

Introduction to “IN-formiamoci”

Workshop on Teaching Practices for Italian Language Instruction to Foreign Students in Study Abroad Programs in Italy

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Abstract

This preliminary text provides a brief introduction to the proceedings of the conference on teaching Italian as a Second Language that ISI Florence organized last fall semester. The event was hosted on the institute’s premises at Palazzo Bargagli on November 29th, 2024. As the title of the conference suggests, the participants discussed new methods and best practices to teach Italian in study abroad programs mostly affiliated with AACUPI (Association of American College and University Programs in Italy).

Keywords: Teaching Italian Language and Culture, Language Teacher Training, Sharing Best Practices in International Education, Study Abroad Programs in Italy.

This section of *Beyond* features some of the papers given last year at the *IN-formiamoci* language workshop organized by the ISI Florence Italian Department. More precisely, the event took place at Palazzo Bargagli (one of the two ISI Florence facilities, the other being Palazzo Rucellai) on 29 November 2024. The event was meant to serve as an opportunity to assess and share practices used by Italian language teachers who work for study abroad programs in Italy. The underlying idea was, therefore, to foster dialogue among colleagues, thus mutually enriching their experience. The organizers were confident that this would lead to sharing observations, impressions, proposals, doubts, and suggestions on our daily commitment to teach Italian language and culture, especially to international university students.

All the articles that we selected for publication share a practical approach. Our colleagues from both ISI Florence and other AACUPI programs chose to illustrate and comment on activities and techniques they use in class. In doing so, they describe how those activities are implemented, their contexts, how often they take place and what changes have been introduced over time.

The workshop started with an introductory speech by Prof. Catia Santi (Coordinator of the Italian Language Department at ISI Florence) titled *The Obvious is Not Obvious. Practical Observations from a Teacher*. After her, Prof. Piero Ianniello (University of New Haven in Prato) took the floor. In his talk (*Italian as a Second Language in Study Abroad Programs: Working with the Territory*) Prof. Ianniello emphasized the importance of capitalizing on local resources to help students learn Italian in a real-life context.

Two papers concentrated on the use of games as efficient tools for learning languages. I refer to the article in this issue of *Beyond* by Prof. Tatiana Speri (both a teacher and a teacher trainer) titled *The Learning Mission: Gamification and L2 Italian in Action!* and the one by our ISI Florence colleague Carlo Lorini (*L2 at Play: Game Learning as a New Approach to Reviewing Language Lessons*).

As the title of her article suggests (*Technology in the Class: Figma and Wordwall for Online and In-person Teaching/Learning*) Elisabetta Blini (also from ISI Florence) spoke about two technological devices she often uses in her Italian language courses. Another important contribution to *IN-formiamoci*, although he did not turn in a paper for this edition of our journal, was the talk by Carlo Manella (publisher, teacher, writer, and editor-in-chief of Progetto Lingua Edizioni) titled *Why Write and for Whom? Some Remarks on Today's Publications on Teaching Italian to Foreign Students*. Prof. Manella not only talked about this business sector today but also shared some insightful reflections on the most common kinds of foreign students who wish to learn Italian today. Finally, ISI Florence professor Emanuela Agostini summed up and commented on all the papers given at the workshop.

As is customary, each talk was followed by questions and observations from the floor. The good number of attendees and their professional expertise made that part of the workshop particularly engaging, lively, and informative. We thus take this opportunity to thank them for contributing to such a rich, gratifying, and productive event.