
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Digital Learning and Corrective Feedback: Analysing Moroccan In-service EFL Teachers' Beliefs

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| ABSTRACT

The aim of this research is to investigate the beliefs and perceptions of in-service English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers in the Moroccan context with regard to digital learning. Corrective feedback is a key component of digital learning, applied linguistics, language pedagogy and language acquisition. In the past two decades, research on OCF has received a considerable and extensive attention to investigate the effectiveness and importance of CF in the context of digital foreign language learning. Most of these studies have shown that CF is beneficial and necessary for foreign language learners. The findings of the study shows that in-service EFL teachers have a general understanding of corrective feedback (CF) techniques, but there is a need for professional development in this area. Elicitation and implicit correction are the most commonly used CF techniques. Furthermore, teachers recognize the importance of CF for effective digital EFL instruction. However, a significant number of teachers do not use digital tools to provide CF due to technological limitations, training deficiencies, or resistance to change. Exploring 35 EFL Moroccan teachers' beliefs concerning OCF types and importance can shed light on their instructional practices and provide insights into the effectiveness of feedback strategies employed in EFL classrooms. To address this, we adopt in this study the descriptive analytical approach as one of the scientific research methods.

| KEYWORDS

Corrective Feedback; Digital Learning; Feedback types; EFL; Teachers' Beliefs; Language Teaching

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

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1. Introduction

Nowadays, digital education has become a norm rather than an exception. Teachers worldwide use technological tools to reach their students, who are becoming increasingly motivated and interested in the use of technology and the Internet. The provision of effective corrective feedback strategies in digital learning is important to generate positive learning opportunities. For example, when teachers utilize various features of the digital tools available, they can individualize feedback to provide assistance that is tailored to each student's needs in a timely way. Furthermore, these tools permit spotting and addressing mistakes dynamically; and this can assist both teachers and learners and enhance the learning-teaching process. Therefore, incorporating corrective feedback and digital learning tools can establish a mutually beneficial relationship. The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has pushed the world to opt for distance learning as the sole option to maintain education around the globe. Even though technology has become more common in language teaching in the last decade, thousands of language teachers and learners were suddenly forced to use the internet as the only medium for teaching and learning during and post-pandemic- for the first time and without adequate preparation (Hodge, Moore, Lockee, Trust, & Bond, 2020 as cited in Tao and Gao, 2022). Not only were many ill-prepared for the challenge of teaching and learning languages online, they were also, in many cases, poorly supported by their local infrastructure (e.g., internet availability) and resources (Tao and Gao, 2022). In other words, both teachers and learners were not ready for the problem of adjusting the teaching-learning process to fit the changes that occur in the educational model (in which

they need to acquaint themselves with the online model as the only option available, especially during the COVID-19 period). Additionally, there was a shortage of the necessary resources, such as laptops, access to the internet, software, lack of training, etc. Thus, there was a switch in the form of feedback provision in the teaching-learning process; teachers provide feedback in an electronic manner (e-feedback).

2. Research Questions

This study aims to explore the beliefs and perceptions of Moroccan EFL teachers regarding corrective feedback in the context of digital learning. This following research questions will guide this investigation:

RQ1: What are the beliefs and perception of in-service EFL teachers in the Moroccan context regarding digital learning and corrective feedback?

RQ2: What types of corrective feedback do in-service EFL teachers in Morocco believe are most effective for their students?

RQ3: What are the factors that influence the use of corrective feedback by in-service EFL teachers in Morocco?

RQ4: What are the challenges and opportunities associated with using corrective feedback in digital EFL classrooms in Morocco?

3. Research Objectives

This study aims to explore the beliefs and perceptions of Moroccan EFL teachers regarding digital learning with a particular focus on CF. The latter plays an important role in digital learning, applied linguistics, language pedagogy and language acquisition. In recent decades, research on OCF has started exploring its effectiveness and relevance in the context of digital language learning. Most of these studies have shown the positive effects and necessity of CF on language learning. By exploring Moroccan EFL teachers' views on the types and importance of CF, this study can shed light on their practices and experience as well as provide insights into the effectiveness of feedback strategies used in EFL classes.

4. Literature Review

4.1 Corrective Feedback

In language teaching and learning, feedback plays a fundamental role as it helps learners to adjust or maintain the hypothesis about the target language, and also assist them to assess their language proficiency. In this regard, teachers use different approaches to give feedback either positively to ensure that their students are in the right path in their quest of language learning, or negatively to indicate that the learner has made a mistake and that he or she needs to rectify or modify their language production. In Second Acquisition research and the English language teaching domain is referred to as corrective feedback. CF is an essential aspect of second language learning which has been extensively studied for decades. It refers to the feedback that learners receive on their errors in their second language productions. Ellis, Loewen and Erlam (2006) define CF as the responses that learners receive as a reaction to their erroneous utterances (p340). This implies that any response to a learner's error, whether direct or indirect, is CF.

According to Ellis (2006), CF is the answer to a learner's utterance that contains an error (p. 28). This does not imply that CF's primary purpose is to draw attention to errors in students' work; rather, it serves as a scaffold that fosters L2 development (Lyster et al., 2013 as cited in Li & Huang, 2017, p 1033). In other words, CF is demonstrated in the teachers' answers that highlight errors in students' work and encourage L2 development. Additionally, Suzuki (2004) recognizes the function of CF as a teaching tool that teachers employ to highlight students' incorrect speech, which may result in students producing altered work.

EFL teachers implement two broad categories of CF: direct and indirect. Direct corrective feedback refers to the technique in which the teacher clearly indicates the erroneous utterance and gives the correct form, for example explicit correction. Indirect or implicit corrective feedback encompasses techniques in which teachers indicate that an error has been committed without providing the correct form, this includes techniques such as elicitation where learners need to correct themselves.

Numerous research has examined the preferences and effects of various corrective feedback techniques. They examined the usefulness of oral corrective feedback (OCF) types in language learning. Explicit correction, recast, and metalinguistic feedback have been shown to be very successful in improving students' speaking ability and language acquisition in general. According to Azam, Sukri, and Paridaluddin (2024) explicit correction is the most preferred CF type. This CF type has proven to be effective as it directly addresses erroneous utterance and offers clear corrections that enhance understanding. Recasts, a CF technique, involves reformulating a learner's error to indicate that he or she has made an error. It has also shown to be beneficial for language development especially in speaking contexts (see also Lyster and Ranta, 1997; Spada and Fröhlich, 1995; Rahimi, 2017; Mafidah, 2018; Lyster and Saito, 2010; Nassaji, 2009; Sheen, 2006). Metalinguistic feedback is a CF mode which encourages learners to reflect on their language use, and it promotes deeper cognitive engagement and understanding (Nurjanah et al., 2024).

4.2 Corrective Feedback Types

Language acquisition is greatly facilitated by different types of CF. In this study, we opt for the renowned typology by Lyster and Ranta (1997). They classified CF into six major types: Explicit correction, recasts, clarification requests, metalinguistic feedback, elicitation, and Repetition.

4.2.1. Explicit correction

Explicit correction is a corrective technique in which the teachers indicate explicitly the correct form to the learner.

Example:

S: The program will start on May.

T: Not on May. We say "the program will start in May." (Lyster and Ranta, 1997, p. 46)

4.2.2. Recasts

In CF research, recasts are techniques which involve the reformulation of all or part of the erroneous utterance to direct learners' attention to the correct form without explicitly identifying the error (Lyster and Ranta, 1997, pp. 46-47).

Example:

S: I have to find the answer on the book?

T: in the book.

4.2.3. Clarification requests

Clarification request is a technique where the teacher shows that the learner's utterance is not clear or understood and asks the student to restate it. This can be done through expressions such as "what?" or "sorry".

Example:

S: What did you spend with your friends yesterday?

T: What? (Lyster and Ranta, 1997, p. 47)

4.2.4. Metalinguistic feedback

According to Lyster and Ranta (1997) metalinguistic feedback involves giving technical linguistic information about the error without explicitly providing the correct answer.

Example:

S: There will be some influence people at the party.

T: Influence is a noun. (Lyster and Ranta, 1997, p. 47)

4.2.5. Elicitation

Elicitation encourages self-correction by pausing or asking questions. It helps learners to supply the correct work or phrase.

Example:

S: This tea is very warm.

T: It is very?

S: Hot. (Lyster and Ranta, 1997, p. 48)

4.2.6. Repetition

In Corrective feedback, repetition is a technique that teachers implement to draw attention to the learners' error by repeating with means of emphatic stress.

Example:

S: I will showed you.

T: I will SHOWED you?

S: I will show you (Lyster and Ranta, 1997, p. 48)

4. Methodology

The current study employs a descriptive analytical approach to explore Moroccan EFL teachers' regarding digital learning with a particular focus on corrective feedback. This approach is considered appropriate as it allows researchers to collect extensive data on participants' beliefs and perceptions.

Data collection and analysis

A structured questionnaire consisting of open and closed questions was developed to gather data for this study. The purpose of the survey was to obtain information about participants' beliefs and perceptions about using digital tools in EFL classroom. The questionnaire was then administered to a sample of 35 in-service EFL teachers in Morocco. To allow efficient data collection and reach a large number of participants the questionnaire was administered online using Google forms.

5. Results and Discussion

Figure 1. How would you describe your understanding of corrective feedback strategies when applied to the teaching of English as a Foreign language (EFL)?

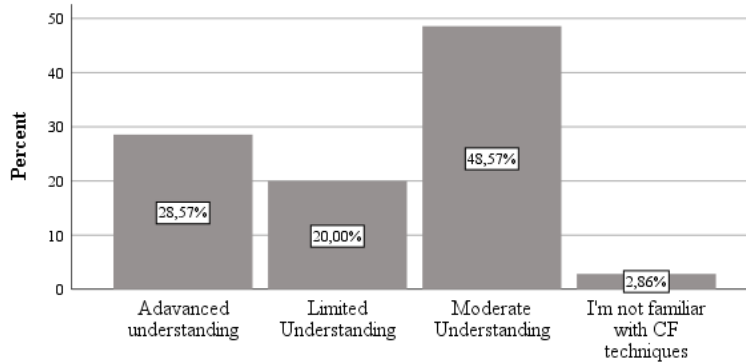


Figure 1 shows how 35 in-service EFL teachers in Morocco described their understanding of corrective feedback strategies. The majority of the respondents (48.57%) have a moderate understanding of corrective feedback techniques, followed by (28.57%) with an advanced understanding, (20%) with a limited understanding, and one respondent who mentioned that he is not familiar with corrective feedback techniques (2.86%). This suggests that most in-service EFL teachers in Morocco have some understanding of corrective feedback techniques, but there is a need for more professional development in this area. Corrective feedback plays a crucial role in language teaching as it allows students to identify and rectify their errors. Teachers who are equipped with a diverse repertoire of corrective feedback techniques can better support their students' linguistic growth.

Figure 2. What is your preferred approach to providing CF in your EFL Classroom?

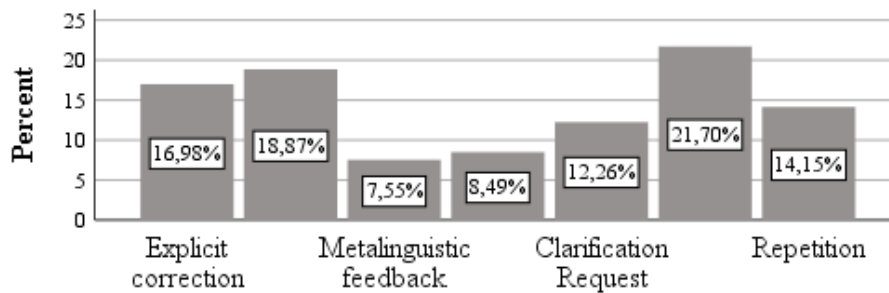


Figure 2 shows in-service teachers' preferences in terms of what type of CF type they tend to use in their classrooms. The most popular technique is elicitation (21.7%), followed by implicit correction (18.87%), repetition (42.9%), explicit correction (16.98%), repetition (14.15%), clarification request (12.26%), recasts (8.49%), and metalinguistic feedback (7.55%). Overall, figure 2 suggests that in-service EFL teachers in Morocco use a variety of corrective feedback techniques. However, the most popular technique is elicitation. This suggests that teachers recognize the importance of helping students to develop their self-correction skills.

Table 1. Corrective Feedback enhances language learning in the EFL context

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	17	16,0	48,6	48,6
	Agree	16	15,1	45,7	94,3
	Neutral	2	1,9	5,7	100,0
	Total	35	33,0	100,0	
Missing	System	71	67,0		

Total	106	100,0
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Table 1 illustrates the perceptions of 35 in-service EFL teachers in Morocco regarding the effectiveness (CF) in enhancing language learning. A significant majority of the respondents (48.6%) strongly agree that CF enhances language learning, while 45.7% agree with this statement. Only (5.7%) of teachers remains neutral, and none of the respondents disagree. This data suggests a strong consensus among in-service EFL teachers in Morocco on the positive impact of CF on language acquisition. The high level of agreement highlights the importance of CF in the EFL context. Teachers who are proficient in various CF techniques are better positioned to support their students' linguistic development.

Figure 3. Corrective feedback is an important element of effective EFL teaching.

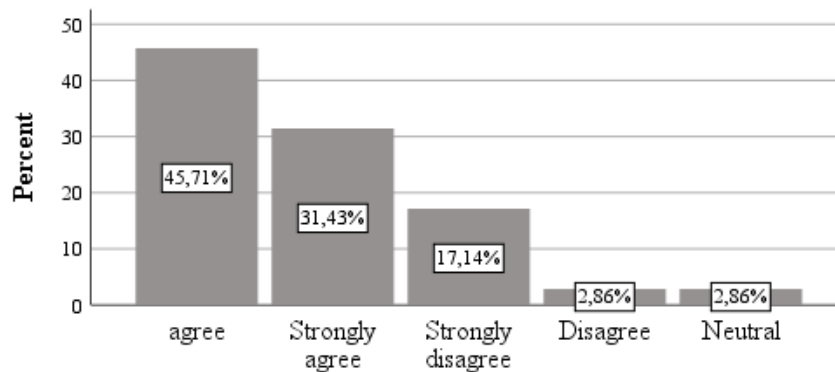


Figure 4 shows the responses of 35 in-service teachers of English in Morocco to the statement "Corrective feedback is an important element of effective EFL teaching." The most common response was "Agree" (45.71%), followed by "Strongly agree" (31.4%) and "Neutral" (2.9%). Only 5.7% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed. This suggests that a large number of in-service teachers of English in Morocco agree that corrective feedback is an important element of effective EFL teaching. Only a small number of teachers disagree.

Figure 4. How often do you use digital tools to provide CF in your classroom?

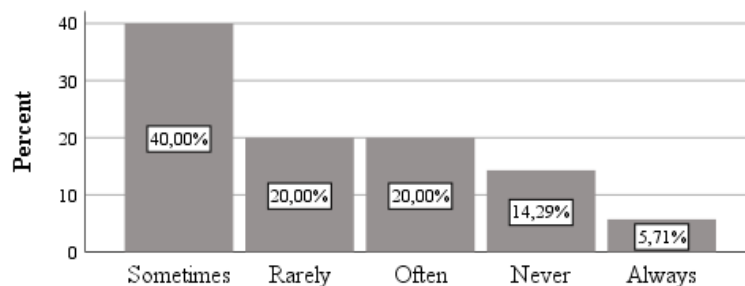


Figure 4 shows the frequency of 35 EFL teachers' use of digital tools to provide corrective feedback in classrooms in Morocco. The majority of teachers 40% use digital tools to provide corrective feedback sometimes, followed by 40% who use them either often or rarely, 14,29% who never use them, and about 5.71% who always use them. This suggests that most EFL in-service teachers are using digital tools to provide corrective feedback to some extent. However, there is a significant minority of teachers who are not using digital tools for this purpose at all. This may be due to a number of factors, such as lack of access to technology, lack of training, or resistance to change.

Figure 5. How effective do you think digital CF tools to be in comparison to traditional methods?

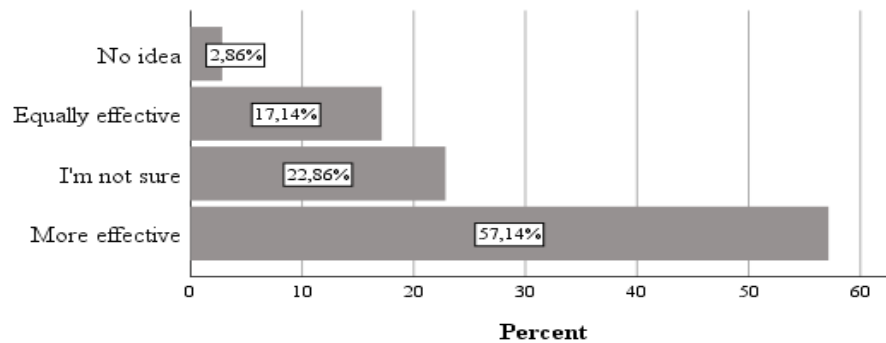


Figure 5 illustrates the responses of 35 in-service teachers of English in Morocco to the question of how effective they think digital corrective feedback tools are in comparison to traditional methods. The most common response was "More effective" (57.14%), followed by "I'm not sure" (22.86%) and "Equally effective" (17.14%). Only 2.9% of respondents had "No ideas". This suggests that a majority of in-service teachers of English in Morocco believe that digital corrective feedback tools are more effective than traditional methods. However, a significant number of teachers (22.9%) are not sure, and a small number of teachers (17.1%) believe that traditional methods are equally effective.

Figure 6. CF, whether provided traditionally or through digital tools, significantly contributes to language learning.

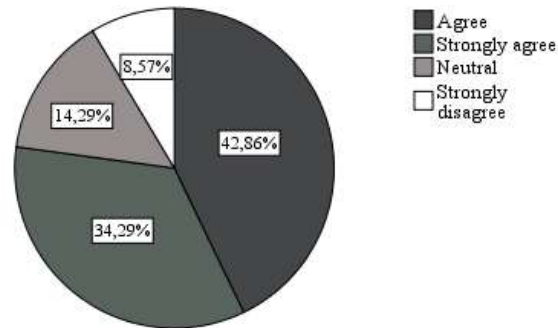


Figure 6 shows that the majority of respondents (77.15%) agree or strongly agree with the statement that corrective feedback, regardless of the method employed, plays a significant role in language learning. A small percentage (14.29%) of respondents remained neutral suggesting that there may be some who are not sure of whether CF provided through digital or traditional tools can contribute to the process of language learning. Additionally, only a small minority of respondents (8.57%) disagree or strongly disagree with this statement which indicates a strong belief among Moroccan EFL teachers in the effectiveness of corrective feedback as a pedagogical tool.

Table 2. What are the challenges that you face in implementing CF using digital tools?

		Count	Column Valid N %
What are the challenges that you face in implementing CF using digital tools?	Limited access of technology	12	34,3%
	Lack of Training	11	31,4%
	Students' resistance	5	14,3%
	Technical Issues	5	14,3%
	CF will not be helpful, especially in large classroom.	1	2,9%

I don't use digital tools for the sake of providing CF	1	2,9%
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Figure 5 illustrates the challenges faced by 35 in-service EFL teachers in Morocco when implementing corrective feedback (CF) using digital tools. The most prevalent challenge, reported by 34.3% of respondents, is limited access to technology. This is followed by a lack of training, cited by 31.4% of respondents. Additionally, 14.3% of teachers face students' resistance and technical issues, respectively. A smaller percentage (2.9%) believe that CF will not be helpful, especially in large classrooms, and another 2.9% do not use digital tools for providing CF. These findings highlight significant barriers to the effective use of digital tools for CF, suggesting a need for improved access to technology, enhanced training for teachers, and strategies to address student resistance and technical difficulties.

Table 3. Responses of 35 in-service EFL teachers in Morocco on their plans and confidence in integrating digital tools for corrective feedback (CF)

Do you plan to increase the integration of digital tools for CF in your future teaching practices?	Yes	Count	25
		Row Valid N %	100,0%
	No	Count	4
		Row Valid N %	100,0%
	I don't know	Count	5
		Row Valid N %	100,0%
	If needed, why not?	Count	1
		Row Valid N %	100,0%
I feel confident in integrating digital tools to provide corrective feedback to my students.	Agree	Count	14
		Row Valid N %	100,0%
	Strongly agree	Count	8
		Row Valid N %	100,0%
	Neutral	Count	7
		Row Valid N %	100,0%
	Disagree	Count	3
		Row Valid N %	100,0%
	Strongly Disagree	Count	3
		Row Valid N %	100,0%

Table 3 presents the responses of 35 in-service EFL teachers in Morocco regarding their plans to integrate digital tools for corrective feedback (CF) in their future teaching practices. A significant majority (71.4%) indicated a positive inclination towards integrating digital tools, with 25 respondents (100.0% of those who answered "Yes") planning to do so. On the contrary, 11.4% (4 respondents) stated they do not plan to integrate digital tools, and 14.3% (5 respondents) were uncertain. Additionally, one respondent provided a conditional response, indicating they might integrate digital tools if needed. Regarding confidence in using digital tools for CF, 40.0% of respondents agreed, and 22.9% strongly agreed that they feel confident in integrating these tools. However, 20.0% remained neutral, and a combined 17.1% either disagreed or strongly disagreed. These findings suggest a general willingness and confidence among EFL teachers to incorporate digital tools for CF, though there is a notable minority who are either uncertain or lack confidence. This Highlights an area for potential professional development.

Table 4. Students' resistance is a barrier to the successful integration of CF through digital tools

		Count	Column Valid N %
Students' resistance is a barrier to the successful integration of CF through digital tools	Agree	15	42,9%
	Neutral	12	34,3%
	Strongly disagree	3	8,6%
	Disagree	3	8,6%
	Strongly agree	2	5,7%

Table 4 shows 35 EFL teachers' responses to the statement "students' resistance is a barrier to the successful integration of CF through digital tools. The majority of respondents (77.15%) agree or strongly agree with the statement that students' resistance is a barrier to the successful integration of corrective feedback through digital tools. This suggests that teachers perceive student resistance as a significant challenge in implementing digital tools for corrective feedback effectively. A minority of respondents (14.28%) disagree or strongly disagree with the statement, indicating that they do not find student resistance to be a major obstacle. This suggests that some teachers may have found ways to overcome student resistance or that they have not yet encountered significant resistance from their students. A small portion of respondents (8.57%) are neutral on the issue, suggesting that they may not have a clear opinion on the extent to which student resistance affects the use of digital tools. This could indicate a need for further research and discussion on this topic among teachers.

6. Recommendations

The following recommendations are presented for the effective integration of CF tools into Moroccan EFL classrooms. Firstly, teachers need to undergo extensive training programs to acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to use digital CF tools effectively. Secondly, further research should be conducted to explore strategies to overcome students' resistance to digital CF tools. Thirdly, a culture of continuous professional development must be fostered among EFL teachers to keep pace with developments in CF practices and technology in general. Fourthly, the successful implementation of CF through digital tools requires fostering collaboration among teachers to facilitate sharing experiences, best practices, and strategies. Finally, to promote the adoption and use of CF digital tools, teachers must have sufficient resources and support. The effectiveness of digital CF tools in Moroccan EFL classrooms should be continuously evaluated to identify areas that need improvement. There is also a need to explore the potential of CF digital tools to support personalized learning and differentiated instruction. Teachers should be encouraged to provide feedback on their experiences with CF digital tools to inform future developments and improvements. Ultimately, digital CF tools should be promoted as complementary to traditional CF methods rather than a replacement.

7. Conclusion

This study investigates the use of corrective feedback (CF) in Moroccan EFL classrooms. The findings shows that most EFL teachers in Morocco use a variety of CF techniques. Elicitation is the most prevalent approach. The focus on elicitation suggests that teachers recognize the importance of developing students' self-correction skills. Moreover, most teachers agree that CF play an important role in effective language teaching learning. This positive perception of CF is consistent with the growing body of literature supporting the effectiveness in language learning. This study also explores the integration of digital tools for CF. although a significant number of teachers use digital tools to some extent, there are still many who do not. This limited adoption may be due to factors such as lack of training, technical issues, or students' resistance. Despite these challenges, most teachers express a willingness to integrate digital tools for CF into their future teaching practices. In fact, the growing interest in digital CF shows that Moroccan EFL teachers recognize the potential of technology to improve language learning and acquisition.

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