

Encouraging Productive Online Interaction and Feedback in Higher Education

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Abstract: *This paper aims to shed some new light on the role of feedback and interaction in higher education (HE), more specifically, productive use of feedback and interaction in online environments in HE. The paper outlines the current conceptualization of feedback and interaction, moving beyond the shared assumption that feedback relates only to positive comments and communication. We start by introducing up-to-date studies by leading feedback researchers and reformers of HE, maintaining that there is always an interplay between inputs and outputs: the output is dependent on the input. In our paper, we discuss the implications stemming from the new paradigm of feedback. We provide numerous examples from researchers that illustrate how technology can facilitate productive dialogue feedback. We endorse the findings of these researchers, who suggest that feedback is most effective when students engage actively in making sense of cues and information. We then explore possibilities of interaction in online environments and introduce several purposes for which feedback and interaction can be used in online environments in HE, starting with ice-breaking activities, socialization, to continue with motivation, fulfilment of learning goals, self and peer evaluation, assessment and evidence of engagement, among other stages of learning and involvement. We conclude that feedback should not go unnoticed or neglected, but it should contribute to future improved students' performance.*

Keywords: *social; online; teaching; feedback; impact; learning; interaction;*

1. Introduction

Despite the existence of various kinds of learners, the foundation of all educational theories emphasizes learning with success. The need for contact and feedback in higher education is expressed particularly by ideas like Constructivism and Connectivism. Even when students' soft skills are used, the two theories stated above tend to build and connect learning. The input provided on various projects by co-workers and instructors counts as one of those soft skills. The construction of learning and instruction entails a social contract that calls for inspiration and criticism. Feedback completes the learning process, which is a two-way dialogue, in all areas of learning resulting at the higher education level. The primary goal of education is to

surpass all barriers brought about by bias. *The Prague Communiqué* in 2001 first addressed the idea of education as a social dimension, and *the London Communiqué* in 2007 subsequently affirmed it. The required skills outlined in higher education curricula are concentrated on developing strong and praiseworthy personalities for the benefit of society and humankind, in addition to the scholastic component. Feedback from speakers, presentations, evaluations, and other forms of educational instruction is a crucial component of learning and a decisive instrument for developing the social dimension of education. These links reframe the function, significance, and social interaction between teachers and pupils. Teaching practices go beyond merely imparting and exchanging information and ideas. Even the primary methodology, which centres on pupils, presupposes instructor and student contact. Giving each other comments could increase motivation by fostering a supportive atmosphere for learning, taking on new tasks, and social interaction.

2. Towards productive online interaction and feedback in higher education

2.1 New paradigm on feedback processes in higher education

As teachers, we must be aware that improving students' success in the future is intrinsically tied to feedback, but we must also acknowledge the significance of students' inputs to the impact and relevance of feedback. Moving away from the widespread misunderstanding that feedback only consists of remarks made to students by their instructors about evaluated work, our perspective on feedback needs to be updated. Instead, feedback should be seen as a crucial component of fostering students' learning. When thinking about feedback in HE, there are many different factors to consider. Utility has been emphasized as one of the key features for students' use of feedback, while other factors such as lack of strategies for productively using feedback or lack of understanding of academic discourse might hinder students' possibilities to use the information formatively (Jonsson 63–76). Some other factors that improve students' quality of learning include student involvement and feedback, technology-supported feedback, evaluation, and feedback, implementation feedback throughout the course, etc. The focus of the current paper is on the social dimension of feedback in HE, as a way to motivate interaction among students and teachers. We quote in this respect contemporary research in HE by leading feedback researchers and reformers of higher education N. Winstone and D. Carless (2020) and their learning-focused approach to designing effective feedback processes in HE. They acknowledge the learner as the primary agent of feedback and offer guidance on how teachers in higher education can reshape and oversee effective

feedback strategies. For the information gained to lead to future progress, students must apply feedback to upcoming tasks, thereby informing the advancement of their learning. The feedback process is linked to the future effect on students; behaviour, motivation, and learning strategies because of this emphasis on sense-making and future actions. The traditional view of feedback, often referred to as the *old* paradigm, focuses primarily on the input – such as the information or comments provided to students. In contrast, the *new* paradigm shifts the emphasis towards student engagement, sense-making, and the actions students take in response to the feedback. The two paradigms, however, are not mutually exclusive, as there is always an interplay between inputs and outputs. *The output relies on the input*; therefore, comments received by students serve as a prerequisite for the future enhanced effectiveness of feedback processes. Some implications of the new paradigm approach to feedback are: it starts from a social constructivist approach to learning and it calls for partnership between teacher and students. It views interactions as integral to feedback processes, with students taking an active role as initiators of feedback and teachers serving as supporters along the way. Sustainable feedback can be fostered through four key design features: providing opportunities for dialogue to clarify quality, enabling students to cultivate the ability to monitor and assess their learning, fostering students' capacity for goal-setting, and creating chances for students to apply feedback to multiple iterations of tasks (Winstone, Carless 6-10).

Having outlined the main features of the new paradigm approach to feedback, we move to what is more relevant to us for the current paper, the social dimension of feedback and the ways it can be achieved productively and impactfully. As scholars have noted, the increasing popularity of online courses highlights a crucial necessity to establish online learning environments that can maintain a robust sense of community. Such environments should support students both socially and cognitively (deNoyelles *et al.* 153-65). We start by presenting initially the approach by Winston and Carless and their research data about enabling dialogue in feedback processes (Winstone, Carless 97-114) Feedback is therefore conceptualized as a process whereby students actively seek out, interpret, and use input regarding their work or learning strategies. As Winstone and Carless explain in their study, the feedback process is linked to the future effect on students' behavior, motivation, and learning strategies because of this emphasis on sense-making and future actions.

There are, however, certain barriers to the development of dialogic feedback processes, as the researchers point out. They are: *teacher-related barriers* (teachers, due to workload and desire for academic advancement, may not prioritize feedback, understand it fully or they may perceive dialogic

feedback as impractical); *student-related barriers* (may not have the confidence, motivation, or chances to participate in conversations with teachers or peers); *institutional barriers* (not enough time and space in the curriculum for feedback dialogues, large classes, short-duration university modules). To address the barriers mentioned above, Winstone and Carless propose three primary methods for structuring feedback dialogues that focus on the roles of teachers, students, or technology as mechanisms for facilitating dialogue.

- *Teacher-facilitated dialogue*

Winstone and Carless suggest enabling different forms of dialogue through assessment designs, timely teacher input through draft and redraft designs, interaction around oral presentation tasks, or student-student dialogue within group projects. Another idea is to set up one-on-one or small group tutorials as a component of direct input on work that is still in progress (an analogous process to doctoral forms of supervision where regular cycles of feedback are acted upon).

- *Peer dialogue and inner dialogue*

As their relationship is stronger and power imbalances are less pronounced, peers can offer numerous chances for engagement; peer interaction can help students grasp concepts better than teacher comments; peer discussion supports social constructivist learning theories, and internal discussion or feedback assists students in making decisions or changes while working on tasks.

- *Technology-enabled dialogue*

Winstone and Carless highlight several innovative ways that technology can enhance feedback dialogue in educational settings. For example, audience response systems and audiovisual feedback methods (like audio, video, and screen-casting) are suggested as tools that facilitate more interactive and engaging feedback processes. These tools align with the principles of effective feedback by encouraging active student engagement and reflection, which are critical in enhancing learning outcomes (Winstone and Carless 2020). One such application is the interACT project at the University of Dundee, which integrates these principles into an online Master's program in Medical Education. This project emphasizes feedback as a dialogic process and encourages students to actively seek and utilize feedback to improve their performance. By doing so, it demonstrates the potential for technology to facilitate meaningful, ongoing feedback interactions that support the development of students' evaluative judgment (Barton et al., 104).

In practice, interactive coversheets have also shown promise. These coversheets allow students to self-assess against established criteria and

request specific feedback, thus fostering asynchronous feedback dialogues. The use of interactive coversheets has been found to enhance students' sense-making and response to feedback by creating a continuous feedback loop that promotes active learning and reflection. This concept is supported by studies, such as those conducted by Bloxham and Campbell, which illustrate how these tools can transform students from passive recipients to active participants in their learning journey. The positive impact on teacher-student interactions and the time-saving benefits for educators further validate the efficacy of these methods (Bloxham, Campbell 298-299). While these examples illustrate the practical application of dialogic feedback strategies, they also underscore the need for developing feedback literacy among both students and educators. Challenges such as insufficient time for reflection and a lack of understanding of standards highlight the importance of structured guidance and repeated practice. For example, Nicol proposes strategies to embed feedback literacy into the curriculum, ensuring that feedback is not just received but actively utilized by students to improve future work, moving away from a model based on teacher delivery of feedback to one based on the co-construction of feedback (Nicol 515).

Overall, the findings highlight the significant potential of technology-enabled feedback mechanisms, such as interactive coversheets and audiovisual feedback, in enhancing the quality and effectiveness of feedback processes. These tools not only facilitate continuous and meaningful dialogue but also empower students to take an active role in their own learning, fostering deeper engagement and understanding. It is crucial for both teachers and students to recognize that feedback dialogues are not meant to defend grades but to enhance long-term academic performance and personal development. Interactive coversheets, in particular, encourage an ongoing conversation around feedback and emphasize the active role students play in co-constructing their learning experience. By inviting students to reflect on their work, seek targeted feedback, and actively participate in dialogue with their teachers, these tools create a more collaborative and reflective learning environment. This approach aligns with the principles of the *new* paradigm in feedback practices, which advocate for a shift from passive receipt of feedback to active engagement in feedback dialogues—whether through peer discussions, teacher-student interactions, or technology-mediated conversations.

In conclusion, despite the challenges associated with implementing these strategies, the benefits of incorporating technology into feedback processes are evident. By adopting interactive coversheets and similar tools, educators can foster a more dynamic and supportive feedback environment that not only improves immediate learning outcomes but also equips students

with the skills and mindset needed for continuous improvement and lifelong learning.

2.2 Interaction types in HE

In this part of the paper, we describe interaction in higher education. To fulfil the aims of this paper, we start with a detailed description of the interaction in the book *Online Learning and Assessment in Higher Education* by R. Benson and C. Brack (2010). Both authors are Senior Lecturers in Educational Design and e-learning at Monash University, Australia. Throughout the book, they provide useful introductory guidance about teaching online, based on the principles of adult learning and good teaching practice in higher education, through the introduction of technology in teaching and assessment with the aims of improving students' learning experience and teacher's exploration of the potential of the online environment. In the second chapter of the book *Teaching with technology – considering your options* the authors describe the evolution of internet technologies for learning and assessment and emphasize that the development of Web 2.0 applications, characterized by user-generated content and the growth of social media, transformed the web into being more dynamic and interactive as compared to the previous static and non-interactive World Wide Web (the so-called *first-generation internet technologies*). The social potential of the online environment for education, they state, was being explored prior to and in parallel with these developments, accelerated by the use of computer-mediated communication in the 1980s, reflecting also the evolution of social software (Benson, Brack 25). They also recognize that, following the development of World Wide Web, the major coordinated development that supported both interactive and content-based options for online learning and assessment in higher education was the emergence of proprietary *learning management systems*, which brought together a range of tools that teachers could select from, manage themselves and use within a single online learning environment (Benson, Brack 26). Our focus in this paper is exploring possibilities of interaction in online environments, thus, we are describing such possibilities of interaction as highlighted in the quoted book (Benson, Brack 27-77).

2.2.1 Interaction with content

Interaction with content has to do with the exploration of web-based resources, which offer advantages over linear, narrative technologies such as video and audio. Such resources provide the ability to navigate, search for, and select content. While this approach can help students achieve objectives that involve exploring resources, it may not be enough to ensure effective learning. Students may require support in developing academic literacy by

learning different strategies for searching information and understanding the varying quality of the materials they find.

Benson and Brack provide several choices of the format of content to be used in online environments by first-generation internet technologies: 1) *text-based content* (depending on the target audience and their access to libraries or other resources); 2) *visual content* (images, graphics, diagrams, concept, and mind maps, animation, and video); 3) *aural content* (audio file, voice-based content, audio with the image of the speaker, real-life sounds); and 4) *media database* (image library with hyperlinks and resources). Researchers also highlight opportunities for interaction, creation, and management of content in Web 2.0 environments. They note that while technologies for content management on the web remain consistent, the manner in which content is generated, overseen, and distributed, particularly in the realm of user interaction, has notably expanded. The preference for one method over another is contingent on the availability of collaborative opportunities and familiarity with online environments. Some examples of Web 2.0 applications that include interaction with content and between users are *blogs, folksonomy, web hosting services, mashups, mobile learning, podcasts, shared documents, social software, virtual worlds, wikis*, etc. (Benson, Brack 37-38). Benson and Brack also mention some mobile technologies that can aid interaction with content, such as laptop computers designed for annotating (tablet PCs), and reading text (iBooks), mp3 players (iPods), and mobile phones. Such devices reduce the load of books and facilitate the creation of content by teachers and students. Also, portable digital devices such as cameras and voice recorders can be used to create content in different forms, adding visual and aural dimensions to teaching materials, adapting them to the versatility of learning styles, while, simultaneously, allowing students to present their work in different ways (Benson, Brack 47-48).

2.2.2 Interaction between users

Interaction between users in HE can be realized via online communication tools such as email, asynchronous discussion, and text-based (synchronous) chat. The most common form of asynchronous online communication is email, which supports one-to-one or one-to-many interaction, conveying also information in the body of the message or attachments to be shared. It is most appropriate for private communication, whereas for communication between groups asynchronous discussion groups (or bulletin boards) prove to be more advantageous. The latter can be utilized for various group activities, such as discussions, case-based learning, character plays, and project-based collaboration. It can also be used for individual contact within a group. They can also be used for support and community development. They can be

specially structured due to the ability to ‘thread’ comments on the same subject. On the other hand, real-time communication benefits are offered by synchronous text-based online conversation, which can greatly support the development of an online community and a feeling of identity. Due to the potential for delays and frustration, time is a problem for both synchronous and asynchronous online conversations. (loss of flexibility, different typing speeds); nevertheless, it cannot be denied that they both provide a point of contact. One way of solving such problems, as the authors suggest, can be saving and circulating transcripts of conversations for those who could not take part. It also has to be borne in mind that not all students discuss spontaneously; they need explicit tasks and support, which can be given via the discussion itself or it can be built into the surrounding environment.

The potential of Web 2.0 applications for enhancing communication and collaboration has been clearly demonstrated through the rise of various web-based social networking and educational platforms. While traditional platforms such as *Facebook* once played significant roles in facilitating educational interactions, the rapid evolution of technology and changing user preferences necessitate a reassessment of their relevance in today’s educational landscape. Current concerns such as data ownership, privacy, copyright issues, and the lack of seamless integration with institutional administrative systems limit the effectiveness of using large, privately-owned social networking sites for educational purposes. However, these platforms’ strengths lie in their ability to promote student-driven communication, fostering learners’ sense of responsibility and independence (Benson, Brack 39).

Given the fast-paced development of digital tools, newer Web 2.0 applications have emerged that are more aligned with the preferences and needs of contemporary students. Platforms such as *Snapchat*, *WhatsApp*, *TikTok*, and *Instagram* have gained popularity among younger users for informal communication and sharing, offering various features that could be harnessed for educational purposes, such as video-based learning and instant messaging. Meanwhile, specialized educational platforms like *Microsoft Teams*, *Slack*, and *Discord* provide integrated features specifically tailored for academic use, including real-time collaboration, video conferencing, and secure file sharing. These tools offer a more structured and secure environment for educational communication.

In addition, *Learning Management Systems* (LMS) like *Google Classroom*, *Canvas*, and *Moodle* have become central to managing coursework, facilitating discussions, and providing feedback in an organized manner. These platforms support various forms of interaction, from discussion forums to assignment submissions, and integrate well with institutional systems. Interactive tools such as *Padlet* and *Miro* enable

collaborative brainstorming and project management, facilitating visual interaction and idea sharing. Similarly, *Flipgrid* encourages video-based discussions, which engage students more dynamically by allowing them to express their thoughts through video responses. Tools like *Kahoot!* and *Quizlet* provide interactive quizzes and gamified learning experiences that enhance engagement and offer instant feedback. Real-time polling tools such as *Mentimeter* and *Poll Everywhere* make classroom sessions more interactive by enabling live feedback and audience participation.

The shift towards more specialized educational tools reflects the need for platforms that not only support effective feedback and interaction but also address privacy, security, and integration with educational infrastructures. To maximize the benefits of these technologies, future research should focus on exploring how these modern tools can be effectively used to enhance feedback and interaction in educational settings. Leveraging the capabilities of *MOOCs* (Massive Open Online Courses) and other dedicated educational platforms, such as *Wakelet*, further expands the potential for innovative teaching and learning methods. Incorporating these technologies into pedagogy will ensure that feedback and interaction remain relevant, effective, and aligned with the evolving preferences and needs of today's students.

2.2.3 Interaction with content and other users

Benson and Brack also discuss questionnaires and quizzes as well as multimedia encounters that may be created to include automatic feedback. The latter is typically more expensive and involves a difficult design and development process as well as the expertise of a video producer. Software programs can use video engagement or LMS tools to assist students in achieving knowledge-based goals. The latter would offer greater freedom in how an item is presented and feedback is given to better future learning, but it would take more time and money to prepare because it would require the specialized technical knowledge of a video producer. Web 2.0 mixes interaction with content and users simultaneously in contrast to such interaction with content by first-generation technologies. An example of this form of communication can be found in online role-playing games, particularly massively multiplayer online role-playing games (MMORPGs), which engage a substantial number of participants and facilitate in-game interactions among them. The Center of Online Educators' founder and head, Dr. Lisa Dawley, stresses the potential of MMORPGs in the classroom; being three-dimensional and involving graphics and audio, they appeal to multiple sensory modalities and thus combine visual with text and sound; they provide the ability to move and interact with the virtual environment; users from around the world can meet and chat in the same environment, integrating external live chat tools; questing resembles problem-solving in educational

terms and mirrors life and work, with learners learning by doing and developing more complex skills and the ability to work as a team as the progress of the task; and, most importantly for our current paper, *the design is excellent for promoting social interaction*, since the interaction is a must to complete the game (Dawley 19-20). Gaming software is designed to facilitate interactions that are controlled, to some degree, by the software designer. Benson and Brack advise teachers to use Web 2.0 applications (games, simulations, and virtual worlds) for immersive and collaborative engagement through designed experiences if the teacher's objectives require experience-based learning (Benson, Brack 45). The scholars cite Active Worlds and Second Life as two instances of virtual worlds that are frequently used in education, but there are many other platforms out there.

In conclusion, based on the platforms accessible and IT assistance in HEIs, there are presently numerous methods to be involved in the engagement, be it with content, among users, or with content and users concurrently. The next section of our paper examines some possibilities for improving feedback and interaction in online teaching and learning in HEIs based on literature review.

2.3 Exploring opportunities for enhancing feedback and interaction in HEIs

Effective feedback is crucial for student learning, and it should be a primary consideration in the design of any educational activity. The methods and tools instructors choose not only shape the feedback process but also determine the type and quality of student engagement that occurs. In this section, we explore various strategies for enhancing feedback and interaction in online environments within HEIs, drawing on a broad spectrum of recent research and best practices.

Creating a supportive online learning environment

Before actively involving students in online discussions and increasing levels of interaction, instructors must first ensure that foundational elements, such as reliable network access and basic IT support, are in place. Ice-breaking activities are recommended to foster a sense of community and compensate for the lack of face-to-face interaction, which is vital for successful online learning environments (Garrison, Anderson 51-55). Activities like online introductions, virtual scavenger hunts, or collaborative brainstorming sessions using tools like *Miro* or *Padlet* can help students feel more connected and engaged.

Structured online discussions using Bloom's taxonomy

Incorporating structured discussion prompts aligned with Bloom's revised taxonomy can deepen the effectiveness of online discussions. By designing questions that move from basic recall to higher-order thinking skills—such as analysis, evaluation, and creation—educators can encourage critical thinking and sustained engagement (Adams 152-153). Learning management systems like Canvas, Google Classroom, and Blackboard support these structured discussions, providing organized forums and interactive assignments to facilitate learning.

Phases of online engagement

Conrad and Donaldson (2004) outline four phases of online engagement: *newcomer*, *co-operator*, *collaborator*, and *initiator/partner* (Conrad, Donaldson 11). Each phase defines different roles for teachers and students, ranging from guiding social interactions to promoting active collaboration and critical thinking. This model can be effectively supported using synchronous tools like *Zoom*, *Microsoft Teams*, and *Google Meet* for real-time interaction, and asynchronous tools like *Discussion Boards* on learning management systems (LMS) for ongoing engagement.

Leveraging modern Web 2.0 tools for enhanced interaction and feedback

Modern Web 2.0 tools offer valuable opportunities to enhance feedback and interaction. Platforms such as *Slack* and *Discord* facilitate ongoing communication and collaboration by creating topic-specific channels. Video-based tools like *Flipgrid* allow for personalized and interactive feedback, while real-time polling tools like *Mentimeter* and *Poll Everywhere* engage students actively during lectures. Additionally, gamified tools like *Kahoot!* and *Quizlet* make feedback and assessment engaging, promoting student participation and motivation. *Nearpod* integrates interactive slides, quizzes, and real-time feedback, while *Voicethread* enables interactive multimedia discussions. Project management tools like *Trello* and *Asana* are also being used in educational settings to facilitate group projects, enhancing collaboration and organizational skills. These tools help students plan, delegate tasks, and track progress, promoting accountability and teamwork.

Educational social networking

The importance of online discussions in higher education has been widely researched, emphasizing how these platforms enable students to interact with peers, instructors, and administrators. Such discussions enhance learning by fostering interaction, as demonstrated in a study by Omar et al., which explored *Facebook* as a medium for sharing information and feedback among students at the National University of Malaysia. The study, grounded in a

learner-centered, socio-constructivist teaching approach, examined ESL students' engagement in Facebook group discussions. Findings revealed that despite language barriers and technical issues, participants were motivated by immediate feedback, reduced intimidation due to the lack of physical presence, and the ability to use multimedia tools like images, videos, and links for clearer communication. Based on positive student feedback, the authors conclude that *Facebook* discussions can effectively promote interaction, boost confidence, and facilitate authentic, collaborative learning among ESL students. Furthermore, the decentralized role of teachers minimizes fear of dominance or disagreement in discussions (Omar et al. 68, 72). Another such research by Aleksandrova and Parusheva explores social media usage patterns among students at the University of Economics - Varna, focusing on the impact of social media on learning, content creation, and educational communication. The findings reveal that students prefer using *Facebook* groups for peer communication and content distribution, while wikis and university LMSs are favored for content creation and learning. A significant trend identified is that students, particularly those in technology-oriented disciplines like Computer Science, tend to initiate the use of social media more than faculty members, highlighting the proactive role of students in integrating social media into their academic practices (Aleksandrova, Parusheva 113-120).

Similarly, Brady et al. from North Carolina State University argue that education-focused social networking sites (SNSs) can enhance online communication in distance education courses, especially in higher education settings. In their study, *The Use of Alternative Social Networking Sites in Higher Educational Settings: A Case Study of the E-Learning Benefits of Ning in Education* (2010), they emphasize that while technology can overcome spatial and temporal barriers, it does not automatically foster interaction and community (Brady et al. 153). To address this, they highlight *Ning* as a valuable platform for building communities of practice among learners in distance education. *Ning*'s features—such as user profiles, forums, and resources—support this community-building (Brady et al. 154). Brady et al. conclude that platforms like *Ning* offer innovative opportunities for educators interested in leveraging social networking technologies for educational benefits (Brady et al. 156). However, it should be noted that, contrary to previous assumptions, *Ning* requires a fee for account creation, reflecting a policy change in 2010.

Furthermore, Edd Pitt, Programme Director for the Post Graduate Certificate in Higher Education and Senior Lecturer in Higher Education and Academic Practice at the University of Kent, UK, offers an innovative approach to feedback that emphasizes students' emotional processing. His recommendations are based on discussions with eleven lecturers who have

integrated dialogic feedback into their teaching practices. Pitt highlights how peer feedback activities—such as "comedy buddies" in comedy performance courses, the "scriptwriter's forum" in film studies, and "speed dating peer feedback" in drama courses—enhance the impact of feedback by fostering interaction among students, their peers, and lecturers. He argues that engaging students in feedback dialogues not only provides them with more feedback but also demands greater engagement and critical thinking. However, Pitt emphasizes that the effectiveness of peer feedback relies on students' ability to develop a strong sense of quality and make evaluative judgments within their discipline. He suggests that the impact of dialogic feedback could be empirically studied using student audio/visual diaries, capturing students' real-time reflections on feedback. Such an approach could offer insights into the short-, medium-, and long-term effects of feedback across an entire study program (Pitt 129-144).

In conclusion, these studies highlight the significant role of educational social networking platforms in enhancing interaction, feedback, and collaborative learning in higher education. Tools like *Facebook*, *Ning*, and peer feedback activities can foster student engagement, confidence, and motivation by facilitating communication and reducing intimidation. By effectively integrating these technologies, educators can create dynamic, student-centered learning environments. Future research should focus on optimizing these tools to maximize educational benefits while addressing challenges related to access and privacy.

Beyond Emergency Remote Teaching

It is essential to distinguish between emergency remote teaching (ERT), implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic, and standardized online learning models that are thoughtfully integrated into curricula. ERT, often hastily adopted without sufficient planning or support, lacks the pedagogical rigor and consistent feedback mechanisms inherent in well-designed online learning environments (Hodges et al.). Findings from studies on ERT should not be conflated with those focused on established online learning practices, which prioritize structured interaction, feedback, and the use of advanced educational technologies.

Fostering motivation and engagement in online environments

The role of learner motivation and classroom engagement has become a prominent focus in recent studies. One such study was conducted by Jeong, a professor at the Department of English Education, Graduate School of Education, Hannam University, South Korea, in 2019. Participants in the study engaged in integrative English learning activities through online group collaboration and peer-tutoring, aiming to enhance learner motivation and

classroom interaction in English instruction. Digital technology was utilized to stimulate the participants' learning process. The study employed instruments such as online questionnaire surveys and semi-structured interviews to collect data, with the goal of identifying the motivational aspects of integrative English learning activities. The findings of the study revealed that the use of social networking platforms in online group collaboration played a crucial role for the participants in recognizing online group collaboration as a positive and effective language learning strategy. Furthermore, participants confirmed that online collaborative English language learning activities were not only encouraging but also motivating for their learning experiences. The study's results indicated that the integration of online collaborative language learning activities promoted self-directed learning, reduced learner anxiety, and increased students' confidence in their learning process (Jeong 95).

Students' satisfaction and motivation have also been the focus of research by Yilmaz, professor at the Bartın University, Turkey. He conducted a study on the impact of students' e-learning readiness within the context of a computing class delivered using the flipped classroom model of instruction. The study involved 236 undergraduate students enrolled in a Computing I class taught via the flipped classroom method. Data were collected using three self-report instruments: *the E-learning Readiness Scale, Satisfaction Scale, and Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire*. The results of the study indicated that e-learning readiness and its subfactors (such as computer self-efficacy, internet self-efficacy, online communication self-efficacy, self-directed learning, learner control, and motivation towards e-learning) are predictors of student satisfaction and motivation. (Yilmaz 259).

Acknowledging the popularity of the flipped classroom in the education field, professors Qu and Miao use qualitative research method to study learning strategies in an extra-curricular English teaching institution where the teaching model of flipped classroom is used. They conclude that while it is true that flipped classroom has freed teachers from constant speaking and explaining knowledge, teachers can make better use of classroom time by using some teaching strategies such as teamwork and language applications, allowing students to collaborate, to express, to perform, to show (Qu, Miao 5-7). In this respect, professors Chen et al. from Central China Normal University conducted a study which differentiated the impact of two flipped learning phases, pre-class discussion and in-class collaboration, on college students' learning performance and experience in a flipped classroom. They identified several specific learning behaviours and learner characteristics as significant predictors of student performance and experience, including post quality, interaction behaviours, learning interest, and academic achievement. The results of the study confirm the significance

of pre-class preparation for flipped learning performance. They also underscore the impact of students' initial interest and prior achievement on their experience with flipped learning (Chen et al. 8-9).

Another recent cross-sectional study by De Souza et al. (2021) employed a descriptive correlational survey research to assess student participation in technology-based learning and teachers' pedagogical views. For this study, 205 language teachers and 317 language students from three higher educational institutions in the Philippines were randomly sampled. The study's findings revealed that respondents generally hold positive pedagogical beliefs and orientations toward using technology-based teaching in their language classrooms. Female teachers, in particular, exhibited a stronger belief in student-centred online language teaching compared to their male counterparts. Interestingly, the use of technology in the language classroom was found to be positively associated with male teachers. Regarding students' levels of language learning motivation and engagement, both male and female students demonstrated a high level of engagement. Furthermore, the analysis of the relationship indicated that the higher the teachers' belief in utilizing student-centred teaching to integrate technology in the language classroom, the more motivated and engaged the students were in their learning. (De Souza et al. 5009-10). The results of the study, according to the involved professors, imply that school administrators need to revisit their language teachers' pedagogical benefits in technology integration and provide ongoing capacity building for teachers on technology integration as well as provide adequate technology resources for teachers.

To conclude this section, we echo the recommendation by Frass et al. that institutions develop online teaching preparation programs by first conducting an internal needs assessment of faculty members. This assessment will help determine their current readiness for online teaching, guiding strategic planning and the implementation of faculty development programs. Such initiatives can then focus on the most relevant areas, whether online technology, pedagogy, or a combination of both (Frass et al. 5-6). Overall, there are numerous ways to utilize feedback and interaction in online learning environments in higher education, ranging from icebreakers and socialization activities to strategies for motivation, achieving learning objectives, self- and peer evaluations, assessment, and enhancing student engagement.

Recent research on feedback and interaction

Recent studies highlight the effectiveness of specific tools and strategies in enhancing feedback and interaction in online learning environments. For example, Astarina and Herlinda (2022) explored the use of *Nearpod* during the pandemic, demonstrating that features such as immediate feedback, gamification, and collaborative activities significantly boosted student

engagement and learning outcomes. Similarly, the *Community of Inquiry (CoI)* model developed by Garrison and Anderson (2003) emphasizes social, cognitive, and teaching presence, which are critical for distance education. This model has been adopted by researchers like deNoyelles, Zydney, and Chen (2014) to enhance online discussions, arguing that effective design incorporating all three presences can create engaging and meaningful learning experiences (deNoyelles et al., 155-56).

Jensen, Bearman, and Boud (2023) further emphasize that productive feedback should challenge students' assumptions and align with their active tasks. They categorize feedback into three types: *elicited* (student-initiated), *formal* (structured course components), and *incidental* (spontaneous peer interactions). Elicited encounters are those actively sought by students, such as asking peers for input, while formal encounters are structured parts of the course, like teacher comments on assignments. Incidental encounters occur spontaneously, often through informal interactions with peers. For feedback to be productive, it must prompt students to make meaning and act upon the feedback, potentially leading to substantive learning outcomes rather than merely instrumental changes. The timing of feedback plays a crucial role, as feedback that arrives too late can limit its impact by not aligning with the students' current or upcoming tasks (Jensen, Bearman, Boud 9-11).

Furthermore, Henderson et al. (2019) identify twelve conditions necessary for effective feedback, categorized into *capacity* (feedback literacy), *design* (tailored feedback), and *culture* (institutional support). Capacity-related conditions emphasize the importance of feedback literacy among learners and educators, ensuring that feedback is understood and actionable. Design conditions focus on tailoring feedback to individual learner needs and aligning feedback with learning outcomes across multiple tasks. Finally, cultural conditions stress the importance of institutional support, such as leadership commitment and consistency in feedback practices, to sustain a positive feedback environment. Findings suggest that feedback effectiveness depends on the interplay of these factors, rather than a one-size-fits-all approach (Henderson et al., 1404-1406).

In her study, "What matters for productive feedback? Disciplinary practices and their relational dynamics," Rachelle Esterhazy (2018) explores how productive feedback is deeply rooted in the relational dynamics between educators and students within specific disciplinary contexts. She highlights that productive feedback is not just about delivering information but involves a relational dynamic that facilitates students' meaning-making and action based on the feedback. This relational dynamic is influenced by the disciplinary context and the specific interactions between educators and students. Moreover, Esterhazy emphasizes that for feedback to be productive, it should be embedded in an ongoing dialogue where students can reflect, ask

questions, and seek further clarification, thus transforming feedback from a unidirectional communication into a participatory process (Esterhazy 1303).

Focusing on feedback as interaction, Karen Gravett explores how feedback literacy is deeply intertwined with the sociomaterial context in which it occurs. In her paper, "Feedback Literacies as Sociomaterial Practice," (2022) Gravett argues that understanding feedback literacy involves recognizing the complex interactions between people, materials, and the environment. This perspective moves beyond seeing feedback as merely information delivery and instead focuses on how feedback is co-constructed through interactions within specific social and material conditions. This approach highlights the importance of considering the broader sociocultural context and the role of technology, power relations, and institutional practices in shaping effective feedback (Gravett 269).

Susanne Narciss, a professor at Technische Universität Dresden, focuses her research on technology-enhanced self-regulated learning, motivation, metacognition in instructional contexts, and the impact of informative tutoring feedback. Her work in feedback methods earned her the Outstanding Development Award from the American Council on Educational Communications and Technology in 2007. Narciss highlights the vital role of feedback in assessment for learning, emphasizing its formative function and viewing the learner as an active creator of knowledge. In her chapter in *Scaling Up Assessment for Learning in Higher Education* (2017), Narciss examines formative feedback in higher education using the Interactive Tutoring Feedback (ITF) model. She links generative feedback design with the ITF model's principles, which view feedback as a multifaceted tool to help students develop skills necessary for learning tasks. This approach integrates insights from systems theory, teaching methods, feedback approaches, task analysis, and error analysis. Narciss argues that this model can enhance feedback techniques, fostering independent, lifelong learning. She also notes that the ITF model has proven effective in her courses, encouraging reflection on effective interactive feedback strategies among teacher education and psychology students (Narciss 173-189).

Overall, these studies bring to the foreground the need for well-designed feedback mechanisms that consider both the type and timing of feedback, ensuring they foster meaningful engagement and deeper learning in online environments. We should also bear in mind that, as the adoption of Web 2.0 tools in education grows, ethical considerations regarding data privacy, security, and equitable access become increasingly important. Moreover, attention should be given to providing equal access to technology for all students, regardless of socioeconomic status, to prevent digital divides. Addressing these concerns is crucial for fostering a safe and inclusive online learning environment.

3. Conclusions and considerations for further research

This paper has highlighted the theoretical and practical justifications for adopting a new paradigm of feedback processes in HEIs, where students actively participate in providing feedback, initiating discussions, and interacting with peers, all facilitated through various technological means. Enhancing feedback and interaction in online learning environments requires a strategic approach that integrates modern technological tools and pedagogical best practices. By employing diverse feedback methods, facilitating structured discussions, and leveraging advanced Web 2.0 tools, educators can create interactive and supportive learning experiences that promote student engagement, critical thinking, and academic success. Thoughtful implementation of these strategies can bridge the gap between remote and in-person learning, ensuring students remain active and engaged participants in their educational journey.

Effective feedback is not just about the activities chosen but also about the quality and nature of the feedback students receive. It is crucial for instructors to strategically plan how feedback processes will unfold, using available technology and tools to support meaningful engagement and learning outcomes. The role of feedback in online education is integral to both learning and providing ongoing support, helping students feel connected and involved, even in virtual settings.

Future research could focus on specific types of interaction, such as peer-to-peer engagement, and conduct case studies to collect realistic data from students and teachers. These studies should examine what occurs in classroom versus online environments, the level of technological support provided to students, and the types of software used to facilitate feedback and interaction. Gathering and analyzing this data will provide insights into improving the quality of feedback and interaction, thereby enhancing the overall learning experience. By raising awareness of the pivotal role students play in generating feedback and fostering interaction, this study aims to contribute to the continuous improvement of learning quality, social interaction, and feedback processes. It is hoped that the insights and recommendations provided will be applied within the practical context of Albanian HEIs, contributing to the evolution of more effective and engaging educational practices.

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