

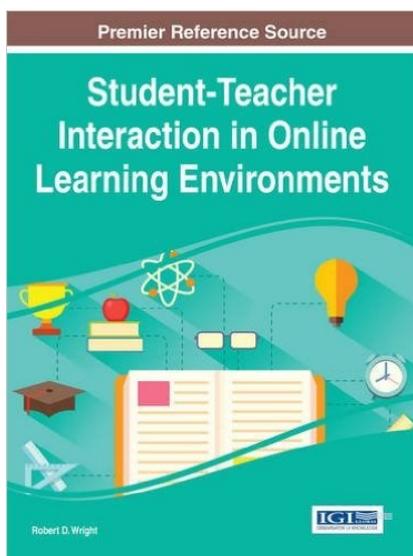
BOOK REVIEW

STUDENT-TEACHER INTERACTION IN ONLINE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

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As online learning environments do not lend themselves to face-to-face interaction between teachers and students, it is essential to understand how to ensure healthy social presence in online learning. This book provides a useful selection of both commonly used and recently developed theories by discussing current research and giving examples of social presence in latest Online Learning Environments (OLEs). The book examines how the appropriate use of technological tools can relate instructors, peers, and course content. The reports on successful implementations are reinforced with research involving pre-service teachers. Both experienced and inexperienced educators will benefit by being informed about the effective use of many valuable tools exemplified here. The last six chapters present an array of new models that support social presence, and demonstrate how traditional paradigms can be used to create online social presence. They further showcase how innovative works

can be successfully aligned with the instructional standards. The book presents valuable observations, rigorous studies, and practical applications of theories refined and put into best practices. The materials offered here can serve as great resources for online educators, inducing new ideas, stimulating inspiration for action, and perhaps validating personal techniques and practices used in the OLEs. Edited by the leading experts in the field, this book specifically focuses on the practical and theoretical aspects of Student-Teacher Interaction in various instructional contexts at multiple levels of application, along the lines of social presence, online presence, digital identities, inclusive/multicultural curriculum design, CoI framework, and innovative methods. As such, the book provides an in-depth overview of Student-Teacher Interaction in OLEs, with experiences from the field helping readers have a clear understanding about how to improve it, allowing a multifaceted perspective on its promises and challenges. The book synthesizes a wide range of findings, opinions, and recommendations of researchers, scholars, and practitioners, centering on the key issues regarding the current status, possibilities,

concerns, and limitations of Student-Teacher Interaction in OLEs. These core issues are elucidated and discussed in detail in three sections and 17 chapters, as follows:

Section 1

Theories, Conditions, and Emerging Best Practices

Chapter 1: Social Presence in Culturally Mediated Online Learning Environments

Providing educators with the information needed to apply culturally responsive teaching in OLEs and adopting a pragmatic approach, this chapter discusses the role of culture in instructional design, teaching strategies, the creation of knowledge, and student performance. It offers solutions to the problems of cultural differences and misunderstandings and demonstrates the way cross-cultural concerns can affect presence in OLEs. In particular, the Table on page 11 exemplifying the various instructional design models that include culture is very useful. The cultural aspects of instructional design, instructional strategies, knowledge creation, and learning outcomes are analyzed, and further studies on culture within OLEs are suggested.

Chapter 2: Examining Design Pattern Strategies as a Means to Achieve Social Presence in the Online Classroom

This chapter demonstrates the way instructional design patterns are used to create a comfortable OLE and to promote student-teacher interaction. Design patterns are deployed to enhance differentiated design, to foster learning-oriented social networking, and to create web-design structures that help diminish students' feelings of isolation. The authors show how design pattern languages can be converted into design pattern libraries to promote social interaction. They outline the steps of creating Web-design structures in overcoming impediments to engagement in OLEs, and make suggestions on working out proper solutions to challenges involved in the design of interactive OLEs. Table 2, which shows the flexible means of social interaction pattern, and Table 3, displaying the collaborative online writing design pattern are especially helpful resources for novice designers.

Chapter 3: Increasing Research Students' Engagement through Virtual Communities

This chapter exemplifies how the graduate-level research students' needs can be addressed by using the Researcher Development Framework to provide graduate students with a sense of community. The authors outline the steps of building a virtual community and implementing blended learning activities that increased students' engagement and interaction. Their framework also helped students have a stronger sense of community as they were able to receive prompt assistance from staff and faculty members, to share experiences with peers, and to receive better support in overcoming research project problems. The schematic models on page 57 and 59 are particularly enlightening.

Chapter 4: Cultural Inclusivity in Online Learning

As in Chapter 1, which tries to engage multicultural students with a meaningful social presence, this chapter discusses the ways to make online courses more inclusive. This chapter details how the Community of Inquiry model can be utilized to create curricula, course management, and communication strategies that foster social interaction and to build a multicultural framework that helps students establish robust ties with their instructors and peers. This approach lays out the factors to be considered in the development of culturally inclusive learning environments in OLEs. The Appendix on page 88 showing the strategies for promoting cultural inclusivity is particularly helpful.

Chapter 5: Fostering Interaction and Social Presence through eCollaboration

This chapter discusses the fundamental theories and design frameworks that apply to the development of course interaction and social presence in OLEs. It presents current research and collaborative models that bring solutions for online student attrition and show the way eCollaboration improves social interaction between students and instructors, enhances teaching presence, and allows students to develop their 21st century learning skills. Table 3 about the elements of "social presence," Table 4 about the elements of "cognitive presence," and Table 5 about the elements of "teaching presence" provide

excellent guidance on the subject of presence. Table 6 on page 108 provides further help by presenting the types and examples of eCollaboration activity structures.

Chapter 6: The Value of Social Presence in Developing Student Satisfaction and Learning Outcomes in Online Environments

This chapter uses Moore's Transactional Distance Theory to explain why feelings of isolation occur in the OLEs. This theory is utilized as a tool to address the feelings of isolation that afflict the OLEs. It allows educators to develop effective strategies, sound instructional methods and LMS communication tools to create social presence by reducing feelings of isolation.

Chapter 7: Building Social Presence through Engaging Online Instructional Strategies

This chapter presents the "Online Steps to Complex Cognition" educational model with five stages of online learning whereby social presence is increased at each stage. High levels of social presence enable students to use critical discourse and contribute to learning as they establish mutual trust and respect with their teachers and with other learners. The authors show how social presence can be cultivated when the instructor assumes the role of facilitator in the learning process. They also describe some effective strategies to develop social presence among learners, and how strategies for creating more challenging discussions can improve learning outcomes by leading to better interaction between students, instructors, and peers. The Appendixes on page 154 and 155 on "online steps to complex cognition model" and "metacognitive process" are great resources for instructional designers.

Section 2

Technology and Student-Teacher Interaction

Chapter 8: Bridging the Social and Teaching Presence Gap in Online Learning

This chapter provides a comprehensive discussion of how technology shapes student-teacher interaction. It provides an in-depth analysis of the effective methods and procedures that create and harness social presence in online learning. Moving beyond the limits of LMSs, the chapter demonstrates the way technology can be used to support engaged learning. The author offers a thorough look at the best practices that provide innovation in the establishment, development, and support of social presence in OLEs. She explains how bringing students and teachers together as human beings can remove the distance barrier in distance learning.

Chapter 9: Digital Identity, Social Presence Technologies, and Presence Learning

This chapter examines how Web 2.0 technologies have been used to foster student-teacher interaction and to support presence learning through the creation of digital identities. After reviewing four social presence technologies, the author then presents a series of projects demonstrating how digital identity, presence learning, and presence pedagogy are mediated by these technologies. He elaborates on the use of social presence technologies for content delivery, instructional program deployment, and the creation of virtual meeting spaces to support synchronous and asynchronous course interaction. He also examines some specific case studies using Facebook, Twitter, and Second Life to improve presence pedagogy. The chapter is concluded by an overview of the future trends with potential to influence social presence technologies and learning.

Chapter 10: Pre-Service Teachers Engaging with Twitter as a Professional Online Learning Environment

Presenting findings of a research project, this chapter details the development of pre-service teachers' skills to use Twitter as an effective OLE. It also relates the value of providing such training by describing how the experience not only created stronger personal ties amongst the participants but also showed them how to create stronger ties with their prospective students. The chapter also documents the progress in students' ability to professionally engage with Twitter and demonstrates how their confidence increase as they learn to participate and critically think about the use of social media as an effective OLE. The chapter also describes how teachers "can make connections, share

ideas, collaborate, and follow through on innovative learning and teaching practices that inspire themselves and in turn their students.” Table 5 listing the pedagogical decisions made to integrate Twitter provides a very valuable guideline for course designers and practitioners who wish to integrate Twitter into their teaching.

Chapter 11: Leveraging Web 2.0 for Online Learning

This chapter shows how Web 2.0 technologies can be tapped into to create collaborative social learning environments for students and teachers. After a thorough evaluation of readily available Web 2.0 technologies, the chapter discusses the optimal ways to promote interaction in distance learning, and offers examples of how they may best be applied to online learning. The chapter concludes with a look towards some of the emerging technologies in this quickly evolving part of modern-day education. Figure 1 on page 239 is very helpful in that it clearly shows the interactions among the factors involved in OLEs.

Section 3

Establishing and Supporting Student-Teacher Interaction

Chapter 12: Strategies for Establishing and Sustaining Social Presence in the Online Learning

This chapter details the necessary steps and elements for the creation and support of social presence in distance learning. It shows that an atmosphere of sharing and support can be created by cultivating a community of inquiry (CoI). The authors provide instructors with detailed plans for creating and maintaining social presence in the online learning environment. By using certain instructional strategies to develop a CoI, faculty members are able to attain student success. A series of demonstration videos, accessed by mobile devices scanning the QR codes appearing throughout the chapter, complements the content with additional resources for incorporating some of the more technical strategies. These QR code links to the videos are very helpful for the reader.

Chapter 13: Technology Readiness and Social Presence in Online Higher Education

This chapter offers an overview of the Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework, explains the three components of teaching presence, social presence, and cognitive presence, and provides the details of the CoI survey instruments. The chapter explores students’ willingness to use technology and its possible influence on their perceptions of social presence. These are complemented by a description of the technology readiness index, an overview of the nature of its quantitative elements, the implications for online education, and suggestions for future studies. Showing the interplay among the constructs and components of the community of inquiry (p.271), of the social presence (p.273), and of the technology readiness (p.280), the Figures 2, 3, and 4 are immensely helpful resources as well.

Chapter 14: Creating a Culture of Engagement

This chapter presents faculty development programs that equip instructors with the strategies, theories, and knowledge to make sound decisions about improving student-teacher interaction through the use of appropriate technology. It details how a quality faculty development program can facilitate student-teacher interaction by providing instructors with effective teaching strategies, adult learning theory, and information on how online technologies can be used properly. Addressing faculty beliefs/attitudes that are vital for the application of social presence strategies in online learning, the chapter discusses many different concerns expressed by both veteran and novice online instructors. Listing the strategies for educators as leaders, Table 1 on page 305 provides an excellent guidance for curriculum designers.

Chapter 15: Using a Distributed Learning Environment Model to Foster Learner-Educator Interaction

This chapter presents a new model geared towards helping educators develop and assess interaction in an online course while keeping students as the focus of the learning process. The *Distributed Learning Environment Model* is designed to foster interaction while integrating assessment. The chapter provides strategies and tools to assist educators in

designing interactive distributed learning environments of their own. The *Distributed Learning Environment Model* helps educators to create, deploy, and evaluate interaction in an online course by keeping the student at the center of the learning process. The authors begin with a brief overview of learning technology as it exists today then move forward with descriptions of the model's elements along with instructions on how to use the model to facilitate the design of courses that improve interaction while incorporating assessment. The distributed learning environment model on page 327 and the assessment rubrics on page 332 and 339 are quite helpful resources.

Chapter 16: Planning, Designing, Implementing, and Managing Social Presence in Online Programs and Online Classes

Drawing upon childhood experiences and observations, Dr. Patel discusses social presence in terms of the dynamics and forces working within individuals, as well as the interactions taking place between them. He analyzes how online class sizes, faculty workloads, learning management systems, social presence measurements, and faculty development can affect an institution's distance-learning efforts. Dr. Patel's discussion of course-level social presence details how proper syllabi, instructional design, and techniques for implementing social presence can help instructors create effective student-teacher interaction in OLEs. By examining the epistemological and psychological frameworks regarding social presence, and analyzing the contemporary social presence models, he describes a valid and efficient approach for the creation, refinement, implementation, and support of social presence in OLEs.

Chapter 17: The Human Element MOOC

This chapter documents and details the development and implementation of a large enrollment Massive Online Open Course that focused on humanizing online learning. Describing participants' experiences while immersed in learning within the CoI model, the chapter demonstrates how course leaders can model instructor presence and integrate technology with a human purpose while supporting the formation of both social and cognitive presence among the participants.

CONCLUSION

Besides holding the oft-cited potential of causing some negative learner feelings like isolation, Online Learning Environments (OLEs) provide innumerable opportunities for learners to interact with peers and instructors. By bringing together important research about enhancing online social presence of teachers and students from multiple theoretical and practical perspectives, and from various institutional contexts/educational levels including considerations of addressing cultural inclusivity, and introducing new and creative applications of improving the online social interaction of learners/instructors, this book makes a remarkable contribution to the field by filling an important gap. This book is also an impressive guide for practitioners since it provides many field-tested implementations of various frameworks (such as CoI) in OLEs regarding digital/social presence with plenty of examples, rubrics and figures. It also helps readers form a clear vision about the future of online social interaction technologies, especially in higher education. As such, this book serves as an invaluable reference for educators/curriculum designers who seek to gain deeper insights into the current status and future potential of Student-Teacher Interaction in OLEs, and for those interested in addressing social interaction needs and isolation problems of learners in their online programs.

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