

# Digital Pedagogy in Second Language Acquisition: Integrating Automated Evaluation and Humanistic Feedback in Italian L2

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*Abstract:* - In our contemporary society, distance learning has significantly restructured the way educators teach foreign languages and most notably the way they assess and communicate with students. As such, our paper examines how formative feedback is applied in higher education with special interest to Italian language courses. Specifically, our study compares traditional international Italian academic literature published between 2020-2025 in terms of different scholarly online assessment traditions approach. As shown, international research tends to treat feedback as a data-driven, technology-supported process and it usually focuses on Learning Management Systems (LMS). In contrast, Italian applied linguistics research, focuses its feedback predominantly as a human based rationale thus promoting dialogue, empathy, trust, and formative interaction. As a result, to address this gap in research, we propose a novice techno-humanistic model for empathetic digital education. Analytically, our framework is characterized by personalization in communication and demonstrates that the success of online assessment relies heavily on how students interpret, use, and respond to feedback. The findings confirm that a shift from solely automation of digital channels is necessary as human dialogue in its core and essence significantly boosts self-regulation, active engagement, learner autonomy, and intercultural awareness for both L1 and L2 student language skills.

*Key-Words:* - formative assessment, educational dialogue as feedback, distance language pedagogy, Italian foreign language, techno-humanism L2 feedback, self-regulated learning, learning analytics, Automated Writing Evaluation, intercultural awareness in education.

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## 1 Introduction

This paper aims to address the crucial role of feedback in formative assessment in distance Italian language teaching, [1]. Analytically, in this article we consider many different crucial factors in regards to new demands that emerged after the pandemic, such as the AI usage and the fast digitalization of university education, mainly via the use of LMS or generic abstract automation systems, [2]. Specifically, after the pandemic of COVID-19, many of the modern ways of teaching in language courses has moved to fully online or strictly hybrid formats. As such, it became evident from the start that to optimize the teaching and education transferring, an educator could not solely depend on digital platforms or technical pre-existing solutions. More specific, educators and students alike needed to reconsider their pedagogical relationship, [3], so that feedback could matter in terms of being focused, dialogue-based and continuous, [4], [5]. As a result, feedback started to shift to more than a grade or an assessment of a student after completion of task. The new pedagogical contract dictated that assessment has now become part of the learning process itself. This means, that it helped learners recognize their current level of knowledge, assisted them in understanding their goals, and ultimately identify the future needed steps for improvement, [6], [7].

In our article, we have carefully studied recent literature review and provide in many cases a comparative view of several issues fusing international and Italian scholarship. Analytically, our results were drawn from well-known indexing services and repositories, including ERIC, Scopus, ESCI Web of Science Google Scholar, Taylor & Francis Online, IGI Global, SpringerLink, and several institutional repositories of Italian universities (e.g. Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Università per Stranieri di Perugia, Università degli Studi di Milano, and Roma Tre). For articles that were not open access and we could not access their pdf information, we used ResearchGate and Academia.edu, i.e. two of the most widely known and used academic online communities.

Our findings in regards to the Italian language, showcases that feedback in most of the studies was strongly coupled with the subject of human-centred view of language education, [8], [9]. In layman's terms, it was treated as an *atto comunicativo* (communicative act), strictly associated with the negotiation of meaning, dialogue, and continuing *interazione formativa* (formative interaction) of

participants, [10]. On the contrary, international research, placed more emphasis on evidence and technology-based feedback mainly focusing on LMS solutions and automated feedback systems. Lastly, even though these systems automated many processes and provided solutions-based answers with speed and consistency, while also accompanying monitoring of student progress, unless they were used with a clear pedagogical framework, they did not offer quality services and solutions, [11], [12].

Moreover, in foreign language teaching, and case specifically in Italian as L2, most researchers agree that the most effective feedback occurs when it is fused with different information and properties such as personalized comments and transparent criteria (e.g. rubrics). This is important as it allows students to operate in cycles, i.e. learn, track, monitor and assess their progress. As such, they may return to some areas of the course that they found challenging thus put extra effort to improve their linguistic choices on their own pace. This element is of great value as it allows them to use both synchronously and asynchronously their study material whether that is through videoconferencing, LMS platforms, forums, or even written notes. As a result, students study on their own accordance and choice (self-regulation) thus the overall course metrics ameliorate from overall linguistic accuracy, to cognitive engagement, and learner participation [7], [13]. These findings suggest that feedback operates as a link between assessment and learning. It helps move teaching away from a one-way transmission of knowledge and towards a more cyclical process based on dialogue, revision, and gradual development, [5], [10], [14].

On this basis, the paper formulates the following research question:

How does feedback contribute to formative assessment in the distance teaching of Italian?

This question is addressed through a comparative synthesis of international and Italian evidence, with attention to the quality, timing, and clarity of feedback, as well as to its dialogic character and its role in learner self-regulation. Particular attention is also given to the relationship between human and technological mediation, [15], [16], since online feedback depends not only on the tools used, but also on the way teachers frame, explain, and follow up their comments, [4], [7], [13], [17], [18]. In this context, innovative practices such as automated feedback and learning analytics are considered as useful complementary mechanisms. They may strengthen the feedback process by making it faster

and more visible, but they cannot replace the interpretive, relational, and supportive role of the teacher–learner relationship, [11].

## 2 Novice Framework of Operation

In this section we present the part of our framework in regards to feedback as a concept.

### 2.1 The Concept of Feedback

Feedback is one of the main ways through which learning can be supported and strengthened. Specifically, it is responsible for connecting teaching with the real capabilities and abilities of the students so they can self-regulate their educational journey. As such, based on [19], effective feedback is closely connected to a series of issues in regards to what is the level of the learner, what is his expected goal and what demotivates him/her from achieving it. This is important as in hybrid and most notably remote environments, since educator and students do not share the same space, interactions are hard to be cultivated from a pedagogical presence to deep connections and interactions such as emotional continuity, and learning support, [20].

The Italian tradition of language pedagogy places particular emphasis on feedback as *interazione formativa*, meaning a formative interaction based on dialogue, communication, and trust between teacher and student, [10]. In this view, feedback is not limited to correction. It is part of a wider educational relationship in which the teacher helps the learner make sense of their progress and difficulties. Moreover, the study, [10], describes the teacher as a *mediatore formativo*, a mediator of learning, whose role is to encourage empathy, learner awareness, and self-regulation. The study, [7], also makes the point that feedback works better when it is timely, personalised, and part of an ongoing process of guidance rather than a one-off comment dropped at the end of a task.

On the technological side, [11], looks at automated feedback systems, particularly Automated Writing Evaluation tools, which can support language learning by giving students quick, consistent responses to their written work, [21], [22]. These systems have genuine uses in online settings where teachers are dealing with large groups or high volumes of written tasks. But their value depends entirely on how they are used. Automated feedback is not a neutral substitute for the teacher, [23]. It needs to be framed pedagogically, explained clearly, and connected to the learner's needs. For this reason, the instructor remains responsible for

“humanising” the digital message and making it meaningful within the learning process, [13].

### 2.2 Formative Assessment

performance, but a process that accompanies learning and supports gradual improvement. Its main purpose is to give learners useful information while learning is still in progress, so that they can revise their work, adjust their strategies, and become more aware of their development. The study, [24], argues that effective feedback gives learners opportunities to reflect on their performance and redirect their learning strategies. In this sense, formative assessment depends not only on what the teacher communicates, but also on how the learner interprets and uses that information.

The authors in [25], note that formative assessment becomes particularly effective when it is combined with low-stakes feedback, such as short quizzes, brief written comments, and repeated opportunities for revision. These practices reduce the pressure associated with assessment and help students remain engaged over time. This rings especially true in online language learning. Without regular confirmation that they are on the right track, students can quickly feel cut off or start doubting themselves.

The authors in [26], are direct about this: formative assessment in digital settings only functions when the tools in use actually serve the teaching goals. Technology can carry feedback, but it cannot make that feedback meaningful on its own. For feedback to do its job, it has to work on several levels at once. It needs to build confidence, clarify mistakes, show students what they are working toward, and get them thinking about how they actually learn. Without all of this, real independence and self-direction stay out of reach.

Study [5], a doctoral dissertation from Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, lands in the same place. Formative assessment in distance learning can deepen how students reflect on their own progress, but this only happens when feedback is genuinely dialogic. Once it becomes a real conversation rather than a checking exercise, assessment starts to mean something more: a space of shared understanding between teacher and student, not just a verdict handed down.

Study [27], from the conference proceedings *La Didattica delle Lingue e il Companion Volume*, pushes this further. Feedback should not be thought of as a correction tool. It is a collaborative act. The authors call for *valutazione dialogica*, dialogic assessment, where students do not simply receive feedback but actively work with it: engaging with

the criteria, making sense of the comments, and connecting all of it back to what they are actually trying to learn.

### 2.3 Distance Teaching of Foreign Languages

Online language teaching does not sit still. Technology shifts, students change, methods get rethought, and all of it happens at the same time. Nothing in that mix operates on its own. Platforms make materials easier to share and schedules easier to manage, but none of that is the same as learning a language, which still comes down to real conversation and actual human contact. Study [4], points out that large online language courses pull in students from wildly different cultural backgrounds. In those environments, feedback does something more than fix grammar. It connects what students are practicing linguistically to what that language actually means culturally. The exchange is about ideas, not just correct sentence forms.

Study [7], argues that feedback in online settings has to hold two things together that do not always sit comfortably side by side: clarity and flexibility. Clarity because students cannot function without knowing what is expected. Flexibility because online learners are not a uniform group. They work at different speeds, carry different needs, and respond differently to the same input. Feedback that works does both: it makes the student feel their work was actually read by someone, and it gives them something real to act on.

The researchers in [28], found that the quality of feedback changes the entire texture of an online course. When feedback is clear and shows some consideration for the student, the course stops feeling like a cold transaction. Study [29], takes this further, showing that combining teacher feedback with peer feedback pushes motivation upward and builds real confidence in speaking and writing. In language learning that is not a minor point, because progress depends on students being willing to put themselves out there and risk getting things wrong. Study [30], rounds this out by showing that feedback that feels warm and attentive can do meaningful work in place of the face-to-face contact that online courses cannot provide.

A study of online Italian courses [13], found that feedback functions best when it runs in tight, repeating cycles: a comment, a moment to think, another attempt. That rhythm gives students enough time to absorb what was said, sit with it, and return to the work with more clarity than they had before. Study [10], calls this a techno-humanistic approach, the idea that technology should be reinforcing the human side of teaching, not substituting for it.

Digital tools can improve access and visibility, but they have to remain anchored to the teacher's genuine attention.

### 2.4 Foreign Language: Teaching of Italian language

Feedback and ongoing assessment are not two separate things in Italian language teaching. They belong together. Feedback catches problems as they happen. Ongoing assessment keeps students pointed toward their goals and gives them a way to measure how far they have actually come. The two together shift attention away from the final grade and toward the process of learning itself, which never really stops.

Study [5], makes the case that combining them creates a cycle in which students steadily take on more responsibility for their own progress. In online Italian courses that matters enormously, because learners in those settings depend on consistent guidance, genuine interaction, and clear moments where improvement is actually possible. Good feedback that arrives at the right time does more than flag an error. It helps the student understand what that error means and what to do about it. That is the difference between teaching that claims to be student-centred and teaching that actually is.

## 3 Literature Review

Research from 2020 to 2025 keeps arriving at the same finding: feedback is among the most reliable tools available for supporting learning, and this holds especially in online settings. There is broad agreement that feedback connects ongoing assessment with learner self-management, it gives students a more active role in their own education. Rather than simply reading a teacher's comments, students engage with them, respond, and use them to do better next, [19], [24].

### 3.1 International Trends and Feedback Models

The systematic review by [25], finds that feedback is most effective when it is timely, specific, and consistent. These qualities help learners understand what they did well, what needs work, and how to move forward. The authors identify three key elements: consistency, clear alignment with course objectives, and open dialogue. Feedback, in other words, should not be scattered or one-sided, it should connect directly to what the course is trying to achieve and leave room for further conversation.

From a related perspective, [31], emphasise the importance of feedback literacy, meaning the learner's ability to understand, interpret, and use feedback in a productive way. This ability is closely connected with metacognition and self-regulation, because students need to reflect on their own learning before they can meaningfully act on the comments they receive. The authors in [32], also argue that digital feedback can make learning more transparent and interactive, especially when students can return to comments, compare their progress, and revise their work. However, they stress that digital feedback is useful only when it supports the teacher–student relationship rather than replacing it. The study, [11], notes that automated feedback systems, including AWE systems, can offer speed, consistency, and repeated support in language learning. These tools have real value, they respond quickly and help students catch certain kinds of errors. But they cannot replace the cognitive and emotional guidance a teacher provides. From a humanistic standpoint, [10], introduces the concept of *tecno-umanesimo didattico*, the idea that technology should act as a partner in teaching rather than a replacement for the teacher. This is particularly relevant in language education, where feedback needs to stay grounded in meaning, communication, and the learner's confidence.

### 3.2 Feedback and Self-Regulated Learning

Self-regulation is not a peripheral skill in formative assessment. It is the whole point. A learner who can monitor their own progress, catch where things are going wrong, change tack when a strategy stops working, and take genuine ownership of improvement is a learner who does not need to be constantly managed. Study [7], takes the position that feedback in online learning has to be genuinely two-way and actually empowering, not just framed that way. It needs to push students to look back at what they did, question where they are heading, and get sharper about how they are going about things. The authors favour mixed models, ones that combine live and self-paced interaction, so that feedback is not something that shows up occasionally but something that runs continuously through the life of the course.

The authors in [31], propose what they call a feedforward model, which reorients feedback away from past errors and toward what comes next. The logic behind it is simple enough: telling a student what went wrong in a finished task only goes so far. What they actually need is to understand how to carry that lesson into the next task, and the one after that. That is what builds metacognitive awareness

that lasts beyond a single assignment. Study [24], connects to this directly: feedback does not reach its real potential until students are genuinely involved in their own assessment and have actual tools for looking at their work critically themselves.

Study [29], strengthens the argument for mixing peer feedback with teacher feedback in digital language learning. The research shows that students get something from both ends of the exchange, not only from receiving comments but from producing them. Sitting with a peer's work and thinking carefully about it builds cognitive persistence, sharpens a sense of responsibility, and generates a real feeling of belonging to something shared. In language learning that is especially valuable, because it forces students to become more deliberate about language choices, more alert to errors, and more conscious of what they are actually trying to say.

### 3.3 Digital Environments and the Affective Dimension

Going online did not just create logistical challenges. It created emotional and communicative ones too. The authors in [30], look closely at what has become known as Zoom fatigue, the exhaustion that accumulates from long stretches of screen exposure combined with the constant low-level effort of trying to read people through a camera. That kind of drain is real, and it changes what feedback needs to do, [33]. Feedback that is precise, clear, and shows some genuine empathy can interrupt that drift toward disengagement and remind students that someone on the other side is actually paying attention to them specifically.

Study [4], drawing on LMOOCs run at the University for Foreigners of Perugia, finds that combining automated tools with genuine dialogic exchange can develop intercultural sensitivity and self-regulation together rather than treating them as separate goals. That combination matters in language education more than in most fields, because students are not just absorbing grammar and vocabulary. They are working out how to reach across cultural distance through language. This connects directly to how [5] frames feedback: as a mirror of metacognition in online language education. When feedback works properly, students do not just see their mistakes. They see themselves learning, and they become more intentional about the choices they make when they use the language.

### 3.4 Types, Timing, and Channels of Feedback

The literature usually distinguishes between three main types of feedback, [11]:

- **Teacher feedback:** personalised, explanatory, and goal-oriented; linked to increased confidence and clearer understanding of learning goals.
- **Peer feedback:** participatory, based on rubrics and dialogue; associated with self-regulation, responsibility, and a stronger sense of community.
- **Automated feedback (AWE):** replicable, immediate, and data-driven; associated with speed, consistency, and increased accuracy.

Each type of feedback has a different role in distance language education. Teacher feedback offers interpretation, encouragement, and pedagogical judgement. Peer feedback supports participation and comparison between learners. Automated feedback can help with immediate correction and repeated practice. The most effective approach is usually not to rely on only one type, but to combine them according to the learning task and the needs of the students.

Timing is also a critical issue to consider. Immediate, in-task feedback supports self-correction and active participation because students can respond while they are still working on the task, [25]. Feedback that comes after a task is completed gives students more time to sit with it and think more deeply about their own learning process, [31]. Blended feedback, which pairs digital tools with spoken or written input from the teacher, tends to be seen as the most workable approach in distance language education precisely because it offers both flexibility and a human presence, [32]. Table 1 maps out the timing of feedback and the distinct advantages each approach brings depending on the distance learning context.

**Table 1.** Timing and Context of Feedback Provision

	<b>Timing type Advantages</b>	<b>Sources</b>
Immediate (in-task)	Rapid correction; sustained attention	[25]
Delayed (post-task)	Depth; metacognition	[31]
Blended	Flexibility; consistency	[32]

### 3.5 Overall Observation

International scholarship does not frame technology and human interaction as opposites pulling against each other. They are meant to go in the same direction. Feedback earns its place when it keeps arriving, runs both ways, and stays connected to what students are genuinely working toward. It should give them a clear picture of where they are, open up space to go back and do better, and over time reduce how much external direction they need. As that happens, the teacher stops being primarily an assessor and becomes something closer to a facilitator, a presence that keeps things in motion rather than one that delivers verdicts.

Once you look at it that way, feedback is not about catching people out or keeping tabs. It is a line of communication, a foundation for trust, and something that pushes learning to stay active rather than passive. Digital tools speed things up, make feedback easier to see, and take some of the organisational weight off. None of that does the work that the human side of teaching does. The models that actually hold up in distance language education are the ones where technological support and real pedagogical care sit alongside each other, where expectations are clear, and where the interaction between teacher and student carries genuine weight.

## 4 Literature Review of Italian Literature

Italian research on formative assessment and feedback is marked by a strongly humanistic orientation, in which the teacher acts as *mediatore formativo* and assessment is understood as a process of dialogue and meaning-making. After 2020, the distance teaching of Italian prompted systematic reflection on *interazione formativa* and *negoziante del significato* (negotiation of meaning), with emphasis on the pedagogical role of feedback discourse, [10].

Empirical studies in university and school contexts show that formative assessment practices, when clearly framed and dialogically organised, support self-regulation, increase goal awareness, and improve student participation, [33], [34], [35]. The use of learning analytics does not replace the pedagogical relationship; rather, it can help adapt feedback in real time, provided it is embedded in a dialogic framework, [36].

Research focusing on videoconferencing and blended teaching models indicates that “micro-cycles” of production-comment-revision increase

engagement and targeted practice in productive skills when supported by clear criteria and personalised comments, [37]. Thematic issues devoted to “assessment and feedback” highlight feedback literacy, the transformative role of feedback discourse, and the need to combine technological support with empathetic, collaborative pedagogy, [37].

Italian scholarship does not lean toward purely technical solutions. Instead, it connects feedback to the cultural side of learning and to learner identity. Feedback, in this view, functions as a communicative act, one that builds self-awareness and responsibility through an ongoing, interpretive conversation about errors and goals, [10]. On the question of digital tools, research shows that LMS platforms, asynchronous comment streams such as annotated PDFs and recorded audio feedback, and analytics can all support personalised, dialogic feedback, provided they are paired with clear rubrics and genuine opportunities for students to respond, [36].

Studies carried out in university settings show that structured peer review, along with a mix of immediate and delayed feedback, encourages deeper thinking and sustained engagement, particularly when teachers make a conscious effort to bring a human quality back to digital tools and maintain a relationship of trust with their students, [37]. Taken as a whole, the Italian model points toward a human-centred hybrid: technology provides the frame, but it does not replace the pedagogical relationship at the heart of teaching. Table 1 (Appendix) outlines the core principles and outcomes of the main theoretical models of feedback found in Italian literature. Table 2 (Appendix) summarises how digital feedback tools have been applied across various Italian universities.

## 5 Comparative Synthesis of International and Italian Literature

Place international and Italian research next to each other and the shared conclusion is hard to miss: feedback is not an audit tool. It teaches. It gets learning started, makes students pause and actually think, and moves them forward over time. Both traditions agree that durable learning needs feedback that shows up consistently, stays on target, and genuinely goes both ways. Where they diverge is in their theoretical foundations, what they consider worth prioritizing methodologically, and what role they think technology should play.

### 5.1 Theoretical and Philosophical Differentiation

International scholarship, represented by [19], [25], [31], is built on constructivist learning theory and evidence-based evaluation. The questions it asks are practical ones: does the student know where they actually stand, can they identify what is missing, and do they have something concrete to work toward? Learning analytics and automated writing evaluation systems exist in this tradition to keep assessment traceable and consistent, [11]. Progress should be visible and verifiable.

Italian scholarship, represented by [10], [36], [37], begins somewhere else entirely. Assessment here is an *atto comunicativo*, a relational act in which meaning is negotiated between teacher and learner rather than simply delivered. *Interazione formativa* and *negoziiazione didattica* are not decorative concepts. They are load-bearing ones, because this tradition refuses to treat students as recipients. Students push back against feedback, sit with it, reinterpret it, and use it to build genuine self-awareness and take real ownership of their learning. The wider frame for all of this is *glottodidattica umanistico-affettiva*, which insists that assessment is an emotional, cultural, and deeply personal experience, not a neutral measurement exercise, [10].

### 5.2 The Role of Technology

The sharpest point of difference between the two traditions is technology. International research is largely unambiguous: technology serves efficiency, scale, and precision. Automated systems and analytics platforms earn their place by being fast, consistent, and capable of producing measurable data about student progress, [11], [29]. The practical aim is to give teachers and institutions a firmer, more systematic hold on feedback delivery, particularly in large courses or fully remote settings where manual tracking becomes unworkable.

Italian research resists that framing. Studies [36], [37], are clear that digital tools only belong in the picture when they are actively strengthening dialogue, enabling personalised feedback, and supporting the *relazione educativa*, the actual living relationship between teacher and student. Technology does not cover for the teacher's absence. It organises and extends what the teacher does while the teacher remains present. The teacher still constructs the learning experience, still interprets what individual students need, and still carries the responsibility of giving feedback the kind of human weight that turns it from a mark into something formative.

### 5.3 Methodological Trends and Practical Models

International studies push for feedback that is frequent, evidence-based, and leaves a traceable record: performance data, engagement indicators, measurable outcomes. Studies [25], [28], show that low-stakes feedback loops built around short quizzes, rapid reviews, automated prompts, and repeated practice tasks build motivation gradually and keep students moving, provided the feedback itself is immediate, specific, and visibly connected to what the course demands.

Italian scholarship moves in a fundamentally different direction. Studies [10], [37], argue that feedback only becomes transformative when it produces *autoregolazione*, real empathy, genuine participation, and a felt sense of learner responsibility. It is not a repair mechanism. It is the process through which students begin to understand themselves as language users, gain confidence in that identity, and enter into a shared effort to make meaning together. The emphasis on intrinsic motivation and cultural sensitivity is precisely what marks the Italian tradition off from the more technology-driven Anglo-Saxon model. Table 2 below puts both approaches directly side by side.

**Table 2.** Comparative table: International vs Italian approach

Dimension	International approach	Italian approach	Key sources
Theoretical basis	Constructivism and evidence-based evaluation	<i>Glottodidattica umanistico-affettiva</i>	[10], [19]
Aim of assessment	Performance improvement	Focus on self-regulation cultural properties	[31], [37]
Technology	Efficiency Tool analytics	Tool for augmenting & relationship status and personalisation	[11], [36]
Type of feedback	Frequent, often repetitive	Dialogic, empathetic, meaning-oriented	[10], [25]
Pedagogical relationship	Focus on performance	Focus on collaboration	[28], [37]

Dimension	International approach	Italian approach	Key sources
		and dialogue	

### 5.4 Interpretive Synthesis

International research gives formative feedback a backbone: structure, measurability, and clear methodological ground rules. It answers the practical question of how feedback can be organised, delivered, and followed so that progress stops being invisible. Italian research fills in what that backbone cannot carry on its own: relational depth, cultural attunement, and a sustained concern for what the learner is actually going through emotionally and communicatively. It holds the line on something easy to forget, that feedback in language education is never a purely technical operation, because language learning itself is built on interaction, trust, and the making of shared meaning.

Putting the two together points toward a techno-humanistic model of formative assessment. Technology handles structure, speed, and continuity. It does not absorb the pedagogical relationship. What the Italian tradition adds is the conversion of assessment into genuine dialogue, something the learner enters as a participant rather than endures as a subject. What the international tradition adds is stability, methodological rigour, and evidence-based instruments that make feedback more dependable and more widely accessible. Combined, they gesture toward something that might be called *formazione digitale empatica*, empathetic digital education, in which feedback is not a feature of the course but the thread holding the human and the technological together.

## 6 Discussions

Strip away the differences and international and Italian research arrive at the same place: feedback is the thing that keeps formative assessment functional when Italian is being taught online. It works when it is sustained, bidirectional, and grounded in real trust between teacher and student [10], [28], [36]. Online settings make this more urgent, not less, because students in those environments do not have the low-level, ongoing contact with their teacher that a physical classroom produces without anyone trying. Feedback is what closes that gap.

International research reaches for structure and tools. Analytics systems, platforms, and automated feedback mechanisms can make responses faster

and more consistent [11], [25], [29]. Students who get feedback that arrives promptly, says something specific, and keeps coming tend to do better and stay more invested, [28]. None of that shifts the basic reality: these tools sit behind teacher judgement, not in front of it.

Italian scholarship approaches the whole thing differently. Feedback is a communicative act, rooted in dialogue, interpretation, and genuine emotional attunement, [10], [36], [37]. The teacher is not an evaluator who occasionally offers guidance. The teacher is a guide who happens to evaluate, and whose primary job is helping students make sense of their own errors and grow through them. Humanistic-affective language pedagogy shapes this tradition throughout, tying assessment to identity and self-awareness in ways that purely metrics-driven approaches cannot reach, [10].

Bringing both traditions into the same frame, four things keep surfacing as decisive for feedback to actually work in distance Italian teaching:

Self-regulation: feedback does not just name the problem. It shows students how to deal with it and slowly builds the capacity to learn without needing someone to prompt every move, [29], [37].

Emotional support: warmth and empathy in a teacher lower anxiety and keep students open to feedback rather than defensive about it. Online, where students can disappear into isolation quickly, this is not optional, [10], [36].

Cultural awareness: in Italian as a foreign language, feedback can reach further than correction. It can help students read cultural meaning into language, understand why certain communicative choices land differently, and develop genuine intercultural competence, [10].

Technology used deliberately: AI and analytics can tailor feedback and surface students who are struggling, but only when a real human presence is behind them giving the data meaning, [11], [28].

So what does feedback actually contribute to formative assessment in distance Italian teaching? It works across several registers simultaneously: building linguistic competence, developing learner independence, maintaining pedagogical coherence across digital space, and creating openings for cultural understanding. The thing that makes it work is not any single tool or method. It is balance. Precision and structure on one side, human warmth and sensitivity on the other.

Practically speaking, that means weekly cycles of writing, feedback, and revision. It means pairing automated prompts with recorded audio or video responses from the teacher. It means giving students a real say in feedback conversations rather than

positioning them as passive receivers. It means rubrics that make criteria visible and analytics that identify who needs more support before the gap becomes too wide to bridge.

## 7 Conclusions

To conclude, the aim of this article was to showcase how feedback is of particular importance in terms of teaching foreign languages. Specifically, we pinpointed the importance of it in Italian and how it is capable of shifting a traditional grading system of errors and tasks to an ongoing conversation between students and educators. Good feedback (and not just a good grade) means that the student understands how to resolve any of his issues during studying and how to structure his way of understanding and learning.

Moreover, by comparing international with Italian resources, we came to the conclusion that though technology and most recently AI LMS is important, the most crucial factors is human interaction. As such, researchers worldwide tend to focus their metrics not on rapid and measurable results in terms of self-paced learning whereas, Italian, focuses more on relationships between teacher-student, feelings, and overall cultural components of a language. In specific, regarding Italian classes and courses, we noticed that a new framework should be introduced with stricter rules, more regular updates on teacher help and group work and on more specialized software solutions. One must always remember that grading is not the ultimate solution to any feedback loop but it should be used as a tool throughout a semester/course to motivate the student to improve his performance

In conclusion, online teaching assists foreign language teaching as on the one hand, computers provide a more standardized form of assessment and monitoring of student thus help provide faster feedback. On the other, hand, teachers must always be present as well to process this feedback and translate it into valuable tasks, goals and objectives to support students.

Lastly, as for future research, we believe our study and rationale could be tested with a mixed approach course of “real” teaching for online Italian courses. Analytically, we feel that mixing Italian language with other languages such as Greek, Spanish, Cypriot and English could help us compare different feedback goals and thus help educators construct a framework of common tasks and objectives (from notes to new feedback types assessments, to voice/video messages in multiple language using deepfake). On a personal note, authors also believe

that teachers should pay extra attention and time to train on the available software and preferably to open access solutions and provide their feedback to the developers on how they can use the software assisted decision-tasks without losing their personal touch as educators.

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## Appendix

**Table 1. Theoretical Models of Feedback in Italian Literature**

Theoretical model	Core principles	Educational outcome	Indicative sources
<b>Interazione formativa</b>	<b>Ongoing teacher-student dialogue</b>	<b>Self-regulation and metacognition</b>	<b>[34]</b>
<b>Negoziazione didattica</b>	<b>Shared interpretation of errors and goals</b>	<b>Empowerment of learner identity</b>	<b>[10]</b>
<b>Feedback dialogico con analytics</b>	<b>Interactive, personalised response supported by data</b>	<b>Increased engagement and transparency</b>	<b>[36]</b>

**Table 2. Representative applications for feedback tools in regards to Italian Universities**

University	Digital feedback tools	Research finding	Source
<b>Roma Tre / Macerata (special issue)</b>	<b>Learning analytics, rubrics, feedback process design</b>	<b>Highlights feedback literacy and the transformative role of feedback</b>	<b>[37]</b>
<b>Palermo / Ferrara</b>	<b>Synchronous-asynchronous distance teaching; micro-cycles “production–comment–revision”</b>	<b>Increased satisfaction and self-evaluation skills</b>	<b>[37]</b>
<b>Ca’ Foscari / CRDL</b>	<b>Formative assessment in literacy projects</b>	<b>Progress and positive feedback from all stakeholders</b>	<b>[34]</b>

**Table 3. Pedagogical Benefits of the Italian Approach**

Field	Distinctive feature	Principal benefit	Indicative source
<b>Pedagogical relationship</b>	<b>Emphasis on trust and dialogue</b>	<b>Emotional engagement and active participation</b>	<b>[10]</b>
<b>Cultural dimension</b>	<b>Meaning-making through feedback as atto comunicativo</b>	<b>Intercultural awareness</b>	<b>[10]</b>
<b>Technological innovation</b>	<b>Analytics for personalisation within a dialogic frame</b>	<b>Adaptive assessment and transparency</b>	<b>[36]</b>