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An Online Training for Increasing Language Teachers' Awareness of Feedback Literacy Based on the Developing Engagement with Feedback Toolkit (DEFT)

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Abstract

This study aims to identify in-service language teachers' knowledge and experiences of feedback literacy and examine their reflections on an online training based on the *Developing Engagement with Feedback Toolkit* adapted for foreign language teaching. The study was designed as practical action research. 17 K-12 English language teachers participated in the study. Data were collected through a survey, focus group interviews, and e-journal entries. The results showed that language teachers were unfamiliar with feedback literacy and perceived themselves as partially effective feedback providers. Assessment methods were based on homework, quizzes, and projects followed by generic feedback information. Teachers reflected on the positive impact of the training on their feedback giving practices and learners' engagement in lessons. They highlighted the points still open for improvement in personal feedback practices. The findings imply that the training can be adapted to language teacher education programs to grow feedback-literate teachers and learners.

Keywords: Action Research, DEFT, Feedback Literacy, Foreign Language Teachers, Online Training

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INTRODUCTION

Feedback increases learning by directing students towards a clear path to follow on their learning journey, and quite a number of studies (Carless, 2019; Chen & Bergner, 2021; Hu et al., 2021; Pitt & Winstone, 2017; Price et al., 2011) focus on improving students' skills for engaging with the feedback given by their teachers. Giving efficient feedback is therefore an important part of teachers' jobs. Yet, studies on supporting teachers in giving efficient feedback to their learners are scarce. It is also not very likely to claim that teacher education and training programs provide enough opportunities for preparing teachers with the necessary knowledge and skills to become feedback-literate professionals. As claimed by Winstone, Mathlin, and Nash (2019), focus on feedback literature has mostly been on the mechanics of giving feedback with a "cognitivist transmission model". More recently, however, "socio-constructivist approach" emphasizing how teachers can give more efficient feedback and how students can engage with feedback and act upon it has gained importance.

Many studies confirm that "clear, purposeful, and meaningful" feedback helps students develop strategies to learn better by building sound connections in their learning process (Carless et al., 2011; Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Winstone et al., 2017). This claim was also confirmed by Lipnevich and Smith (2008) who found detailed and descriptive feedback to be the most useful instrument for learning when given alone, without grades or praise. Nevertheless, research acknowledging the importance of feedback on learning has identified some barriers limiting learners in benefitting from what they receive as feedback. For instance, Jönsson (2013) found out that in addition to students' lack of motivation, there are various other sources causing students to fail to get the most benefit from the given feedback. Feedback that is insufficient in nature, unspecific, and delivered with a language difficult to understand, or given in an authoritative style was listed among other reasons. Lack of motivation to spend time and effort to act upon feedback or being unaware of the possible feedback implementation strategies might also be added to the list as other reasons for not benefitting from feedback (Nash & Winstone, 2017). Reviewing the research literature on students' use of feedback, Jönsson (2013) concluded that students can find it difficult to use feedback when it comes too late, when it is insufficiently detailed or individualized, or when it is seen as too authoritative or difficult to decode the specialist language used in feedback. In addition to these possible reasons, "emotional backwash" that students often experience in response to feedback has been identified as inhibiting their cognitive processing (Henderson et al., 2019; Pitt & Norton, 2017)

Based on the assumption that much of the feedback students receive is not relevant for their future assignments, Handley and Williams (2011) provided sample assignments and feedback given to the previous sample assignments before students submitted their future ones. While this opportunity was appreciated by the students, researchers concluded that developing students' self-assessment skills would serve them more in increasing their feedback literacy. Similarly, Crisp's (2007) study concluded that giving feedback to students is not enough on its own, so teachers need to reconsider their practices. After reviewing 195 research articles published between 1985 and 2014, Winstone et al. (2017) summarized that learners' failure to engage with feedback might be attributed to various factors including the content and the delivery method of the feedback, learners' individual differences, educational context, confusing academic terminology, and a lack of specificity.

Teachers' applications and their perspectives of feedback delivery are also indicated as other reasons for failure. As Molloy, Boud and Henderson (2020) point out, it is difficult to encourage teachers to change their perceptions from being an "information provider" to being a "facilitator of learner feedback literacy". They highlight "the fear of curriculum crowding" as the main reason for this challenge. Studies show that teachers are not familiar with higher-order feedback strategies that help learners improve their learning. For instance, in Molloy et al.'s (2020) study, while teachers generally used recognition and feedback loops, they did not use quality feedback strategies to increase children's critical thinking frequently or they used scaffolding ineffectively.

As both teachers and students have shared responsibility for advancing students' feedback literacy, it would be wise to claim that increasing teachers' feedback awareness and literacy by equipping them with the necessary strategies and knowledge would benefit their learners as well. As Carless and Boud (2018) indicate, for students to be able to appreciate the given feedback, teachers need to construct appropriate curriculum environments for their active participation accompanied by guidance, coaching, and modelling. Without having such an environment, it would be unrealistic to expect learners to become feedback literate, so being able to create this environment requires teachers who have this literacy in their own repertoire as well. As suggested by the researchers, teachers and students need "mega-dialogues" to understand each other's perceptions on feedback, rather than discussing a piece of work. This need for establishing a more meaningful dialogue between teachers and students was also confirmed in Bloxham and Campbell's (2010) study which concluded that students have limited literacy in understanding expectations to be engaged in a meaningful dialogue with their teachers.

Considering the role played by teachers in growing feedback-literate students, this study aimed to develop foreign language teachers' feedback literacy and help them acquire knowledge and skills to create conditions for their students to appreciate and use feedback effectively. To this end, we utilized the Developing Engagement with Feedback Toolkit (DEFT) (Winstone & Nash, 2016) to design a modular training on feedback literacy for language teachers. DEFT was developed considering the barriers inhibiting learners from benefitting teachers' feedback. Consisting of 3 modules as *Knowing, Being,* and *Acting,* DEFT provides a toolkit of resources perceiving students as "proactive recipients".

The "Knowing" Module aims at helping students identify why feedback is important as well as different forms of feedback and the standards and the criteria used in evaluating their performance. It also intends to show students how feedback can be used as a tool for learning. The "Being" Module enables students to understand how feedback comments can be interpreted based on different identities and how students can deal with the barriers preventing them to get the most benefit from what they receive. It further deals with the emotional aspect of receiving feedback for improvement. The "Action" Module encourages students to act upon the feedback they receive with a "bank" of actions they can use as well as to create a plan for putting their plans into action.

Feedback literacy of language teachers and learners has rarely been studied in Türkiye. Thus, this study sought to identify foreign language teachers' existing knowledge of feedback and the strategies they use when they give feedback for assessed student performance. Additionally, we intend to raise foreign language teachers' awareness of feedback literacy and help them acquire relevant skills and attitudes through an online training so that they might become feedback literate practitioners. Research questions the study addressed were;

1. What are foreign language teachers' current feedback literacy levels regarding their
   a) existing knowledge and experience of feedback literacy?
   b) practices and strategies in giving feedback?
2. How do the foreign language teachers reflect on their experience in an online modular training program on feedback literacy?

METHOD

Research Design

The study has been designed as practical action research consisting of four stages: (1) identifying the problem, (2) developing an action plan, (3) implementing the plan and collecting data, and (4) analysing data (Fraenkel, Wallen & Hyun, 2012). The research design is displayed in Figure 1.

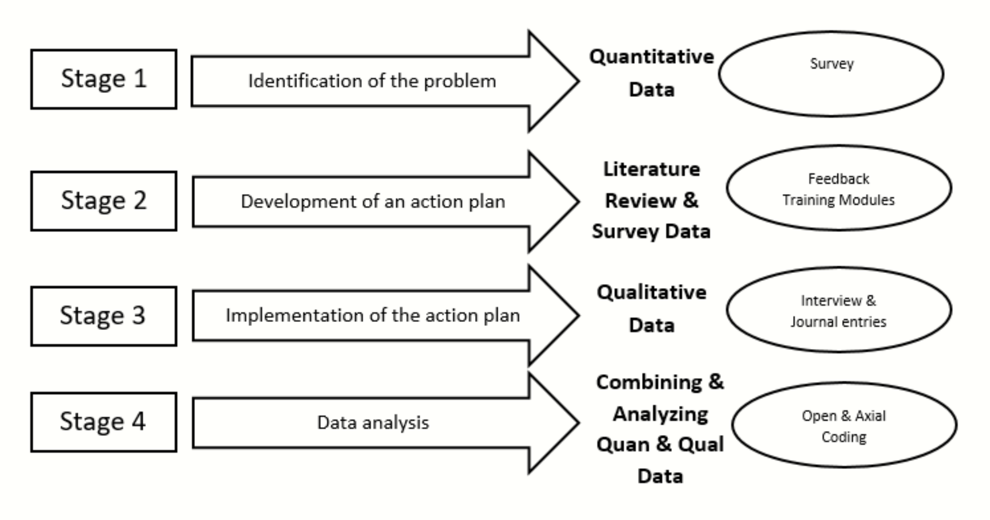

Figure 1. Research Design

Setting and Participants

After ethical permission was obtained to conduct the study, a readily approachable case school (hereinafter referred to as School Y) was chosen based on convenience sampling. School Y is a private K12 college established in 1998. It is located in a city in north-western Türkiye. So far, it has graduated more than 1500 students.

The principal of School Y and the lead language teacher, who served as gatekeepers between the researchers and potential research participants, were informed about the nature and purpose of the study. With their facilitation, we gained access to all the language teachers in the school and volunteer teachers were picked as research participants. A total of 17 language teachers took part in this study.

Table 1. Profile of the Language Teachers

Pseudonyms	Gender	Subject	K12 Level	Education	Teaching Experience (Years)
P1	Female	English	Elementary School	BA	4
P2	Female	English	Elementary & High School	BA	2
P3	Female	English	Elementary & Middle School	BA	1
P4	Female	English	Elementary & Middle School	BA	7
P5	Female	English	Middle School	BA	14
P6	Female	English	Middle & High School	BA	4
P7	Female	English	High School	BA	10
P8	Female	English	High School	BA	2
P9	Female	English	Kindergarten	BA	20
P10	Female	English	Middle School	BA	4
P11	Female	English	Middle School	BA	12
P12	Female	English	Middle School	BA	7
P13	Female	English	Middle School	BA	4
P14	Female	French	Elementary School	PhD in progress	8
P15	Female	French	Middle School	PhD in progress	4
P16	Female	French	Kindergarten	BA	1
P17	Male	French	Middle School	BA	1

Females constituted 94.11 % (*n*=17) of the participants, and there was only one male participant. 76.47% (*n*=13) of the language teachers were teaching English, whereas 23.53% (*n*=4) of them specialized in teaching French. 88.23% (*n*=15) of the participants had undergraduate degrees, and there were only two participants pursuing their Ph.D. studies. Participants' teaching experience varied from 1 to 20 years.

Data Collection

Data were collected through a survey, focus group interviews, and e-journal entries. Quantitative data was gathered through a survey developed by the researchers. The survey included 19 items categorized under 3 headings: *personal information* (7 items), *background in feedback literacy* (3 items), and *experience in giving feedback* (9 items). The items in the survey were written based on a thorough literature review in feedback literacy (Carless, 2019; Carless et al., 2011; Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Nash &Winstone, 2017; Winstone & Nash, 2016; Yucel et al., 2014). Before finalizing the survey and administering it, we employed cognitive interviews with two teachers to investigate whether the items in the survey were formulated in a way that was fit for our research purpose.

Based on survey data, training modules to increase the feedback literacy of language teachers were developed based on DEFT resources, as explained above, and delivered in an online meeting platform (See Table 3 for further information on modules). In our study, we conducted semi-structured focus group interviews after each module to gain insights into how teachers reflect on each module and plan to benefit from the ideas and practical activities discussed. All the participants attended the focus group interviews conducted by researchers. Each researcher interviewed a group of 5 to 6 teachers in an online meeting platform. Participants were asked to engage in reflective discussions around a set of guided questions. Questions we asked them to respond to can be seen in Table 2. The interviews were video recorded and lasted for a maximum of 1 hour for each group. The interviews were conducted in the participants' native language.

Table 2. Focus Group Interview Questions

Questions
What are your impressions of Module X?
Please evaluate Module X in terms of its implications on your teaching practice.
Do you think Module X is useful in terms of its contribution to your and your students' feedback literacy? If yes, in what aspects? If not, why? Do you have any suggestions for Module X to produce better gains?
Do you think Module X is easy to practice? Why? Why not?

Participants were also asked to record their reflections regarding each module in their e-journals. Within a week after a module was completed, teachers filled in their journal entries referring to how they felt during training, what they learned, what aspects they found useful, and what else could be incorporated into the training. Entries were recorded and archived anonymously. The outline of data collection procedures can be seen in Table 3.

Table 3. Feedback Literacy Modules

Module	Date	Duration	Content
1	24.02.2021	2hrs	Introduction to Feedback Effectiveness
1	10.03.2021	2hrs	How to Give Effective Feedback
	20.03.2021	1hr	Focus Group Interview1 + E-journal Entry1
2	24.03.2021	2hrs	Feedback Literacy: Knowing Domain
2	07.04.2021	2hrs	Feedback Literacy: Knowing Domain
	21.04.2021	1hr	Focus Group Interview2 + E-journal Entry2
3	05.05.2021	2hrs	Feedback Literacy: Being Domain
3	19.05.2021	2hrs	Feedback Literacy: Being Domain
	02.06.2021	1hr	Focus Group Interview3 + E-journal Entry3
4	16.06.2021	2hrs	Feedback Literacy: Action Domain
	30.06.2021	1hr	Focus Group Interview4 + E-journal Entry4

Data Analysis

Quantitative data coming from participants' responses to survey questions were analysed descriptively, conducting frequency and percentage analyses. Qualitative data coming from interviews were transcribed and sent to teachers for confirmation. Each researcher analysed the qualitative data individually. We analysed data thematically by identifying, deducing, and recording different themes into groups (Clarke & Braun, 2013). Data were coded in three steps. In the first step, open coding was employed, and data were labelled with initial codes. In the next step, we linked initial codes together by reading over the codes and grouped them into categories. In the last step thematic codes were assigned to categories (Corbin & Strauss, 2014). Finally, 7 themes were generated: *(a) impact on teaching practice and learners, (b) points still open for improvement in personal feedback practices, (c) content, (d) method of delivery, (e) duration, (f) instructional materials,* and *(g) suggestions for the improvement of the training.*

To ensure the trustworthiness of data analysis, data and investigator triangulation was utilized. All three researchers coded data in a three-step process and the findings from each researcher were then compared to see whether the interpretations made were coherent. The themes were finalized after several discussions.

RESULTS

In line with the research questions, we analysed data and interpreted the results in the following headings.

RQ1 (a). What are foreign language teachers current feedback literacy levels regarding their existing knowledge and experience of feedback literacy?

Data analysis showed that most of the teachers (64.7 %) have not participated in any training related to feedback literacy. As reported in Table 4, six teachers (35.3 %) received training on feedback literacy during their undergraduate education and only four teachers (23.5 %) reported to have done so after graduating from university. Most of the teachers (79.4 %) wanted to attend a training on feedback literacy.

Considering teachers' knowledge about feedback literacy, five teachers (29.4 %) responded they were knowledgeable about the term while 10 teachers (58.8 %) reported being partially familiar with it. We found that two (11.8 %) of the teachers did not know about feedback literacy at all. Analysis of teachers' self-perceptions of the effectiveness of their feedback showed that six (35.3%) teachers perceived their feedback as effective and 10 of them (58.8 %) considered their feedback as partially effective and only one (5.9 %) teacher thought her feedback was ineffective. Results also revealed that only one (5.9 %) teacher thought she could give feedback easily while two (11.8 %) teachers considered the process to be difficult. 14 teachers (82.4 %) reported having partial difficulty while providing feedback.

Table 4. Teachers' existing knowledge and experience of feedback literacy

Questions	Responses	*F*	%
Training on feedback literacy during undergraduate education	Yes	6	35.3
	No	11	64.7
Training on feedback literacy after undergraduate education	Yes	4	23.5
	No	13	76.5
Willingness to receive training on feedback literacy	Yes	12	79.4
	No	5	20.6
I know what feedback literacy means.	Yes	5	29.4
	Partially	10	58.8
	No	2	11.8
I think I give feedback effectively.	Yes	6	35.3
	Partially	10	58.8
	No	1	5.9

How do you evaluate the process of giving feedback?	Easy	1	5.9
	Partially difficult	14	82.4
	Difficult	2	11.8

We also asked teachers to explain what feedback meant to them. The majority associated feedback with *giving advice*, *correcting mistakes*, and *informing students about their poor performance*. P3 added the element of appreciation in her definition saying, "*appreciating if there is any good work*" and referred to the importance of instant communication with students for their improvement. P5 connected feedback with future work stating, "*comment how this outcome will affect the next step*" and P2 defined feedback as "*presenting new strategies for encouraging progress*".

For in-depth analysis, we investigated what aspects teachers thought could make the feedback process effective. Qualitative data yielded the categories shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Teachers' opinions about the elements of effective feedback

Categories	Excerpts
Immediate	If I give feedback after a long time, it will not achieve its purpose. I take notes of mistakes during the task and then I explain the points that need attention without giving names (P10)
Focusing on strengths	I start my sentence by explaining the things that the student did well, and then I refer to the mistakes (P1)
Informative	Feedback message should be informative, not superficially given with phrases like *bravo, well-done, be careful*! (P17)
Comprehensible	It should be understood by the learner, that is, the teacher must use simple language. (P3)
Objective	I try to be as objective as possible while giving feedback and I explain what evaluation results mean and how the student should proceed according to the results (P9)

Lastly, the teachers were asked to explain why they described the feedback process as partially difficult and difficult. Below we outlined the recurrent ideas emerging from the participants' responses.

Differences among students: One teacher expressed her concern about differences in students' academic levels in the same class saying, "*When students' levels are different, I find it hard to adjust my language to their levels while giving feedback"* (P7). Two teachers acknowledged students' individual differences made the process partially difficult stating *"I found the* feedback process partly difficult as it varies according to the students' abilities, preferences, and capacity" (P15). Another teacher agreed that students are not alike, thus, it is not easy to decide how to give feedback. *"It is not always easy to evaluate the student's performance and offer suggestions for self-improvement considering individual factors, such as learning style and intelligence type"* (P4).

Using appropriate feedback language: Teachers' having difficulty in choosing appropriate words or phrases while giving feedback was seen as another source of difficulty during the feedback process. P16 commented; *"Choosing the appropriate words or giving feedback at the appropriate time is a sensitive point. If I don't express my ideas properly, it can damage the interest and motivation of the students."*

Amount of feedback: Another challenge for the teachers during the feedback process was to decide how much feedback would be appropriate for student improvement. P2 expressed; "*I'm having a hard time figuring out the amount of feedback I should give. I can never know if I say too much or too little."*

Foreign language barrier: All the participants in our study used target language in order to give feedback to their learners, which appeared to cause difficulty for the teachers to make the feedback message clear. P11 reported; "*I think using the target language while giving feedback* *sometimes prevents students from accurately understanding feedback. Thus, I can't decide whether to use mother language or target language."*

Students' low-level engagement with feedback: One teacher commented on some students' resistance to receiving feedback and highlighted they are not interested in receiving feedback or don't want to accept the teachers' comments, and said, *"Sometimes students may not want to listen to and accept my comments. I notice some of them never read my feedback notes, perhaps thinking it wouldn't affect their performance at all"* (P4).

RQ1 (b). What are foreign language teachers current feedback literacy levels regarding their existing practices and strategies in giving feedback?

We also aimed at revealing the assessment methods teachers used in their lessons (Figure 2) and found that *homework* assignments followed by *quizzes* and *projects* were the most preferred forms of assessment.

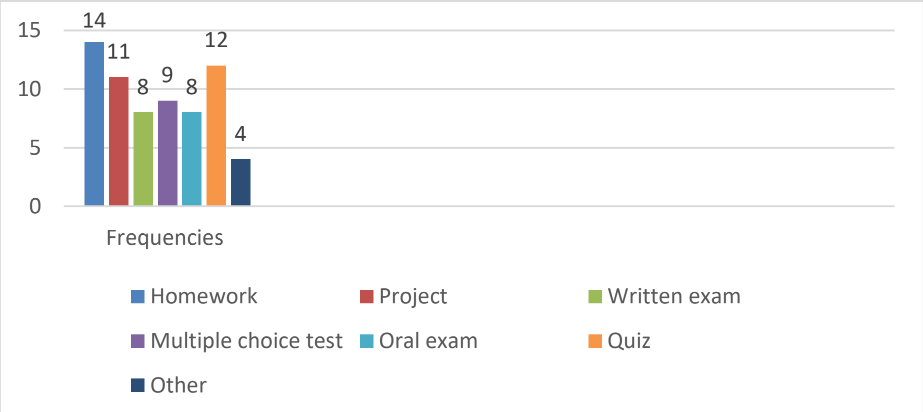

Figure 2. Frequencies of the assessment methods used by the teachers

Whether teachers gave feedback to students after using these assessment methods was also explored. All the participants reported doing so, but they seemed to differ in terms of delivery. Five teachers stated they gave *oral feedback* while 12 of them reported providing both *oral and written feedback*. Considering how their students felt after receiving feedback, 13 teachers expressed students felt happy upon having feedback, 12 teachers described students' feelings as encouraged. For seven teachers, students became sad and three of them reported their students' feelings as "*bored*" after obtaining feedback from their teacher.

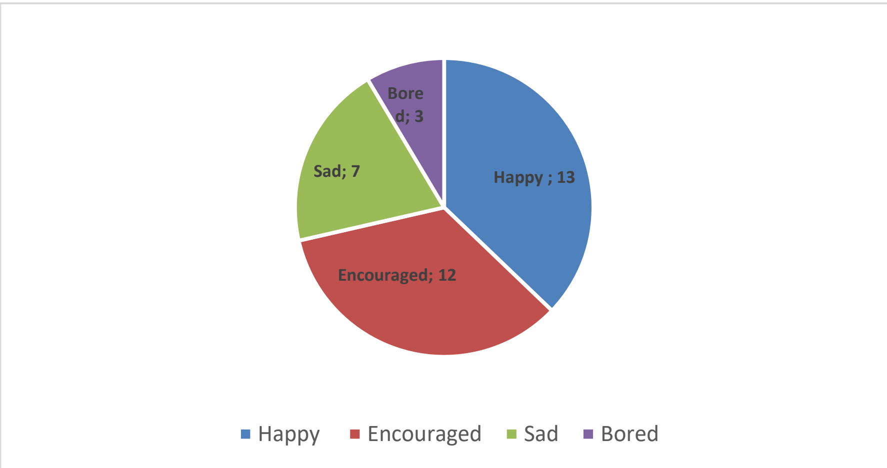

Figure 3. Teachers' perceptions of students' feelings after receiving feedback

We wanted to explore to what extent teachers thought their students benefitted from the feedback they were provided with. 12 teachers acknowledged that students understood their feedback and made necessary corrections while nine of them believed students didn't bother to make necessary changes although they understood feedback. The teachers' opinions about the reasons why students were not interested in their feedback were presented in Figure 4.

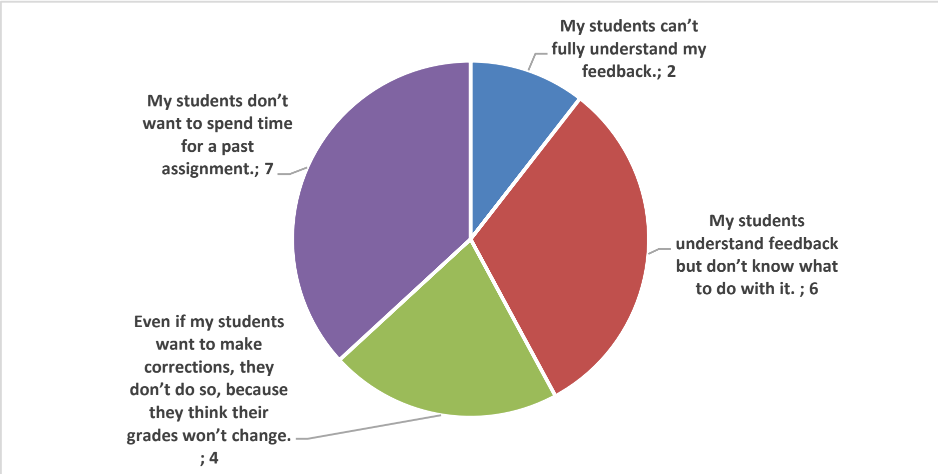

Figure 4. Teachers' perceptions of the reasons for students' attitudes about feedback

RQ2. How do foreign language teachers reflect on their experience in an online modular training program on feedback literacy?

Our next research inquiry was to explore teachers' reflections on their experiences of the online modular training on feedback literacy. To achieve this, we collected data through focus group interviews and e-journal entries. Comparative data analysis helped us arrive at conclusions regarding the teachers' reflections on the impact of the training program on their *teaching practice* and *learners* and their evaluations of the *points still open for improvement in personal feedback practices*. Further data analysis revealed the teachers' evaluations of the program regarding its *content, method of delivery, duration, instructional materials, and suggestions for the improvement of the training.* Figure 5 displays emergent themes and categories.

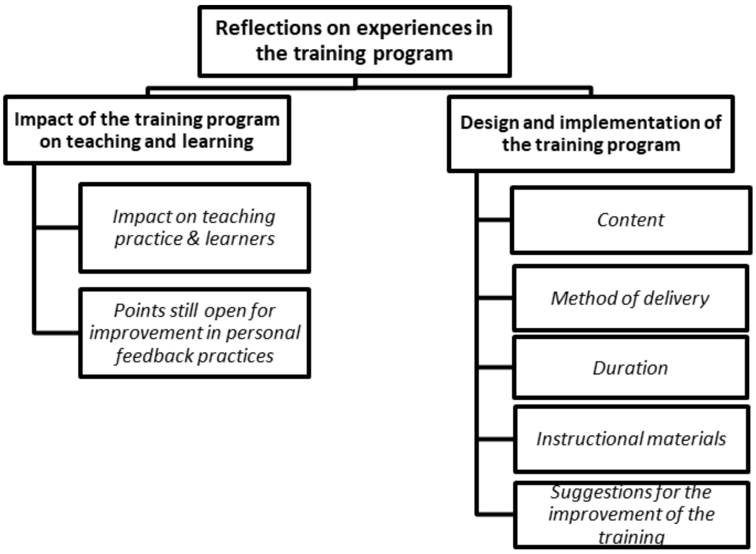

Figure 5. Emergent themes and categories from data analysis

Reflections on the impact of the training program on teaching and learning

Impact on Teaching Practice & Learners: The findings highlighted that the training provided examples of real-classroom cases all teachers might be experiencing while giving feedback. In other words, what was studied during the training corresponded well to the classroom practice. One teacher said: "*Almost every example given reminded me of my own problems in my classes. I think the presenters' explanations and concrete examples from real situations added to the practicality of the training because I could discover some ways to solve these problems*" (P3).

With heightened awareness of feedback literacy, the teachers could realize they were using some inappropriate and demotivating strategies to give feedback and they needed to empathize more with their students. For example, one teacher wrote she started paying more attention to feedback on language and individual differences among learners: "*The training [Knowing module] showed me the power of my language for effective feedback. To be honest, I used to provide feedback using similar words and phrases without considering whether different students could interpret my message differently. Now I tend to pay more attention to the feedback message and care about my students' identities. I will help them see they might react emotionally to my feedback [Being module]*" (P1).

Another impact of the training was found as the preparation of evaluation criteria together with learners. The results showed the teachers didn't use to share their rubric with their students, even some didn't use any criteria to evaluate student performance. The training seemed to help teachers realize the importance of creating a standard evaluation criterion with the involvement of learners: "*After learning that feedback is a reciprocal process that needs to be carried out with effective communication channels with students, I started to communicate more with my students and ask them for their opinions and feelings about how they want to learn and to be assessed*" (P14).

Speaking of the importance of using standard evaluation criteria, one teacher emphasized that standards need to be set with the shared efforts of the teachers in the language teaching department at school. Participant 4 said, "*One of the most significant effects of the training was to realize we need to create evaluation forms with the participation of all language teachers at school and share it with our students.*" Another teacher reflected on the same issue with the following comment: "*For example, we learned the importance of preparing evaluation criteria with our learners. After this session [Knowing module], we sent writing and speaking tasks to the students. For both tasks, we set criteria, inserted samples for students to understand the task requirement better, and then shared the criteria with our students*" (P8).

Practicing what they have learned from the training in the classroom, the teachers noticed their students appreciated forming a common definition of feedback with their classmates and enjoyed taking an active role in the creation of evaluation criteria. After the application of the activities in the class, one teacher reported that her students seemed to feel more valued by the teacher as well as being more aware of what feedback literacy means: "*I can say some of my students have become more curious individuals. They started to question what they did, how they did it, and how it resulted. I see they felt even more comfortable expressing their ideas and asking questions when we started talking about their emotions [Being module] and the strategies they could take up to compensate for their weaknesses [Acting module]*" (P12).

One teacher emphasized her students began to attach more significance to listening to her while receiving feedback. She noticed the details in her verbal and written messages gained importance with students' higher awareness of feedback: "*When I practiced [Knowing module] with my students, I realized there were those who thought feedback was just a negative comment or appreciation by an authority. We talked about what feedback was and was not as well as discussing how we should design the feedback process together*" (P4).

Lastly, some teachers agreed that the "*Acting Module*" was a very important dimension of the training. They confirmed creating a pool of strategies and an individual action plan would benefit both teachers and students by increasing learner autonomy and performance: "*The Acting Module will certainly be reflected in our classroom practices. We talked about a pool where these strategies are* *collected and an action plan for improvement. I think it will be very useful for teachers and students*" (P11).

Points still open for improvement in personal feedback practices: When analysing the points the teachers would want to improve personally more about feedback literacy, it became apparent that all were concerned about allocating sufficient time for the implementation of the activities in their classes due to their busy schedules and demanding curriculum: "*I came to realize that feedback should be individualized, and I need to give detailed feedback paying more attention to personality types. To do this, I need plenty of free time among tons of responsibilities of mine and the curriculum we have to cover*" (P3).

Concerns about lack of time also led them to question the sustainability of feedback literacy practices in their classes and making them a part of their school culture: "*I am not sure if we can implement them [feedback literacy practices] in our school effectively. During the semester, we are extremely loaded with work and may not be able to allocate extra time for training our students about feedback literacy*" (P4).

Additionally, the teachers would like to focus more on *being* and *acting* dimensions of the training as they thought there was still a strong need to know learners' individual features and emotions as well as predict how each could act upon receiving feedback. They had not thought that learners' emotional states could determine whether they would react to or reflect on the feedback message.

Upon realizing the receiver is as important as the sender and message of feedback, some teachers wanted to improve themselves more on this area. Prior to the training, they used to define feedback as a written or verbal product containing some criticism towards student homework, exam, or performance. The training seemed to cause a shift in their beliefs and practices in relation to feedback literacy. For this reason, most confirmed they were still open to development in making learners an active part of the feedback process and hearing their voices in the planning and implementation of feedback practices. One teacher commented: "*I realized what I missed most was I never allow students to give feedback to each other. I think I do it on purpose thinking that they will hurt each other, or they will not be able to express their opinions clearly. I want to improve myself a little more in this regard*" (P12).

Similarly, one of the teachers mentioned that before attending the *Being Module*, she had never considered that students' identities had such an important role in the feedback process and that teachers could guide students through exploring their identities to receive feedback more effectively for their improvement. She wanted to develop herself in this area: "*I think about the time when I was a student myself. Only a few teachers of mine really cared about what I could do to improve my weaknesses. My personality and feelings were never taken into consideration, but I will. I would like my students to realize feedback is not a criticism and that they could develop themselves through feedback if they discover their true identities. I wish we had this opportunity when we were students. I plan to talk about it in my class*" (P5).

Reflections on the design and implementation of the training program

Content: As with the content of the program, participants stated the content was "*informative*", "*clear-to-understand*", "*practical*", "*useful*" and "*entertaining*". A special focus on feedback literacy helped the participants obtain new insights into the significance of feedback information and learners. For example, one teacher reported: "*I had never considered feedback as a reciprocal process to be handled from a multi-dimensional way as Knowing, Being and Acting"* (P1).

One teacher referred to the content as being "*entirely new and different*" from the ones she had previously listened to, which encouraged her to consider the feedback process in relation to learners' knowledge, identity, and actions. She summarized her perceptions as follows: "*Previously, I had* *listened to the elements of effective feedback in seminars and had taken an undergraduate course on giving feedback. This one was all new and different. Knowing Module focused on the purpose of feedback and establishing standards with students for assessment. During the Being Module, we discussed how different interpretations could be made on the same feedback information by students, and Acting Module was about the implementation of feedback messages and targets set by students for their improvement*" (P14).

Method of Delivery: Results indicated the participants' satisfaction with the delivery method of the training. All stated that it was not conveyed in the form of a lecture, but as an interactive one encouraging discussion and sharing among the teachers. Most teachers liked the end-of the-session practices of each module where they were asked to engage in group work and think and act as if they were students. The teachers also agreed that the trainers were well-prepared for the sessions, and each knew well how to deliver the content in the most interesting and enjoyable way.

The teachers also thought information in a new module was always presented in relation to the previous one. This helped them remember the previous week's subject better and make easier connections with new content. One teacher said: "*It [Knowing Module] was highly useful as we first recognized what feedback is not, we then focused on the purpose of feedback and how to use it as a learning source. Being Module started with the revision of the Knowing Module and the trainers presented some group tasks where we could connect both modules to each other and remember the past content. The last one [Acting Module] began with an online quiz followed by a review of the answers collected by all participants*" (P11).

Another point was related to the online mode of delivery due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It was perceived as a disadvantage at first since there wouldn't be any face-to-face interaction between the participants and trainers. However, the online mode seemed to make the training more practical as the training modules could be arranged after working hours and the teachers could connect to the sessions from the comfort of their homes. This can be evidenced by the comment made by a teacher: *"We accessed the training from home. Despite my former prejudice against taking an online course, it never impeded communication or interaction among us. I think it was more comfortable and safer connecting from home*" (P2).

Duration: The teachers agreed the entire program lasted very long although it did not negatively influence or demotivate them. Participant 1 said: *"It took long, more than 3 months to complete the training, but I still can remember what we talked about in the first module*", emphasizing the positive impact of the training on her learning. Participant 12 noted that the training could not have been shorter as there was a lot to focus on, even suggesting a longer program which would enable participants to spare more time to practice the samples from the assessed student performance.

Data analysis further revealed positive perceptions of the teachers regarding the delivery of the training every two weeks. This duration was good because they reported that they needed time to apply what they learned from the training in the classroom and then to reflect on their experiences of the feedback process until the next module.

Instructional Materials: The participants described the instructional materials as engaging with respect to their content and design. For all teachers, the content was presented in a diverse and the most interactive way possible: "*I think the materials set an example for us in terms of their content and diversity. I really liked the use of tools like Padlet and Mentimeter, which helped us do the tasks with full attention*" (P13).

Most teachers commented positively about the group activities in breakout rooms where they collaborated to complete the worksheets and exchanged ideas with other group members during the main session. Sample materials (worksheets) shared for application in the classroom were also appreciated. They were found to be authentic and help internalization of the content by the participants. They were reported to be well-prepared and free of any complex terms or phrases:

“Sample materials presented and shared were functional and easy to understand. It’s good they didn’t contain too much terminology. I also have useful ideas for material preparation on feedback literacy” (P4).

Suggestions for the improvement of the training: Data analysis revealed two main suggestions for the improvement of the training. The first suggestion was made for the provision of more real-cases such as samples from graded student work, and excerpts from teacher feedback notes, rubrics, etc. to assist participants’ understanding of theoretical parts. “*I know it might not be possible to present everything about feedback literacy in 30 or 40 hours, but my suggestion is to spare more time for the Knowing Module with more authentic examples of student work and teacher feedback. I believe participants could make sense of the content better this way*” (P5).

Another suggestion was related to sparing more time for practice in all three modules. The teachers wanted to have several opportunities for self and peer evaluation; in other words, to compare themselves with their colleagues by giving feedback on the same piece of student work and check to see if they were standard in their feedback practice. “*We usually advise our students to seek more practice opportunities to make learning permanent. Now, I, as a learner of feedback literacy in this training program, recommend extending the duration of application parts in each module*” (P1). Participant 8 commented: “*I would like to learn more about the Acting Module. I think I was unable to fully concentrate on the strategies students should develop upon receiving feedback. I suggest having an additional session for more practice about this module*.”

DISCUSSION

The results of the study showed that the online modular training program aiming to increase teachers’ knowledge of feedback literacy was successful in achieving its aims. The participants of the study, most of whom did not get any specific training on feedback literacy, were unfamiliar with the topic but willing to increase their knowledge. They stated that they benefitted from the online training they participated in. The shift in their definitions of feedback from “*giving advice, correcting mistakes*, and *informing students about their poor performance”* to *“encouraging students to be more curious learners who question what they did, how they did it, and how it resulted in expressing their emotions freely”* is one of the most significant findings of the study. Thus, it would be possible to conclude that the training provided to the teachers in this study gave them the opportunity for perceiving feedback as a two-way dialogue between teachers and students. As expressed by the teachers, students started to become active agents of their own learning, questioning, and evaluating what they were doing and freely expressing their feelings, as also suggested by Molloy et al. (2020). Therefore, encouraging teachers to reconsider their beliefs, applications and curriculum considering their assessment practices and beliefs might be suggested as one of the important implications of this study.

Our study can also be shown as an example of collaborative professional development endeavour promoting feedback literacy at the institutional level. As Carless et al. (2011) believe these types of collaborative activities focusing on teachers’ attitudes and behaviours regarding their feedback practices, especially with specific and real examples are useful in increasing teachers’ awareness. As also argued by Price et al. (2011), rather than devoting more time and resources to doing more assessments, creating opportunities that can help both students and teachers to become more literate in appreciating the aims of assessment and encouraging more engagement with assessment practices for both parts would be more effective. In this study, teachers’ heightened awareness of their own assessment practices, ineffective feedback language, inappropriate or even demotivating strategies they were using in giving feedback all confirmed the positive effect of the training to change their beliefs and future applications with respect to feedback literacy. The training program contributed to creating a feedback literacy culture at the institution, at least for foreign language teaching, which is a desirable outcome as suggested by Henderson et al. (2019). For more effective feedback processes, longer-term practices and ongoing engagement with the new perspectives are needed. Thus, as Carless (2019) suggests, making professional development focusing on feedback literacy should be a long-term institutional practice guiding both teachers and students.

Rather than including feedback practices as isolated actions, learners need to be given opportunities for making judgements and be involved in dialogue with others as part of their curriculum (Boud & Molloy, 2013).

The results also revealed that the online program based on DEFT was perceived positively in assisting teachers to develop a new understanding of feedback literacy. The structure, content, and materials used were found useful and practical for the participants. The dialogues among the teachers working at the same institution during the online training helped them understand each other's perceptions and applications. They understood that feedback is a two-way interaction and merely giving feedback to learners does not mean they comprehend it and take actions for improvement. Nevertheless, the teachers desired several opportunities for self and peer evaluation; to see if they were consistent in their feedback practice. Additionally, they demanded to have more real classroom examples related to their contexts, and more importantly to have more time to devote to feedback practices in their own curriculum, being concerned about the sustainability of putting what they have learned into practice. While teachers in this study were enthusiastic to spend more time in improving their students' feedback literacy and their own assessment applications such as developing an institutional evaluation criterion, their expectations show that the capacity development of teachers need more time and energy to be channelled institutionally (Carless & Winstone, 2020).

CONCLUSION

Although the findings cannot be generalized to other contexts, we believe the training offered in this study can be applicable in many other educational settings. Following similar steps, trainers can assist teachers in becoming feedback literate with the goal of assisting learners and, as a result, improving the quality of education. While we provided an online modular in-service teacher training program, a similar approach, including classroom observations, can be used in a face-to-face or blended approach. For further research, making observations in the teachers' classrooms and giving feedback on their real applications might help them become more conscious and literate about the feedback process.. Teachers can also be encouraged to give feedback to each other to ensure the sustainability of the new practices institutionally. Involving students' perspectives and comparing them with the teachers might be suggested to see the events from the other side of the coin. Considering the significance of being able to give and receive effective feedback throughout our lives, feedback literacy might even be considered a graduate outcome as also suggested by other researchers in the field (Carless & Boud, 2018; Nicol et al., 2014; Winstone et al., 2020). We think that fostering institutional feedback literacy culture will contribute to the development of a more literate society, one in which people are able to evaluate their own work as well as that of others and to give and receive feedback from one another in an appropriate manner and language.

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