T2 gave me a lot of confidence because, after the presentation, when I was translating a text, I used to say: "I remembered that this was not correct and I know how to do it correctly". This gave me a lot of confidence, as well as to realize that, even though I still had doubts, I had improved a lot (Participant C, Group 3).

Two participants from Group 2 and all participants from Group 3 also explained that the fact that T2 selected an adequate solution adopted by their team for his/her presentation helped them become aware of this achievement, which positively influenced their self-efficacy beliefs. Furthermore, when they realized that their solution was adequate, they were able to extrapolate the reasons for this adequacy to subsequent projects, attaining new achievements and improving their confidence:

When your solution appears as an example of a good solution, you say: "Well, T2 has shown my solution as an example of good ones, so I am following the right path". You assimilate that this is good, you realize that you are improving, and apply this solution to future situations to continue improving (Participant A, Group 2).

According to this comment, self-regulation does not only seem to occur when the causes of mistakes are analyzed and understood (negative and constructive feedback), but also when adequate solutions are identified and their causes understood (positive and constructive feedback).

Moving to the feedback provided by T3, the four participants from **Group 3** stated that T3's feedback was "not good feedback, since T3 simply identified wrong translation solutions and told us the correct alternative, but we need to know why to be able to improve" (Participant C, Group 3).

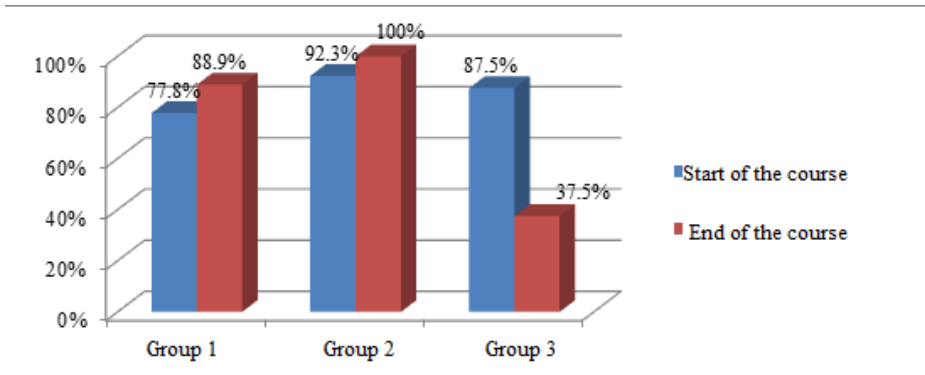
Regarding the influence of T3's negative, simple and direct feedback on the participants' self-efficacy beliefs, all participants explained that, since T3's feedback did not allow them to understand the causes of their mistakes and did not include suggestions for improvement, they found it difficult to self-regulate their learning and to improve their performance, which negatively influenced their self-efficacy beliefs:

T3's feedback did not give me confidence, because I said: "Ok, this is wrong, but as I do not know, I continue not knowing, and as T3 has not told me how to improve... I have even more pressure now, because my solutions will continue to be wrong..." (Participant C, Group 3).

It must also be noted that all participants from Group 3 mentioned the unimportant role that the students played during classroom presentations. This coincides with observation (triangulation) and relates to the type of feedback provided by T3, characteristic of a transmissionist approach: "During classroom presentations I was ready to have a lot of mistakes pointed out by the teacher and to see how T3 deleted the translation solutions adopted by the team and wrote the correct one without explaining why" (Participant A, Group 3).

#### *4.3.3. The Translator's Self-Efficacy Beliefs Scale*

Graph 2 shows the results of item 19 of the Translator's Self-Efficacy Beliefs Scale (Haro-Soler, 2018a, 2022/forthcoming). This item measures self-efficacy beliefs to adequately solve translation problems:



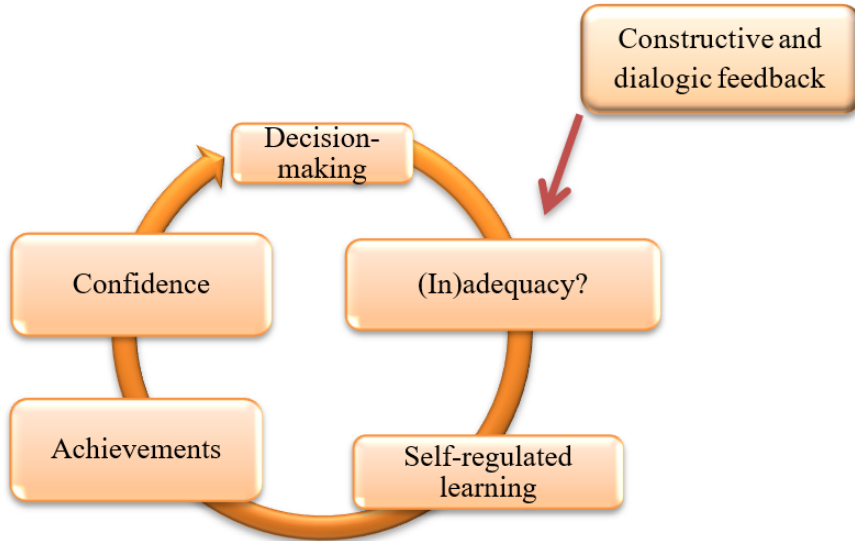
**Graph 2:** Self-efficacy beliefs to adequately solve translation problems.

During the course there was an increase in the percentage of students that trusted their ability to adequately solve translation problems in Groups 1 and 2, whereas this percentage diminished from 87.5% to 37.5% in Group 3.

The comparison between the groups of this study and triangulation allowed us to interpret these percentages. We know now that feedback received by students in Group 1 and Group 2 was constructive, as it focused both on errors (negative) and achievements (positive), it encouraged reflection on and discussion about the causes of the (in)adequacy of the solutions adopted through hints and questions (indirect and dialogic feedback) and included suggestions for improvement (elaborate feedback). Due to all the above, feedback in Groups 1 and 2 helped the students self-regulate their learning taking into account the causes of the (in)adequacy of their solutions, improve their performance, become aware of their achievements, and improve their self-efficacy beliefs to adopt adequate solutions to solve translation problems.

As for students in Group 3, they received constructive feedback by T2 during the first half of the semester. However, this did not seem to be enough to compensate the negative impact that the ineffective feedback by T3 had on their self-efficacy beliefs during the second half (maybe because this is closer to the end of the course). As feedback by T3 was mainly negative, indirect and simple, it prevented students from self-regulating their learning and thus from understanding how and why to adequately solve translation problems.

The following graph summarizes the main ideas presented so far:



**Graph 3.** Self-regulation, feedback and self-efficacy beliefs.

## 5. Second phase: online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic

The results of the first (sub)study helped the author deal with the sudden switch to online learning that occurred in the first semester of the academic year 2020-2021. Apart from being aware of the requirements feedback had to meet to be effective, thanks to the first (sub)study the author was familiar with possible environments where online feedback could be effectively provided.

The author implemented the results of the first (sub)study in the course she was teaching at the University of Granada when the switch to online learning took place: General Translation (Spanish-English). To rapidly organize the lessons in this new educational mode, the author/teacher took the results of the first study into account and decided to offer constructive feedback on the product through classroom presentations by students that would be held synchronously through online software, such as Google Meet, and on work in progress through Google Drive. The students would prepare their translation projects collaboratively through Google Drive, although they could also use Google Meet if they wished to complete written debates on translation solutions with oral ones.

Therefore, this second (sub)study constitutes a clear example of how action-research can really contribute to overcoming difficulties in (translator) education.



## 5.1. Method

Online classroom observation, the survey and the focus group were implemented in this second study. As the author was the teacher responsible for the course, interviews with the teacher were not conducted and observation was performed by two students/researchers who were performing their final research project on self-efficacy beliefs. The observers connected to Google Meet to register all aspects related to the provision of feedback during synchronous lessons and documents in Google Drive were shared with them so that they could track feedback on the process.

The survey materialized in an online questionnaire distributed at the end of the course through Google Forms. The Translator's Self-Efficacy Beliefs Scale (HaroSoler, 2018a, 2022/forthcoming) was not used in this study, as the sudden switch to online learning occurred two months before the end of the course. The distribution of this instrument at the beginning and end of this short period may not have detected changes in self-efficacy beliefs and may have led students to remember their answers. Moreover, going back to face-to-face lessons before the end of the course was a possibility that depended on the evolution of the pandemic. The online questionnaire included both closed and opened-ended questions on the teacher's feedback and on the students' perception of the influence that it has had on their self-efficacy beliefs. The closed questions were adapted from the official questionnaire used at the University of Granada to assess teachers' performance and attitude and a panel of two experts reviewed the whole questionnaire.

A focus group session was organized at the end of the course. It was moderated by the two external researchers that had been observing the online lessons. The semi-structured script used is available in Haro-Soler (2018a). The focus group session was held online, through Google Meet, and lasted some 50 minutes.

The same consent form used in the first (sub)study was distributed to students in this second (sub)study.

It must be noted that the author/teacher was aware of the importance of neutrality when analyzing and interpreting (qualitative) results in order to reach rigorous conclusions. Dr. Catherine Way, a researcher and lecturer at the University of Granada, supervised the analysis and interpretation of the results obtained in this (sub)study to guarantee neutrality, following recommendations by Krueger and Casey (2015).

## 5.2. Sample

A total of 42 students fully completed the online questionnaire. Most of them were women (90.5%). All students were aged between 19 and 22 years, except for two who were over 30.

Of the 42 students, 9 volunteered to participate in an online focus group session. The students were informed that the teacher would not be present in the

session and that their responses would be anonymized by the two moderators before the teacher could read them.

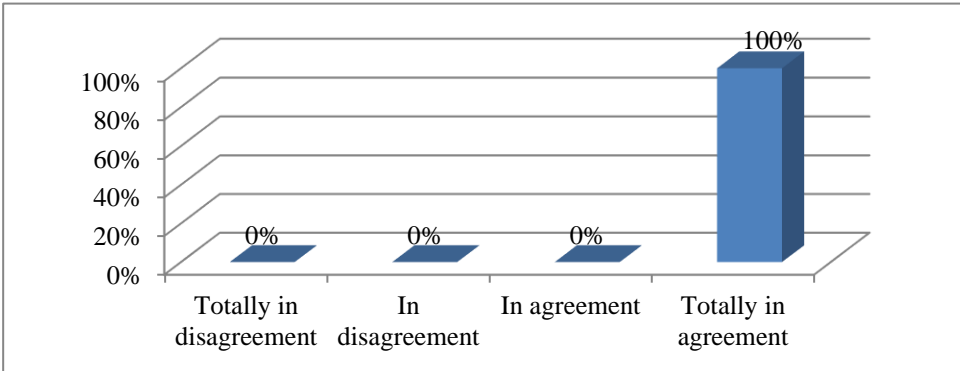
### 5.3. Results

Through (online) classroom observation it was registered that the teacher's feedback was constructive. It was provided to students in classroom presentations in Google Meet. Presentations by students lasted for the whole lesson (90 minutes) and not only the students presenting but also the other students, as well as the teacher, participated in discussions about the (in)adequacy of the solutions adopted. Despite the online mode, active participation by other students took place. Observation also confirmed that constructive feedback was provided through Google Drive on work in progress. Examples of feedback include:

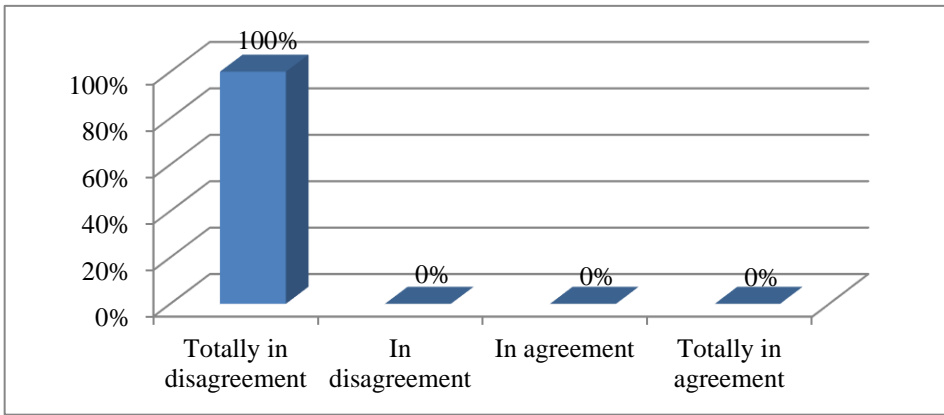
- The team presenting their project in the classroom had omitted the height of the highest peak in the Iberian Peninsula. The teacher asks if this information may be important to attract tourists to Granada. The students then realized that this figure should not have been omitted.
- Comment in Google Drive: "Have you checked this expression in reliable parallel texts? Is this frequently used in texts from the tourism sector?"

As for the students' perception of the type of feedback received, 100% of the students indicated in the questionnaire that they agreed (2.4%) or totally agreed (97.6%) with the statement: "The teacher has provided constructive feedback during the course". This coincides with the results of classroom observation.

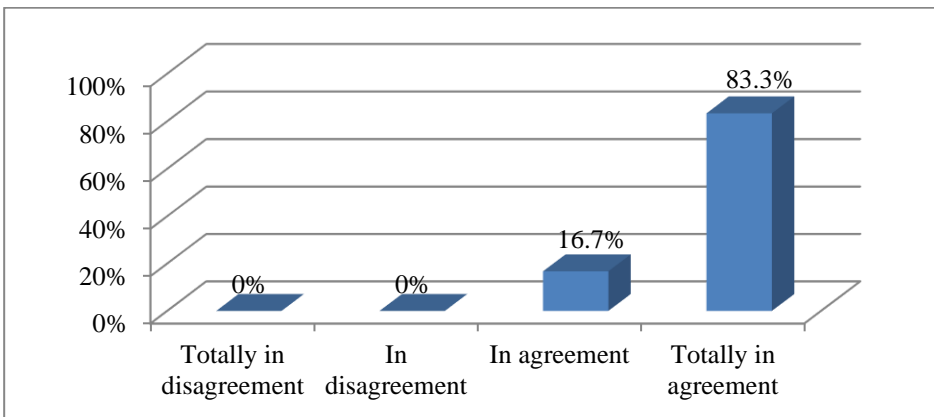
Following McKimm's (2009) recommendation to foster respect and mutual trust between the teacher and the students to facilitate dialogue/discussion in the provision of feedback, two closed questions were included in the questionnaire to discover the extent to which students agreed or disagreed with the following statements: "The teacher is respectful with the students", "The teacher does not pay attention to your concerns" and "You find it easy to share your concerns with the teacher". All the participant students (100%) totally agreed with the first statement, totally disagreed with the second one (negative item), and all of them were in agreement (16.7%) or totally in agreement (83.3%) with the third statement:



**Graph 4.** “The teacher is respectful with the students”.



**Graph 5.** “The teacher does not pay attention to your concerns”.



**Graph 6.** “You find it easy to share your concerns with the teacher”.

Mutual trust and respect are two of the pillars of the caring-teaching approach (Gholami and Tirri, 2012), which the teacher attempted and seemed to have managed to implement in the course, according to the previous graphs. In this approach teachers perceive each student “as a whole person, not just as a student” (Isenbarger and Zembylas, 2006, p. 121) and special attention is paid to moral and emotional aspects, not only to technical or methodological ones (Gholami and Tirri, 2012).

To know the students’ perception of the influence that the teacher’s (constructive) feedback has had on their self-efficacy beliefs, a closed question was included in the questionnaire to know the extent to which the students agreed or disagreed with the following statement: “The teacher’s feedback has diminished my confidence as a translator”. Results are clear, as 100% of the students chose the answer option “Totally in disagreement”, which means that all students considered that the (constructive) feedback provided by the teacher had a positive and notable influence on their self-efficacy beliefs.

In one open-ended question students were asked to indicate, if any, positive aspects<sup>4</sup> that they would like to mention about the course. Taking into account the results presented so far, it is not surprising that more than half of the students (25 students, 59.5%) referred to the teacher’s constructive feedback and to the effect that it has had on their learning, and thus on self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1997, Section 2). In the words of one student: “The teacher’s feedback is constant and always constructive. It helps us improve, as well as the teacher’s comments in Google Drive”.

Of the 25 students mentioning feedback as a positive aspect of the course, 9 referred to the group discussions about the (in)adequacy of different translation solutions that took place during classroom presentations by students, where the virtual class became a true collaborative environment: “I like group discussions on the translations because the lessons are very interactive and we learn a lot” or “During presentations we can identify our own errors and good solutions, as well as those of our peers, and we think about them, why they are good or not, and propose different alternatives too”. Moreover, 10 students referred to the comments inserted by the teacher in Google Drive, which, in the words of one of them, “is a huge advantage, because we do not only elaborate a better translation, but we learn a lot too, as these comments open our mind to other alternatives or lead us to think how to transform an inadequate solution into an appropriate one”. Three other participants highlighted the positive approach adopted by the teacher in the provision of feedback, as well as the trust and proximity between the teacher and the students:

The teacher pays attention to the things we have done correctly, although there is also feedback on those we have not done fine; this motivates us a lot. Moreover, there is

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<sup>4</sup> A question on negative aspects was also included. One student referred to small technical problems, such as the fact that his/her Wi-Fi did not always work properly.

proximity between the teacher and the students, we trust her, and she trusts us, which is very positive too.

The remaining 3 participants mentioning feedback as a positive aspect of the course referred to both, feedback on the product provided in presentations and on the work in progress through Google Drive.

Of the remaining students (17), 7 referred to the collaborative learning environment that existed during classroom presentations, where everyone's opinions were respected; 6 underlined the practical character of this course, and 4 highlighted teamwork when preparing translation projects.

The information collected through focus groups confirms the results presented so far on the type of feedback provided (constructive), on its influence on self-efficacy beliefs to translate (positive), on the importance of feedback on the task in progress to facilitate learning, on the reflection on the (in)adequacy of translation solutions through constructive, elaborate and indirect feedback, on the creation of a collaborative learning environment where feedback is accompanied by discussion, and on the positive approach adopted in the provision of feedback. Due to space constraints, we will not enter into more detail here, but will close this section with the words of one participant in the focus group session:

The comments that the teacher inserts in Google Drive and the feedback during the class have always been very clear, fair and constructive. After the presentations everything was super clear, you learn why something is correct or not, and you gain more confidence to face the following projects (Participant B).

## 6. Conclusions

This action-research study was performed in two phases. Firstly, a mixed-method quasi-experimental field study was performed in the translation classroom to shed light on how feedback can be effectively provided in face-to-face lessons and in a blended learning environment, as well as to analyze the impact that (different types of) feedback can have on students' self-efficacy beliefs. The results and recommendations to which this first (sub)study led were implemented in an online learning environment after the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and data were again collected through a mixed-method approach.

The results obtained coincide irrespective of the educational mode in which feedback was provided: face-to-face, blended or online learning. They seem to indicate that constructive feedback can effectively facilitate learning self-regulation and thus contribute to improving performance, provided that it encourages discussion (dialogic) on the causes of errors (negative) and achievements (positive) through questions or hints (indirect feedback) and that it includes suggestions for improvement (elaborate feedback). On the contrary, mainly negative, simple and direct feedback, proper of a transmissionist approach,

prevented some of the students from understanding the causes of their errors and achievements, from extrapolating these causes to subsequent projects and from self-regulating their learning and improving their performance. As for the influence of feedback on the participants self-efficacy beliefs, constructive feedback helped them adjust (increase) their confidence in their ability to translate, and, more specifically, to adequately solve translation problems, when they realized they had improved this ability, that is, when they attained achievements after self-regulating their learning. On the contrary, transmissionist/ineffective feedback reduced some students' self-efficacy beliefs to adequately solve translation problems.

Results also show that the adoption of a positive approach in the provision of feedback can benefit learning self-regulation and self-efficacy beliefs. This does not mean that only achievements must be praised, but that both errors and adequate solutions should be underlined and accompanied by an analysis of their causes. Constructive feedback on work in progress also seems to have facilitated the learning/translation process and to have positively influenced the students' self-efficacy beliefs. It must be noted that, although the results presented here refer to translator education, they could be applicable to any other discipline, as feedback is inherent to the teaching-learning process.

This two-fold study constitutes an example of how action-research, which pursues to solve difficulties detected in education, can offer results that, when incorporated to education programmes, that is, when the circle is closed, contribute to overcoming this difficulty. This study may also show that it is possible to perform quasi-experimental field studies in translator education if the traditional quasi-experimental design is taken as a starting point, but a step forward is given to adapt it to the characteristics of the (translation) classroom.

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