Lecturers' Overall Comments in the Specialised Translation Classroom: Focus and Discursive Strategies of Written Corrective Feedback

Los comentarios globales de los docentes en el aula de traducción especializada: focos y estrategias discursivas de retroalimentación correctiva escrita

GEMMA ANDÚJAR MORENO
gemma.andujar@upf.edu
Universitat Pompeu Fabra

MARIA DOLORS CAÑADA PUJOLS
mariadolors.canada@upf.edu
Universitat Pompeu Fabra

Abstract: Despite its formative value, research on feedback in translation teaching is relatively scanty. Generally, the written corrective feedback that university students of translation receive comes primarily from their lecturer and may take a variety of forms. The present study centres around overall written comments, which the lecturer appends to the translation before returning it to the student. Here, a corpus was created consisting of the overall comments written by four lecturers at three different Spanish universities on a total of 48 student-written sworn translations. The corpus was then analysed in terms of the focus of the feedback as well as its form. Attention was paid to elements such as type of speech act conveyed by the comment, and the courtesy or mitigation strategies it entailed. The results show that the written feedback provided in the form of overall comments corresponded to a unidirectional teacher-to-student model of communication, the predominant speech acts being praise and criticism. In addition, comments tended to focus on the quality of the sworn translation and did not address the translation process. These findings point to the need to rethink the characteristics of the feedback provided by translation lecturers in order to maximise its usefulness in the teaching-learning process.

Keywords: Feedback, Overall comments, Sworn translation, Translation training

Resumen: La investigación sobre retroalimentación en didáctica de la traducción es relativamente escasa, pese a su importante valor formativo. Por lo general, la retroalimentación correctiva escrita que se ofrece a los estudiantes de traducción procede del profesorado y puede adoptar diversas formas. El presente estudio analiza los comentarios generales escritos que el profesor añade a la traducción antes de devolvérsela al estudiante. Para ello, se creó un corpus compuesto por comentarios generales escritos de cuatro profesores pertenecientes a tres universidades españolas en un total de 48 traducciones juradas realizadas por estudiantes. A continuación, se analizó el corpus en función tanto del enfoque del comentario como de su forma. Para ello, se prestó atención a elementos como el tipo de acto de habla expresado por el comentario y las estrategias de cortesía o atenuación que conllevaba. Los resultados muestran que la retroalimentación escrita que se proporciona en forma de comentarios generales correspondía a un modelo de comunicación unidireccional profesor-estudiante, con el elogio y la crítica como actos de habla predominantes. Asimismo, los comentarios tendían a centrarse en la calidad de la traducción jurada y no abordaban el proceso de traducción. Estos comentarios apuntan a la necesidad de replantear las características de los comentarios que ofrecen los docentes para maximizar su utilidad en el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje.

Palabras clave: Retroalimentación, Comentarios generales, Traducción jurada, Didáctica de la traducción

INTRODUCTION

Translation training in higher education has not been exempt from recent attempts to foster an approach to assessment that goes beyond its purely certifying function to incorporate a formative purpose as well (Kiraly, 2000; Kelly, 2005; Hurtado Albir, 2019). Constructivist approaches argue that assessment is inseparable from the learning/teaching process: it should not only be applied by the lecturer to monitor the student's learning process but must also be oriented to the student's self-regulation. In short, assessment must be perceived as a central element in the learning/teaching process (Hortigüela *et al.*, 2019).

One of the fundamental pillars of formative assessment as it is generally understood is feedback, in most instances lecturer-generated. It could be defined as a specific form of guidance whose aim is to facilitate for the student the construction of knowledge and the self-regulation of their learning process (Espasa Roca & Meneses Naranjo, 2010). Together with the quality of instruction (Darling-Hammond, 2000), feedback as a scaffolding practice constitutes one of the most crucial factors in the learning/teaching process (Hattie, 1992).

For feedback to be formative, it is not sufficient to be student-centred, meaningful, and offered at the appropriate moment. It is also essential that the student demonstrates previously "the understandings, capacities and dispositions needed to make sense of comments and use them for enhancement purposes" (Carless & Boud, 2018, p. 1316). Therefore, to be effective, feedback must not be unidirectional from teacher to student; rather, dialogue and reflection on the part of all participants are critical.

In the context of the learning/teaching of translation, one of the chief pathways for feedback available to the lecturer is the assessment of student-produced written texts. This task is by no means a simple one given the subjectivity inherent in the act of assessing the quality of a translation, despite the understandable desire on the part of most lecturers to design and apply assessment systems that are as objective as possible (Conde Ruano, 2009; Orozco-Jutorán, 2006). In the present study[1] we will concern ourselves with evaluative comments written by lecturers as part of the feedback they provide to students in specialised translation courses, and more specifically with the field of sworn translation, for reasons which we will explain below.

1. Sworn Translation in Translation Training

Sworn translation has been defined in Spain as the official translation of documents of any sort or content, carried out by professionals who are duly certified to do so by the Spanish government's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the European Union, and Cooperation. The special nature of this sort of translation can be seen in the designation 'sworn' given to the translator who is certified to perform these tasks, the official nature of the translations they carry out, and the civil and criminal liability assumed by the translator when she/he affixes her/his signature and seal, thereby authenticating the translation of the document in question. In terms of form, the sworn translation must fulfil a very specific set of requirements about the seal, signature, formula, and proof of authenticity of the original document to be translated.

Sworn translation represents an attractive professional career for those with a university degree in translation because it entails greater social prestige and higher remuneration than most other careers open to those with a degree in translating. These considerations fully justify the inclusion of activities centred around sworn translation within the curricula of degree programs in translating and interpreting at Spanish universities, either as part of courses in legal translation or as courses exclusively devoted to this specialisation. In such courses, the standard practice is for students to receive assignments in

which they are told to translate some sort of official document as if they were already active professionals duly qualified to practise in the current market (Andújar Moreno & Cunillera Domènech, 2017). The resulting student-produced translations are then scrutinised and assessed by their lecturers before being returned to the students. During the process of scrutiny, lecturers are generally expected to write or otherwise affix marginal comments to the student-produced text. These comments may be either narrowly focused on certain aspects of the text, or of a more overall nature, referring to the text as a whole. In the present study, we will analyse specifically the second sort of comment mentioned above, namely overall comments.

2. RESEARCH ON FEEDBACK IN TRANSLATION `PEDAGOGY

Though there is evidence of the formative value of feedback for the acquisition and development of translation competence (Göpferich, 2013; Massey & Brändli, 2016), there is as yet little empirical research on this practice. One of the pioneers in analysing the use of feedback in the training of translators is Dollerup (1994), who argued that formative feedback should be a mix of written annotated corrections of student-produced translations, oral commentaries about the various possible solutions to the problems posed by translations, and the use of specific critique forms on which the strengths and weaknesses of a particular student text can be noted. Various other feedback-related topics have aroused the interest of researchers, among them the use of feedback in online translation teaching (Neunzig & Tanqueiro, 2009), the beliefs and perceptions of lecturers and students regarding the feedback that they respectively give and receive (Mikolič Južnič, 2013), and the uses of peer feedback (Wang & Han, 2013), positive feedback (Conde Ruano, 2016), group feedback (Pietrzak, 2017), and corrective written feedback (Washbourne, 2014), including the modalities in which this latter can be provided (Andújar Moreno & Cañada Pujols, 2020).

In translation teaching, the paradigm has tended to be articulated around group commentary in the classroom on translations done previously by the students outside the classroom (Kiraly, 2000, p. 24; Cañada Pujols & Andújar Moreno, 2021, p. 370). The modality of the formative assessment that results from this interaction is largely oral, as the lecturer or students identify the errors in student-produced work, explain their causes or consequences, and discuss alternative solutions critically. Nonetheless, written feedback on student translations plays a significant role in their training, consistent with the importance placed on this sort of feedback in higher education in general (Agricola *et al.*, 2020).

In written formative feedback, the lecturer's comments could be defined as communicative acts of didactic intervention in student-written texts (Tapia,

2016, p. 70). They constitute the lecturer's reactions to the student's translation manifested in the form of annotations of varying length, either hand-written or inserted in a text file using a word-processing program, in which the lecturer responds to various aspects of the student-produced text. When they are broad in focus, the comments refer to the text as a whole and not to one specific element in it:
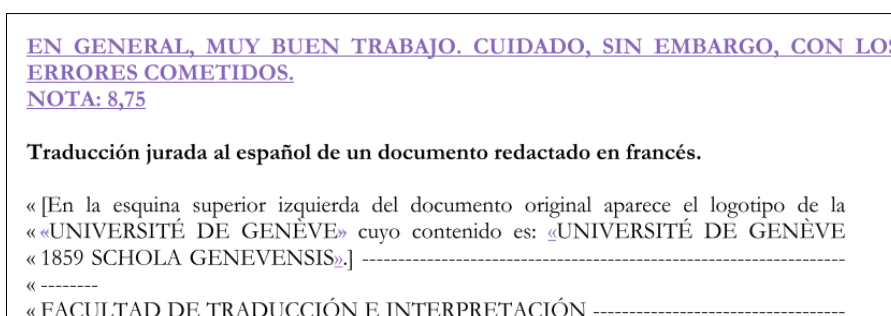

Figure 1. Example of a comment in the upper margin[2]
Source. Corpus extract

Overall, comments of this sort tend to be written at either the beginning or end of the translation, and their length depends on their content. More narrowly focused comments, on the other hand, deal with specific aspects of the translation and tend to be written along the margins of the text or, in the case of a digital file, inserted by the lecturer at a specific location in the text (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005; Goldstein, 2006; Christiansen & Bloch, 2016). We will focus here on overall comments, because full exploration of narrowly focused feedback would require a much lengthier analysis, given the abundance and variety of such comments provided by lecturers. Moreover, it is the overall feedback that is claimed to be more likely to stimulate students learning given its "potential to 'feedforward' into future tasks rather than back to completed assignments" (Carless, 2006, p. 225).

In overall comments, both the form and focus of the message being delivered by the lecturer play a key role in inducing reflection and learning on the part of the student (Dawson *et al.*, 2019). Conrad and Goldstein (1999) draw a distinction between direct comments, which openly express their function (*e.g.*, "Please reformulate this passage"), and indirect comments, whose intention is more implicit (*e.g.*, "It would have been useful to reformulate this passage"). Both types of comments influence student motivation, because

---

[2] "In general, very good work. Pay attention, however, to the errors you have made. Grade: 8.75/10" (our translation).

they generate an emotional response that determines the degree to which the student will engage with the feedback by taking active steps to self-regulate (Way, 2019). It is, therefore, necessary to study the form, and focus of written comments in the context of translation, either general or specialised, to see how its formative character might be strengthened, thereby leading to improvements in both teaching practices and learning processes.

3.   LECTURER DISCOURSE

The classroom is a social context where students and lecturers interact through language. The sort of language that is generated in situations of teaching/learning in an academic context is called classroom discourse, and its features may differ in form and function from other types of oral interaction (Martín-Peris *et al.*, 2005). Research on classroom discourse from the perspective of sociocultural theories takes as its starting point the premise that the oral interactions, that take place in such contexts, have a possible impact on learning (Thoms, 2012). Nonetheless, not all the discourse that occurs in a classroom is based on oral interaction. In fact, comments that a lecturer makes on evaluable activities are also a type of classroom discourse and can be regarded as a pedagogical genre (Arancibia Gutiérrez *et al.*, 2019). Tapia-Ladino *et al.* (2016, p. 245) argue that written corrective feedback forms part of an "interwoven dialogic interaction", given that "by turning in their written assignments, the students initiate a conversation with the lecturer in which the latter replies by means of comments"[3]. It would therefore seem necessary to analyse these comments from a linguistic-discourse perspective to determine their function. As noted by Antón González (1999) a real understanding of lecturer discourse, in this interaction should enable us to make the discourse a more effective instrument to enhance the student's learning process.

The theories of pragmatics best suited to the purpose of defining the functions of lecturer discourse are, in our view, Austin's (1975) speech act theory and Searle's (1969) illocutionary acts theory, which centre around speakers' intentions. There exist various classifications of speech acts, but a full discussion thereof lies outside the scope of this paper, so we will limit ourselves instead to the traditional distinction between direct and indirect acts.

Direct illocutionary acts are those in which the utterance produced by the speaker signals, explicitly and literally, what is being expressed. By contrast, indirect illocutionary acts are those in which, besides the propositional component, a complementary meaning is conveyed (Searle, 1969). In classifying these acts, we will rely on the typology set forth in Albelda Marco *et al.* (2014, pp. 49-51) whereby there are four illocutionary categories

---

[3] Our translation.

of speech acts encompassing the full set of communicative intentions, namely to direct, to assert, to commit, and to express. At the same time, our analysis will bear in mind the concept of *politeness* (Brown & Levinson, 1987), understood as the set of all discursive strategies whose goal is to avoid or mitigate the tensions that may arise during the interaction. We will also refer to the various attenuation phenomena (Briz Gómez & Albelda Marco, 2013) which may appear in lecturer discourse.

4. DATA CORPUS AND METHODOLOGY

The corpus was made up of all lecturer comments on 48 examples of student-produced sworn translations, provided to us by four lecturers teaching courses in legal translation from French to Spanish or Catalan, as part of Translation and Interpreting degree programs at three Spanish universities. The lecturers all have advanced university degrees in the field of translation, and three of them are professional sworn translators. In all cases, these courses were being offered to students in their third or fourth year of the degree program.

The number and source of each of the texts making up the corpus can be seen in Table 1.

Lecturer	University education	Profile	Sworn translator	University	Number of student-produced translation texts	Percentage of total
1	PhD Translation	Academic	Yes	A	10	20.8
2	PhD Linguistics	Academic/ Professional	Yes	B	11	22.9
3	PhD Translation	Academic/ Professional	Yes	C	12	25
4	Master's degree Translation	Academic/ Professional	No	A	15	31.2
Total					48	100%

Table 1. Source university and number of student-produced translations
Source. Elaborated by the authors

The original texts in French translated by the students were documents certifying the completion of university degree programs or other academic achievements (*e.g.*, *diplôme de maîtrise*, *diplôme d'études approfondies*, *diplôme de licence*). They were texts that accredited information of an academic nature whose purpose was to satisfy administrative requirements outside the country of issuance. The task assigned to the student to be carried

out outside the classroom was to produce what would pass for a sworn translation if they were themselves fully certified freelance sworn translators. The grades they received on this assignment constituted a stipulated fraction of the overall grade they would receive for the course (summative assessment). Students were not explicitly required to revise or correct their translations once they had been graded. Thus, the lecturer provided written feedback on what was essentially a final textual product.

The first step in the analysis consisted of identifying all instances of overall feedback comments. Using the QDA Atlas-ti software, these comments were then coded according to their focus (Derham *et al.*, 2021) and the pragmatic-discursive dimension of the lecturer's discourse. Following Hattie and Timperley (2007), the focus of each comment was categorised as pertaining to one of four levels, namely task, process, self-regulation, or person. The pragmatic-discursive level of analysis was related to speech acts conveyed in the comments and the discursive strategies applied. Finally, we triangulated the data using the results of a brief questionnaire (see Appendix 1) answered by the lecturers. The questionnaire consists of four open-ended questions which aim to collect information on how lecturers justify their feedback practices. The lecturers' answers were compared with the results of the analysis in order to detect overlaps and divergences.

Our three research questions were as follows:

- Do the lecturers use overall comments to provide written corrective feedback on these translations?
- What are the focal areas of these overall comments?
- What pragmatic-discursive strategies do the lecturers rely on in their overall comments?

5. RESULTS

In the following sections, we will set out the results of our analysis to answer the research questions.

5.1. General Quantitative Data

We identified 69 overall comments in the 48 student-produced sworn translations. This total is broken by the lecturer in Table 2.

Lecturer	Number of student-produced translations	Number of overall comments by lecturer
1	10	10
2	11	20

3	12	24
4	15	15
Total	**48**	**69**

Table 2: Number of overall comments per lecturer
Source. Elaborated by the authors

The distribution of comments across lecturers shows two tendencies, with lecturers 1 and 4 offering relatively fewer comments (10-15), and lecturers 2 and 3 offering somewhat more (20-24). Lecturers 1 and 4 wrote only one overall comment per assignment (as we will see below, on many occasions the comment amounted to simply indicating a grade), while 3 and 4 typically wrote more than one per assignment, either at different locations on the page or writing more than one in the same location. Figure 2 illustrates an instance where the lecturer has written two overall comments at the end of the document, separating them from the student's sworn translation by means of a line, and separating the two comments from each other through initial dashes.
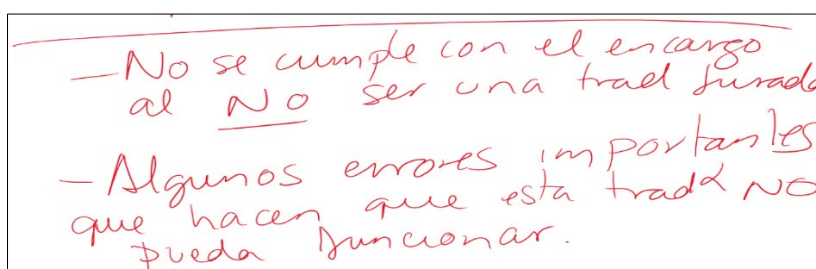

Figure 2. Example of two overall comments by lecturer 3[4]
Source. Corpus extract

The picture we get of each lecturer is consistent with the answers provided on the questionnaire: all the lecturers write overall comments on all student assignments in the corpus. The reason they do so is, in the words of lecturer 2, "so that the student can get feedback about the overall quality of her or his translation." The lecturers feel that the use of overall comments is essential if "the aspiring translator is to understand [his weaknesses] and be self-critical" (lecturer 4). Such comments will have a positive impact on the learning process, in their view, because "in subsequent assignments, most

---

[4] "This does not fulfil the assignment requirements because it does NOT constitute a sworn translation" / "Several serious errors make this translation unusable" (our translation).

students tend not to repeat the same errors that have been pointed out to them (and commented on) in previous assignments" (lecturer 1).

Regarding the location of the overall comment on the student text, lecturers 1 and 4 noted that they usually write their comments at the end of the student translation to distinguish them from more specific comments. Lecturers 2 and 3 did not provide any information in this respect, although in the corpus it was found that they usually write them at the beginning of the translation.

In all cases, the focus of the comment is the task, not the process, self-regulation, or person, and the comment may or may not be accompanied by a grade. As shown in Figure 3, while lecturer 1 wrote only overall comments and never noted the grade the student had received, lecturer 4 always accompanied the grade with a comment, while lecturer 2 always separated grades from comments, and lecturer 3 generally wrote more than one comment on each paper, so comments were not always accompanied by a grade. Thus, the data do not reveal any special tendency in lecturer behaviour in this respect.
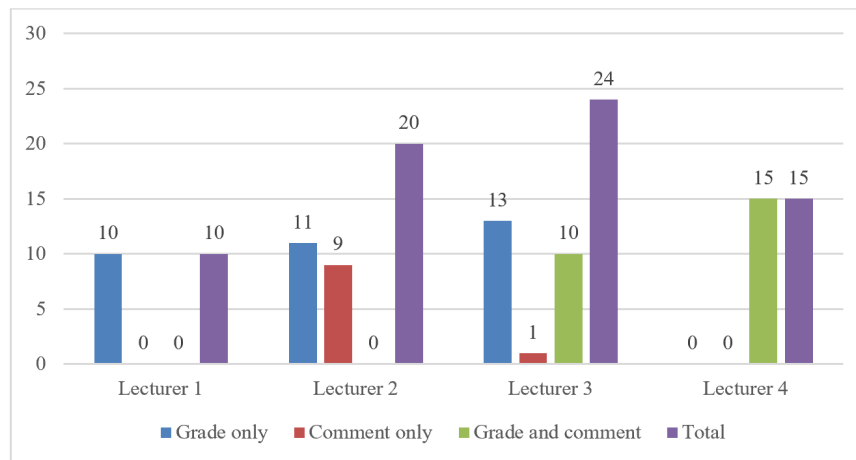

Figure 3. Combination of overall comments with grades
Source. Elaborated by the authors

From the lecturers' responses to the questionnaire, for most lecturers the key factor determining whether a grade should be included or not is simply that it is a graded assignment, because "the grade is taken into account when it comes to calculating the student's overall grade for the course" (lecturer 3). Of the four lecturers, only lecturer 1 simply writes a grade at the end of the

student text, without comment because "during the term I focus more [in class] on explaining errors and their consequences to help the students judge for themselves whether their translations are valid or not, and why," thus obviating the need for such explanations to be written on student assignments.

5.2. Discursive Features of Overall Comments

Setting aside the input from lecturer 1, who writes only a grade on student translations, there are 35 instances of lecturer-written overall comments in our corpus, whose contents can be broken into three main speech acts, in the proportions displayed in Table 3.

Speech act	Number of comments (% of total)
Praise	17 (48.5%)
Criticism	15 (42.8%)
Warning	3 (8.7%)
Total	**35**

Table 3. Types of speech acts performed by lecturer comments.
Source. Elaborated by the authors

Lecturer comments are generally speech acts offering praise, followed closely by those conveying criticism. Only a small fraction of comments can be classified as warnings. The breakdown by individual lecturer is shown in Table 4.

Lecturer	Speech act			
	Praise	**Criticism**	**Warning**	**Total**
1	0	0	0	0
2	3	5	0	8
3	8	4	0	12
4	6	6	3	15
Total	**17**	**15**	**3**	**35**

Table 4. Types of speech acts broken down by lecturer.
Source. Elaborated by the authors

The lecturers clearly have individual tendencies. Lecturer 1 refrains from writing any overall comments whatsoever on student papers, limiting her-

or himself to indicating the grade received. Lecturer 2 writes a few overall comments, most of them critical. Lecturer 3 tends to give praise rather than criticism, whereas lecturer 4 shows a balance between praise and criticism and is the only lecturer to proffer warnings.

Regarding the focus of the overall comments, lecturer 1 reported that her/his comments addressed issues such as "requirements of the assignment," "appropriate formatting for a sworn translation," "spelling and grammar," "terminology," or "translation techniques and strategies." Lecturer 2 claimed to focus on "the overall quality of the translation as if it were a real-life sworn translation job." Lecturer 3 referred to "the linguistic quality of the translation" and whether the student had respected "the formalities of a sworn translation." Finally, lecturer 4 reported that her/his overall comments covered "all sorts of aspects, from translation-related ones to the process I deduced that the student had followed in documenting their work."

In the next section, each speech act identified in the corpus–praise, criticism, and warning–, will be examined in greater detail.

5.2.1   Praise

The overall comments in this category correspond to a positive evaluation of the quality of the translation, always expressed directly (Albelda Marco *et al.*, 2014, p. 51). They are characterised by being synthetic: the lecturer limits her- or himself, with greater or lesser degrees of enthusiasm, to brief compliments (*e.g.*, lecturer 4: "good work;" lecturer 3: "great work"). The focus is always the "work," a generic lexical unit that can allude to, either the product or the translation process.

The lecturer's approval of these expressive speech acts is conveyed in all cases by means of value-loaded adjectives like *good* or *excellent*, sometimes preceded by an intensifier. When the sworn translation warrants special recognition for its high quality, the lecturer may reinforce the praise with a congratulatory expression (*e.g.*, lecturer 3: "excellent work. Congratulations!", or "very good job. Congratulations!"). At once expressive, polite, and evaluative, the congratulatory speech act is conveyed through the marker of illocutionary force *congratulations*, which implies recognition of the student's face (Briz Gómez & Albelda Marco, 2013, p. 307).

5.2.2.   Criticisms

The 15 criticisms identified in the corpus represent a type of speech act in which a negative opinion is asserted (Albelda Marco *et al.*, 2014, p. 50). Through them, the lecturer transmits a negative judgement motivated by an error or omission in the sworn translation, invalidating the official text as a

whole. In six of these examples, the criticisms take the form of assertive negative statements in which the illocutionary force of the message is unattenuated, as illustrated by (1) and (2) below.

> (1) "The requirements of the assignment have not been met because this is not a sworn translation." (Lecturer 2)

> (2) "The final text does not fulfil its function." (Lecturer 2)

The negative orientation is made clear in these examples through the verbs *meet* and *fulfil* and negative forms with *not*. The use of objectifying devices such as the passive in (1) or making "the final text" the subject of the sentence in (2) is intended to put distance between the lecturer and the student.

About areas of focus, the unattenuated direct criticisms tend to revolve around formalities related to the seal, the certification formula, or confirmation of the authenticity of the original document. These overall comments therefore negatively evaluate the validity of the translation as an official document.

Criticisms can be attenuated by various discursive devices. In (3), lecturer 3 addresses the student by his name to mitigate the impact that an overall negative assessment of the translation is likely to have on the student's self-image.

> (3) "Alex, you have tried to make the text sound too natural and in these sworn translation assignments you can't do that, especially with the names of degrees." (Lecturer 3)

The lecturer attenuates the critical force of her/his message, involves the student in his/her assessment, thereby reducing the distance between them. The focus of (3) is on process of sworn translating, and the excessive weight attached to the target administrative culture when it comes to translating cultural references from an administrative context. This is one of the main difficulties due to conceptual asymmetries between the two languages.

Another attenuating strategy, used by lecturers, is to precede a criticism by praise (9/15 instances). In such cases, the comment consists of a first utterance in which the lecturer evaluates the quality of the translation positively by ranking it on a gradient good-bad or correct-incorrect scale, sometimes preceded by an intensifier. This is followed by a second utterance which points to specific errors or aspects that could be improved, which qualify the initial praise. The two utterances are joined by counter-argumentative connectors such as *although*, *but*, or *however*. These lexical units present the second utterance as a suppressor or limiter of some of the possible inferences

that may be triggered by the first. The praise always precedes the criticism, indicating that it is intended as a strategic politeness device to attenuate the criticism in order to protect the student's face. This can be seen in (4) through (7) below.

> (4) "Good, although some elements are inexact, which should be borne in mind next time." (Lecturer 4)

> (5) "In general, good, but it is essential to avoid serious errors." (Lecturer 4)

> (6) "The translation as a whole is well executed. However, the few errors you have made are serious (undergraduate vs. Master's degrees/some information from the information is missing), and this greatly diminishes the value of the work." (Lecturer 4)

> (7) "Very good work, but given the requirements of the assignment, you should have been more precise in your translation of the name of the university degree." (Lecturer 3)

In (4) and (5), lecturer 4 points to several areas for improvement by generic lexical items with negative connotations, such as *inexact* and *errors*. In (6) and (7), the lecturer is more specific about the type of error that has elicited her/his admonition. In the first case, the translation of specialised terminology and lack of information, and in the second, an error in the translation of the name of a university degree which proves that the student is applying a method of translation too focused on the target administrative culture and thus inappropriate for a sworn translation. Once more, the feedback revolves around terminology and the translator's method.

In examples (4) through (7) we also see the use of evaluative adjectives and verbs (*e.g.*, *serious*, *diminish*, *essential*, *more careful*) and modal verbal forms related to obligation (*should be*, *should have been*), which refer to instructions given by the lecturer and her/his role as an authority. But this obligation is mitigated by depersonalization (*e.g.*, "should be borne in mind," "it is essential to") to save the student's face.

The lecturers tend to highlight areas where improvement is especially important by using the explicit warning marker *be careful*, as we see in (8).

> (8) Good overall, but be careful to avoid the errors you have made. (lecturer 4)

In this speech act, the lecturer addresses the student to draw her/his attention to the translation errors she/he has made.

5.2.3. Warnings

It will have been noted that the preceding example included a warning, inserted into a criticism, when the errors spotted by the lecturer were, in her/his view, of gravity. Two other examples were identified in which a warning constituted the overall comment itself.

(9) "Be careful to avoid being imprecise." (Lecturer 4)

(10) "Be careful to avoid the errors you have made here." (Lecturer 4)

In accordance with their illocutionary force, warnings are considered here directive speech acts intended to benefit the student, because they provide information that the warner believes will be of assistance to the recipient (Albelda Marco *et al.*, 2014, p. 50). Just as we have seen in the other overall comments, the lecturer resorts to generic terms like *imprecise* and *errors* in her/his feedback.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

In the present study, we have empirically analysed a corpus of overall written comments made by lecturers on student-produced translations which were required assignments in courses forming part of undergraduate degree programs in translation at three Spanish universities. The assignment was to simulate preparing a sworn translation of an official document, a sort of assignment that is typical in the translation classroom.

Our analysis has allowed us to answer our first research question in the affirmative: the use of overall comments on student-produced sworn translations is indeed a common form of corrective written feedback in the specialised translation classroom. From the domain of second language teaching, Ferris and Hedgcock (2005) and Jamalinesari *et al.* (2015) recommend the use of a combination of overall and specific comments for feedback on student work, noting that the value of the former lies in the fact that they allow both lecturer and student to view the text as a whole and prioritise what is most important. As we have seen, three of the four lecturers conform to this recommendation, reporting that they combine qualitative comments with other modalities of written corrective feedback which fall outside the scope of this study.

Various empirical studies on formative feedback have demonstrated that descriptive feedback has a greater effect on improving student work than grades. As noted in works such as Black and William (1998), Yorke (2007), or Butler and Shibaz (2014), because it dominates the attention of students, grading tends to limit the formative potential of comments as a scaffolding

instrument. Thus, when given only a grade, many students focus their attention on that and do not bother to check their errors to learn from them. Similarly, if both grade and feedback are given to the student, the student's attention is likely to be dominated by the grade at the expense of the feedback. Only when feedback is provided without a grade will the student focus fully on it. In the corpus, overall comments with qualitative assessment, unaccompanied by a grade, are relatively rare, with only one of the four lecturers failing to apply this practice. Although our sample size was admittedly small, the results obtained here allow us to claim that grading still seems to be the majority tendency.

At the same time, we have seen that feedback in the form of an overall comment corresponds to a model of communication that flows unidirectionally from lecturer to student, and not a dialogic model as proposed by various authors (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006; Nicol, 2010). The student-produced translations seen here constitute final products to be graded, and the students are not explicitly asked to revise or rewrite their text, meaning that in effect the lecturer is assessing a finished work. Hence, lecturers' overall comments are not oriented towards the improvement of future work, but rather centre around the quality of the product as it stands, without regard for the possible actions that the student could take to assimilate and apply the feedback received.

With regard to our second research question, we have seen that all the overall written comments are related to the quality of the student's product, an observation that coincides with the findings of Dirkx *et al.* (2019), and Derham *et al.* (2021). This product-centred feedback does not address methodological aspects of the translation, such as the documentation process or the revising of drafts, which are of fundamental importance to fostering the learning that will be transferable to other sworn translation assignments of a similar nature.

A closer examination of the discursive dimension of the data has revealed that their focus cannot be separated from the speech acts in which they are framed. A correlation can be seen between the orientation of the evaluation expressed in the speech act (positive for praise, negative for criticism) and the degree of precision in the lecturers' use of terms to refer to the aspects of the work that are being judged. While in the praising comments, the focus is always expressed through the generic term *work*, feedback offered in the form of criticism is more specific and error-oriented. In the latter instances, frequent allusion is made to the formalities proper to a sworn translation because the lecturer is assessing in her/his overall comment the text's validity as an official document. The specialised terminology of the academic context and a method of translation excessively oriented to the target administrative culture are aspects that also frequently elicit overall

comments and are therefore issues to which the lecturer attaches special importance.

These foci of attention in the feedback, also pointed to in lecturers' responses to the questionnaire, are related to the very specific features of sworn translation. Working on these elements in the classroom through the design of specific activities more narrowly focused on how to plan a sworn translation would in turn result in an improved learning process.

As for the third research question, our analysis of speech acts has revealed that instances of praise and criticism are rather evenly distributed in frequency, with warnings coming a distant third. Thus, the variety of speech acts present in lecturer comments is limited: we see no instances, for example, of questions, requests for more information, or suggestions, which would be particularly useful to foster the dialogic component of feedback (Washbourne, 2014).

Several studies have pointed out that the excessive use of indirect speech acts can make feedback less effective because it may be difficult for students to decode the true intention of the discourse (Carless, 2006). This issue does not arise in our corpus, where the lecturers express praise, criticism, or warning in a direct fashion, with greater or lesser degrees of attenuation.

Giving praise is an expressive, polite, and evaluative speech act which is expressed in our corpus in a highly synthetic manner. The instances seen here are not accompanied by any information which might help the student understand the reasons for her/his success (expressed by the grade), hence the possibility of transfer to other translation assignments is greatly diminished. It can be hypothesised that the reasons for the praise are fleshed out in the specific comments the lecturer makes elsewhere in the text.

It is true that, in the teaching of translation or any other discipline, positive feedback constitutes a valuable tool to foster self-esteem, motivation, and student involvement in the feedback they receive (Conde Ruano, 2016; Pitt & Norton, 2017). However, "positive comments without directive guidance do not provide advice which makes action possible. All students, including those with high marks, require feedback which enables them to enhance future work" (Derham *et al.*, 2021, p. 10). Indeed, there seems to exist a consensus among both lecturers (Lipnevich & Smith, 2009) and students (Gamlem & Smith, 2013) that generic praise of this sort contributes little to improving student learning. Praise that is more focused would therefore serve better to project the feedback towards the future by reinforcing the learning already acquired.

Criticisms constitute speech acts that voice a negative opinion. When they express themselves without attenuation, the lecturers use negative assertions and resort to the passive to produce a distancing effect and objectivise the criticism. When the criticism is attenuated, it is often preceded by a compliment as a politeness strategy. In short, there can be perceived as desire to convey objectivity on the part of the lecturer, which is particularly noteworthy given the fundamental subjectivity inherent in translation assessment (Conde Ruano, 2009). In light of the use they make of attenuation in their discourse, the lecturers here appear to be conscious that the way comments are expressed can have a negative impact on student self-confidence and self-esteem (Carless, 2006), and, consequently, they seek to avoid this.

We are aware that this study has certain limitations. First, in the interest of keeping it homogeneous, we have analysed a relatively small sample, in terms of both the number of lecturers and the number of student-produced translations. Second, we have restricted our analysis to the overall comments, with the result that the overview obtained of written corrective feedback is perforce only partial. These results need to be complemented by an analysis of the lecturers' specific comments, given that students receive both types of feedback on any given assignment.

Despite these limitations, this research has clear implications for translation teaching in educational contexts. We believe that our findings invite lecturers to reconsider the feedback they provide students not just in terms of form and focus, but also in terms of its utility in helping the student to develop her/his competence as a sworn translator. We have seen here that the provision of feedback through overall comments is unidirectional and that the lecturers did not apply a strategy that would force the student to reflect on her/his sworn translation. It is not enough for feedback to be a mere transmission of information. As has already been done in other disciplines, further work must be done that addresses the issue of how students make use of feedback and what consequences that use has thereafter, since "to be effective, feedback needs to be meaningful, understood and correctly acted upon" (Ajjawi & Boud, 2017, p. 254). In translation teaching, considerable research remains to be done in this direction.

REFERENCES

Agricola, Bas. T., Prins, Frans J., & Sluijsmans, Dominique M. A. (2020). Impact of Feedback Request Forms and Verbal Feedback on Higher Education Students' Feedback Perception, Self-Efficacy, and Motivation. Assessment   in

Education Principles, Policy & Practice, 27 (1), 6-25. https://doi.org/10.1080/0969594X.2019.1688764

Ajjawi, Rola, & Boud, David (2017). Researching Feedback Dialogue: an Interactional Analysis Approach. Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education, 42(2), 252-265. https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2015.1102863

Albelda Marco, Marta, Briz Gómez, Antonio, Cestero Mancera, Ana María, Kotwica Dorota, & Villalba Ibáñez, Cristina (2014). Ficha metodológica para el análisis pragmático de la atenuación en corpus discursivos del español [Methodological File for the Pragmatic Analysis of Attenuation in Spanish Discursive Corpora]. Oralia: análisis del discurso oral, 17, 7-62.

Andújar Moreno, Gemma & Cañada Pujols, Maria Dolors (2020). Modalidades de retroalimentación correctiva escrita: Estudio exploratorio de prácticas docentes en el aula de traducción [Modalities of Written Corrective Feedback: An Exploratory Study of Teaching Practices in the Translation Classroom]. REDIT-Revista Electrónica de Didáctica de la Traducción y la Interpretación, 14, 50-72. https://doi.org/10.24310/REDIT.2020.v1i14.13726

Andújar Moreno, Gemma, & Cunillera Domènech, Montserrat (2017). Traducció jurídica i jurada francès-català. Teoria i pràctica [French-Catalan Legal and Sworn Translation. Theory and Practice]. Eumo Editorial.

Antón González, Marta (1999). The Discourse of a Learner-centered Classroom: Sociocultural Perspectives on Teacher-learner Interaction in the Second-language Classroom. The Modern Language Journal, 83(3), 303-318. https://doi.org/10.1111/0026-7902.00024

Arancibia Gutiérrez, Beatriz, Tapia-Ladino, Mónica, & Correa Pérez, Roxanna (2019). La retroalimentación durante el proceso de escritura de la tesis en carreras de pedagogía: descripción de los comentarios escritos de los profesores guías [Feedback During the Thesis Writing Process in Pedagogical Careers: Description of Written Comments from Guiding Teachers]. Revista Signos, 52(100), 242-264.

Austin, John. L. (1975). How to Do Things with Words. Harvard University Press.

Black, Paul, & William, Dylan (1998). Assessment and Classroom Learning. Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy and Practice, 5(1), 7-74. https://doi.org/10.1080/0969595980050102

Briz Gómez, Antonio, & Albelda Marco, Marta (2013). Una propuesta teórica y metodológica para el análisis de la atenuación lingüística en español y portugués. La base de un proyecto en común [A Theoretical and Methodological Proposal for the Analysis of Linguistic Attenuation in Spanish and Portuguese. The Basis of a Common Project]. Onomázein, 28, 288-319. https://doi.org/10.7764/onomazein.28.16

Brown, Penelope, & Levinson, Stephen C. (1987). Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage. Cambridge University Press.

Butler, Ruth, & Shibaz, Limor (2014). Striving to Connect and Striving to Learn: Influences of Relational and Mastery Goals for Teaching on Teacher Behaviors and Student Interest and Help Seeking. International Journal of Educational Research, 65, 41-53. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2013.09.006

Cañada Pujols, Maria Dolors & Andújar Moreno, Gemma (2021). La mirada del estudiante sobre la evaluación en traducción: Estudio preliminar y posibles vías de investigación [The student's view of assessment in translation: a preliminary study and potential research lines]. Meta, 66(2), 362-381. https://doi.org/10.7202/1083184ar

Carless, David (2006). Differing Perceptions in the Feedback Process. Studies in Higher Education, 31(2), 219-233. https://doi.org/10.1080/03075070600572132

Carless, David, & Boud, David (2018). The Development of Student Feedback Literacy: Enabling Uptake of Feedback. Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education, 43(8), 1315-1325. https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2018.1463354

Christiansen, M. Siduri, & Bloch, Joel (2016). Papers are Never Finished, just Abandoned: the Role of Written Teacher Comments in the Revision Process. Journal of Response to Writing, 2(1), 6-42.

Conde Ruano, José Tomás (2009). Proceso y resultado de la evaluación de traducciones [Process and Outcome of Translation Assessment]. [Doctoral dissertation, Universidad de Granada]. http://hdl.handle.net/10481/2309

Conde Ruano, José Tomás (2016). Positive feedback in translation assessment. In Celia Martín de León & Víctor González-Ruiz (Eds.), From the Lab to the Classroom and Back Again (New Trends in Translation Studies 19) (pp. 155-180). Peter Lang.

Conrad, Susan M., & Goldstein, Lynn M. (1999). ESL Student Revision after Teacher-written Comments: Text, Contexts, and Individuals. Journal of Second Language Writing, 8, 147-180. https://doi.org/10.1016/S1060-3743(99)80126-X

Darling-Hammond, Linda (2000). Teacher quality and student achievement. Education Policy Analysis Archives, 8(1). https://doi.org/10.14507/epaa.v8n1.2000

Dawson, Philip, Henderson, Michael, Mahoney, Paige, Phillips, Michael, Ryan, Tracii, Boud, David, & Molloy, Elizabeth (2019). What Makes for Effective Feedback: Staff and Student Perspectives. Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education, 44(1), 25-36. https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2018.1467877

Derham, Cathrine, Balloo, Kieran, & Winstone, Naomi (2021). The Focus, Function and Framing of Feedback Information: Linguistic and Content Analysis of In-text Feedback Comments. Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education, 47(6), 896-909. https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2021.1969335

Dirkx, Kim, Joosten-ten Brinke, Desirée, Arts, Jorik, & Diggelen, Migchiel van (2019). In-text and Rubric-referenced Feedback: Differences in Focus, Level, and Function. Active Learning in Higher Education, 22(3), 189-201. https://doi.org/10.1177/14697874198552

Dollerup, Cay (1994). Systematic Feedback in Teaching Translation. In Cay Dollerup, & Annette Lingarrd (Eds.), Teaching Translation and Interpreting 2: Insights, Aims and Visions (pp. 121-132). John Benjamins.

Espasa Roca, Anna, & Meneses Naranjo, Julio (2010). Analysing Feedback Processes in an Online Teaching and Learning Environment: an Exploratory Study. Higher education, 59(3), 277-292. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-009-9247-4

Ferris, Dana R., & Hedgcock, John S. (2004). Teaching ESL Composition: Purpose, Process, and Practice. Routledge.

Gamlem, Siv M., & Smith, Kari (2013). Student Perceptions of Classroom Feedback. Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy and Practice 20(2), 150-169. https://doi.org/10.1080/0969594X.2012.749212

Goldstein, Lynn (2006). Feedback and Revision in Second Language Writing: Contextual, Teacher, and Student Variables. In Ken Hyland, & Fiona Hyland (Eds.), Feedback in Second Language Writing: Contexts and Issues (pp. 185-205). Cambridge University Press.

Göpferich, Susanne (2013). Translation Competence: Explaining Development and Stagnation from a Dynamic Systems Perspective. Target. International Journal of Translation Studies, 25(1), 61-76. https://doi.org/10.1075/target.25.1.06goe

Hattie, John (1992). Measuring the Effects of Schooling. Australian Journal of education, 36(1), 5-13. https://doi.org/10.1177/00049441920360010

Hattie, John, & Timperley, Helen (2007). The Power of Feedback. Review of Educational Research, 77(1), 81-112. https://doi.org/10.3102/003465430298487

Hortigüela, David, Pérez-Pueyo, Ángel, & González-Calvo, Gustavo (2019). Pero… ¿a qué nos referimos realmente con la evaluación formativa y compartida?: Confusiones habituales y reflexiones prácticas [But What Do we Really Mean by Formative and Shared Assessment?: Common Misconceptions and Practical Reflections]. Revista Iberoamericana de Evaluación Educativa, 12(1), 13-27. https://doi.org/10.15366/riee2019.12.1.001

Hurtado Albir, Amparo (2019). La investigación en didáctica de la traducción. Evolución, enfoques y perspectivas [Research in Translation Training. Evolution, Approaches and Perspectives]. MonTI. Monografías de Traducción e Interpretación, 11, 47-76. https://doi.org/10.6035/MonTI.2019.11.2

Jamalinesari, Ari, Rahimi, Farahnaz, Gowhary, Hsbib, & Azizifar, Akbar (2015). The effects of Teacher-written Direct vs. Indirect Feedback on Students' Writing. Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences, 192, 116-123. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.06.018

Mikolič Južnič, Tamara (2013). Assessment Feedback in Translator Training: a Dual Perspective. In Nike K. Pokorn, & Kaisa Koskinen (Eds.), New Horizons in Translation Research and Education 1 (pp. 75-98). Publications of the University of Eastern Finland.

Kelly, Dorothy (2005). A Handbook for Translator Trainers. St. Jerome.

Kiraly, Don (2000). A Social Constructivist Approach to Translator Education. Empowerment from theory to practice. St. Jerome.

Lipnevich, Anastasiya A., & Smith, Jeffrey K. (2009). I Really Need Feedback to Learn: Students' Perspectives on the Effectiveness of the Differential Feedback Messages. Educational Assessment, Evaluation and Accountability, 21(4), 347-367. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11092-009-9082-2

Martín-Peris, Ernesto, Atienza Cerezo, Encarna, Cortés Moreno, Maximiano, González Argüello, María Vicente, López Ferrero, Carmen, & Torner Castells, Sergi (2005). Diccionario de términos clave de ELE del CVC [Dictionary of Key Terms of ELE of the CLC]. Universidad de Sevilla.

Massey, Gary, & Brändli, Barbara (2016). Collaborative Feedback Flows and how we can Learn from them: Investigating a Synergetic Learning Experience in Translator Education. In Don Kiraly, and Gary Massey (Eds.), Towards Authentic Experiential Learning in Translator Education (pp. 177-199). VandR Unipress/Mainz University Press.

Neunzig, Wilhem, &Tanqueiro, Helena (2009). Teacher Feedback in Online Education for Trainee Translators. Meta, 50(4). https://doi.org/10.7202/019873ar

Nicol, David (2010). From Monologue to Dialogue: Improving Written Feedback Processes in Mass Higher Education. Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education, 35(5), 501-517. https://doi.org/10.1080/02602931003786559

Nicol, David, & Macfarlane-Dick, Debra (2006). Formative Assessment and Self-Regulated Learning: a Model and Seven Principles of Good Feedback Practice. Studies in Higher Education, 31(2), 199-218. https://doi.org/10.1080/03075070600572090

Orozco-Jutorán, Mariana (2006). La evaluación diagnóstica, formativa y sumativa en la enseñanza de la traducción [Diagnostic, Formative and Summative Assessment in Translation Education]. In María José Varela Salinas (Ed.), La evaluación en los estudios de traducción e interpretación (pp. 47-68). Bienza.

Pietrzak, Paulina (2017). A Methodology for Formative Assessment: Feedback Tools in the Translation Classroom. Kwartalnik Neofilologiczny, 64(1): 66-80.

Pitt, Ed, & Norton, Lin (2017). Now that's the Feedback I Want! Students' Reactions to Feedback on Graded Work and what they Do with it. Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education, 42(4), 499-516. https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2016.1142500

Searle, John R. (1969). Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language. Cambridge University Press.

Tapia, Stella Maris (2016). Correcciones en lengua: modos de intervención docente en los textos escritos por los alumnos [Linguistic Corrections: Ways of Teacher Intervention in Texts Written by Students]. Bellaterra Journal of Teaching and Learning Language and Literature, 9(3), 69-84. https://doi.org/10.5565/rev/jtl3.640

Tapia-Ladino, Mónica, Arancibia Gutiérrez, Beatriz, & Correa Pérez, Roxanna (2016). Rol de los comentarios escritos en la construcción de la tesis desde la perspectiva de estudiantes tesistas y profesores guías [Role of Written Comments in the Construction of the Thesis from the Perspective of Student Thesis Writers and Guiding Teachers]. Universitas Psychologica 15(4). https://doi.org/10.11144/Javeriana.upsy15-4.rcec

Thoms, Joshua J. (2012). Classroom Discourse in Foreign Language Classrooms: A Review of the Literature. Foreign Language Annals, 45(1), 8-27. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1944-9720.2012.01177.x

Wang, Kenny, & Han, Chong (2013). Accomplishment in the Multitude of Counsellors: Peer Feedback in Translation Training. Translation and Interpreting, 5(2), 62-75. https://doi.org/10.12807/ti.105202.2013.a05

Washbourne, Kelly (2014). Beyond Error Marking: Written Corrective Feedback for a Dialogic Pedagogy in Translator Training. The Interpreter and Translator Trainer, 8(2), 240-256. https://doi.org/10.1080/1750399X.2014.908554

Way, Catherine (2019). Fostering Translator Competence: the Importance of Effective Feedback and Motivation for Translator Trainees. InTRAlinea Special Issue: New Insights into Translator Training. https://www.intralinea.org/specials/article/2430

Yorke, Mantz (2007). Grading Student Achievement in Higher Education Signals and Shortcomings. Routledge.

APPENDIX 1. LECTURER QUESTIONNAIRE

1. When you evaluate a sworn translation in writing, do you usually indicate the student's grade for the assignment? Why or why not?

2. Do you usually write any overall comments evaluating the text, either at the beginning of the student's sworn translation or at the end? Why or why not?

3. If you write overall comments on the text, what aspects (whether translation-related or otherwise) do you usually mention in them?

4. Do you believe that overall comments have any impact on student learning?