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Analyzing "Teaching Presence" in online Persian courses to non-Persian speakers based on Andersons' conceptual framework

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ABSTRACT
Teaching and learning in online courses are disparate from face-to-face courses. Considering that instructors are not physically present in virtual courses, it is necessary to strengthen their presence sense in virtual courses by applying some strategies. Based on Anderson's (2001) conceptual framework, this essay aims to analyze Teaching Presence (TP) as an influential component in online Persian courses for non-Persian speakers at the International Centre for Teaching Persian to non-Persian Speakers (CTPL), Ferdowsi University of Mashhad (FUM). The data were collated from questionnaires completed by 30 instructors involved in different Persian online language courses, during the last four years. This questionnaire was taken from Anderson's conceptual framework on "Teaching Presence" and the aim was to examine (1) the instructors' views on teaching presence (agreement, disagreement, application and non-application) in Persian online courses, and (2) The factors influencing the emergence of their attitudes. Based on the data, according to the main three indicators of TP consisting of "instructional design and organization", "facilitating discourse" and "direct instruction", the instructors agreed with all TP indicators, specifically, most "agreement" and "application" was dedicated to facilitating discourse. Among the components of the first indicator, the "designing methods" and "establishing netiquette", and the indicator of facilitating discourse, "encouraging student contributions" and "drawing in participants to prompt discussion" show the highest percentage of agreement and application. Additionally, in the indicator of direct instruction, the lowest percentage was dedicated to the "present content and questions", which indicates the acceptance of new educational approaches among the instructors at CTPL.

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1. Introduction

The concept of being in a place is often understood with the presence of others. As social beings, humans derive meaning from their presence when they are in the company of others. In the context of educational courses, the presence of individuals gains significance by considering the social aspects and interactions with others.

Participating in online courses and acknowledging the presence of others differs significantly from attending traditional face-to-face educational courses. In this context, TP elucidates the diverse responsibilities of teachers towards learners and their interactions with them.

The Community of Inquiry (CoI) model, developed by Garrison et al. (2001), includes TP as one of its key components. This model was designed to enhance the overall quality of online courses (Richardson et al., 2015, p. 257). This model enables a comprehensive examination of the intricacies of virtual education. Numerous researchers have utilized this model to facilitate meaningful inquiry and enhance learning in online environments (Garrison & Arbaugh, 2007). Within this community, there is a focus on investigating the significance of interactions among social presence, teaching presence, and cognitive presence in creating collaborative learning groups (Richardson et al., 2015, p. 257).

Anderson et al. (2001) identified TP indicators in an online educational environment in a text-oriented process, then presented it as a conceptual framework that has three categories of instructional design and organization, facilitating discourse and direct instruction. This conceptual framework evaluates teaching presence, teacher's roles, and their duties. Puranen and Vurdien (2020) highlight the significance of teacher feedback in different scenarios when defining TP. They also associate TP in online second-language classes with the instructional tools employed by teachers (Puranen and Vurdien, 2020, p. 286).

In this research, we intend to examine the conceptual framework of TP in the virtual Persian classes at ICTPL. A virtual classroom is an environment where language learners can interact with their teachers, other learners, and course content. Yilmaz and Keser (2017, p. 2) have stated that through the possibility of using chat, whiteboard and web video conference in real-time, virtual classrooms gradually turned into online synchronous environments. According to Tyrväinen et al. (2021), virtual classrooms equipped with multiple media facilities offer various opportunities to foster interaction and enhance TP (p. 132). In addition to synchronous online environments, there are also asynchronous online environments where participants are not required to be present in the class at a specific time and do not engage in real-time communication with each other.

In recent years, the advancement of online educational environments has greatly contributed to the progress of online Persian language learning as a second language. Prominent institutions, both within and outside of Iran, have consistently offered virtual courses to teach Persian to non-Persian speakers. Among these institutions, ICTPL stands out as one of the oldest centers in the country and also one of the leading centers in the field of Persian digital materials and Persian virtual education. ICTPL has traditionally conducted its training courses in a face-to-face format. However, with the onset of the COVID-19 in 2019, the center swiftly adapted to the circumstances and successfully transitioned to virtual education. During this period, over 700

JOURNAL OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE RESEARCH, Volume 13, Number 4, winter 2023, Page 525 to 541

language learners were taught through online platforms. The shift to virtual education posed new challenges for both Persian language teachers and learners. The center recognized the importance of integrating technical facilities within the educational systems to ensure the advancement of educational courses.

The situation of transitioning from face-to-face to online teaching in different educational systems presents an opportunity to explore the conceptual framework of TP. While previous research studies has extensively examined TP in online environments for teaching second languages and other educational fields, there is a lack of research specifically focused on TP in online courses for teaching Persian language to non-Persian speakers. In particular, the case study of ICTPL, a prominent institution for teaching Persian language to non-Persian speakers, remains unexplored in this context.

In this article, we have explored the perspective of ICTPL's teachers regarding their teaching presence and the influential factors that shape these attitudes. We address two key questions in our study: 1. what are teachers' perceptions about their teaching presence in online Persian courses over a period of four years? 2. What factors contribute to the formation of teachers' attitudes towards teaching presence online?

By examining these questions, we seek to gain insights into the effectiveness of online teaching practices and identify the factors that influence the attitudes of instructors at ICTPL towards TP in online courses for non-Persian speakers.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Conceptual framework of Teaching Presence (TP)

To advance research in teacher training area, it is crucial to embrace new perspectives in education. One such perspective is the examination of TP to understand the role of teachers in online classrooms (Gabrys´Barker, 2011, p.197). TP involves exploring the teacher's relationship with learners from various aspects within online environments. Anderson et al. (2001) have highlighted that TP begins even before the course starts, with teachers assuming multiple roles such as instructional designing, facilitating discourse, and direct instruction (Anderson et al., 2001). Richardson et al. (2015, p. 259) suggests that instructors should strive to interact with learners in online settings, mirroring the same level of presence as they would in traditional, face-to-face education. This emphasis on both educational and social aspects of teaching is especially pronounced in online synchronous courses when compared to asynchronous ones.

The first indicator of the conceptual framework of TP is "Instructional design and organization", which shows general views about the process and content of the course. In this indicator, teachers need to have the necessary reflection and planning about the process, structure and evaluation (Anderson et al., 2001, p. 6). The components of this indicator can be seen in the table below:

Table 1. Instructional design and organization (based on Anderson et al., 2001 and; Shea et al., 2006).

Components	Examples
Setting curriculum	The instructor creates the course syllabus as a digital file and shares it with the learners.

Designing methods	The teacher explains to the learners that they will be divided into several groups and encourages them to discuss the lesson topics together.
Establishing time parameters	The teacher may arrange for the learners to record one or more activities and request them to share and discuss the files within the class group by a specified day of the week.
Utilizing medium effectively	The instructor gives guidance to learners on how to engage in online discussion forums.
Establishing netiquette	The instructor educates the learners about the significance of maintaining concise and respectful posts, and emphasizes the importance of not unmuting their microphones without permission.

The second indicator, "facilitating discourse," is essential for supporting learners' interest, motivation, and participation during the active learning process throughout the course. Anderson uses the term "discourse" instead of "discussion" to highlight a focused and sustained discussion (Anderson et al., 2001, p. 7). Facilitation discourse components can be seen in the table below.

Table 2. Facilitating Discourse (based on Anderson et al., 2001 and; Shea et al., 2006).

Components	**Examples**
Identifying areas of agreement/disagreement	The teacher uses the platform's features to conduct a poll for learners on various topics or issues.
Seeking to reach consensus/understanding	The teacher indicates whether the learners' ideas are similar through verbal or written feedback.
Encouraging, acknowledging, or reinforcing student contributions	The teacher uses affirming statements to validate the responses of the learners.
Setting climate for learning	The instructor reassures learners, encouraging them not to hesitate to think aloud and express their opinions, as the classroom is a place to test ideas.
Drawing in participants, prompting discussion	The teacher asks for the learners' opinions on various topics and guides them into further discussion.
Assess the efficacy of the process	The teacher reminds the learners when they deviate from the topic and steers the class discussion back on track.

In “direct Instruction”, teachers are in charge of the intellectual and scientific leadership of the course and share their subject knowledge with the learners. The role of teachers in any field requires direct instruction that uses their subject and educational expertise (Anderson et al, 2001, p. 8-10).

JOURNAL OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE RESEARCH, Volume 13, Number 4, winter 2023, Page 525 to 541

Table 3. Direct Instruction (based on Anderson et al., 2001 and; Shea et al., 2006).

Components	Examples
Present content/questions	The teacher delivers the course material through direct instruction and then engages students by asking questions related to the content.
Focus the discussion on specific issues	The teacher addresses specific educational topics and provides explanations to the learners to enhance their understanding.
Summarize the discussion	The teacher summarizes the lesson and incorporates the insights and findings that learners have contributed during the class.
Confirm understanding through assessment and explanatory feedback	The teacher demonstrates an understanding of the learners' comprehension through various feedback and assessment methods.
Diagnose misconceptions	The teacher remindes the learners of the parts they were struggling with and emphasized the importance of misunderstood parts.
Inject knowledge from diverse sources, e.g., textbooks, articles, the internet, and personal experiences (includes pointers to resources)	The teacher uses a range of online resources, such as digital textbooks, public educational websites, and relevant personal blogs, to enrich the learning experience.
Responding to technical concerns	The teacher instructs the learners on how to insert links in the messages section.

Numerous studies have been conducted in various languages based on Anderson et al.'s (2001) conceptual framework of TP in online educational environments. These studies have led to innovative solutions in this area. In the following paragraphs, we review these studies.

In the research studies on online foreign language courses, Puranen and Vurdien (2020, p. 286) investigated the role of teacher participation. Their survey of teachers and learners revealed that both groups consider learners' active involvement to be crucial for effective learning in an online setting. Additionally, participants in this interactive environment generally expressed satisfaction with the feedback provided by teachers.

Peterson et al. (2018) conducted a study highlighting the advantages of synchronous online education in promoting a more cohesive relationship between learners and their teacher. They underscored the significance of improving teacher participation in these environments. Similarly, in synchronous online courses, Baker (2010, p. 1) found, based on learners' feedback, that the instructor's immediacy of presence (instantaneous and simultaneous response through voice, video, or chat) is significantly higher compared to asynchronous online courses.

In line with these results, Martin et al. (2012) figured from their research that learners should have the opportunity to engage in real-time conversations with their classmates and teachers. They also highlighted the importance of receiving immediate feedback and being able to see the teacher and listen the attitudes of their peers.

Gabris Barker (2011) has investigated Critical Incidents (CI) in online second language classes. These events are unplanned and unanticipated occurring during or outside of the classroom and create challenges (P. 199). By comparing the presence of experienced teachers and novice teachers, he concluded that on the one hand, experienced teachers are more prepared in the face of unforeseen events in the classroom and are more aware of their presence, but on the other hand, compared to novice teachers, they did not easily accept the need for change (p. 207). Tyrväinen et al. (2021) Tyrväinen et al. (2021) identified teachers' characteristics by examining their various roles and concluded that successful synchronous communication requires multitasking teachers with high skills. They also emphasized the importance of holistic teachers determining the type of interactions before the course begins through purposeful planning of the courses (p. 143).

Parrish et al. (2021) in a research based on the development of Integrated Online—Team-Based Learning with combined synchronous and asynchronous interactions showed that learning increases in synchronous sessions using the working group is going well. Learners in such a system experience a heavy workload that takes a significant amount of time, so by dividing the work into groups, the process of doing activities goes faster and with better quality. Regarding the emphasis on the participation of learners, Bolliger and Martin (2018) investigated the attitude of learners about TP and concluded from the sum of the learners' comments that it is important for the course instructors to engage the learners with the learning resources and their peers in the online environment. In his research, Mehall (2020) highlights the importance of teachers' strategies to involve learners with their peers and course resources in the online learning environment. This approach creates an opportunity to establish a learning community and foster a deeper understanding of course content.

Dahmardeh and Eghtesad's (2022) study stands out as one of the few studies conducted in Iran in this field. Their work explores the role of important factors mentioned by students in their willingness to communicate in online elementary Persian language courses at Korea University, drawing on the Complex Dynamic Systems Theory. The study found that individual and emotional factors did not significantly influence learners' desire to communicate, whereas environmental factors did. Notably, the study highlights significant differences between East Asian learners and other nationalities in this regard.

Within the field of Community of Inquiry (CoI) model, a few internal studies have been carried out, albeit unrelated to Persian language online teaching, focusing on other various academic fields. One such study conducted by Khazaei and Arefi (2019) investigated the extent of teaching, cognitive and social presence in web-based courses at Shahid Beheshti University. Their findings indicated a weak level for all three components. Furthermore, Taghizadeh et al.'s research presents a model for web-based training based on the presence factors. In addition to the

JOURNAL OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE RESEARCH, Volume 13, Number 4, winter 2023, Page 525 to 541

components mentioned in tables 1, 2 and 3, they propose new components that include allowing sufficient time for completing assignments, setting deadlines for doing homework, providing scaffolding for learning in order to raise the level of learners, the teacher's intervention at critical moments to resolve differences between students, teacher availability to learners outside of class hours, the use of colours and fonts to highlight important things and give responsibility to learners to guide or participate in the discussion (Taghizadeh et al., 2015).

3. Methodology

This research is based on the TP questionnaire (Shea et al., 2006), which comprises 18 questions derived from the TP conceptual framework of Anderson et al. (2001). The questionnaire evaluates the ICTPL instructors' perspective on the TP indicators in their online classes and the level of implementation in three areas: instructional design and organization, facilitating discourse, and direct instruction. Moreover, there are initial inquiries categorized into two sections: basic demographic details of teachers and specific details about ICTPL's online courses. These questions were crucial for deriving conclusions from the results of the conceptual framework section, thereby ensuring face validity.

During the second phase of the study, the questionnaire by Shea et al. (2006) was evaluated for its format, content validity, and adjusted response range. Our specific focus was on the accuracy of the translation and the modifications made to the response options. To assess the face validity, we conducted a preliminary test involving six experts who were asked to provide feedback on the clarity of the questionnaire's translated questions and the revised response range. The new range of responses was set according to the new environment of virtual education based on the options of agreement and usage, disagreement and misusage, agreement and misusage, disagreement and forced usage and not paying attention to the use of this method in question so that it can both agree and disagree with the teachers and the possibility of usage or not usage measure the mentioned components. To assess content validity, the Content Validity Ratio (CVR) method was utilized, which is widely employed for measuring content validity. Following formal validation, the questionnaire was distributed to 8 experts, and the content validity for 18 indicators was calculated based on the opinions of these 8 evaluators, resulting in a value of 0.75.

The questionnaire's reliability was assessed by calculating the Cronbach's alpha coefficient using SPSS 22 software. This was based on a sample of 10 individuals from the target community and their responses to the questionnaire items. The resulting Cronbach's alpha coefficient was found to be 0.801, indicating acceptable reliability for the questionnaire.

In the preliminary general and specific questions, we analyzed the data by calculating the frequency and percentage distributions. For the main questions related to TP, we conducted chi-square tests to determine the level of agreement or disagreement among teachers regarding the components of TP and their usage.

4. Results and Discussion

In Table 4, the descriptive statistics based on general information and demographic variables were presented, and in Table 5, the descriptive statistics of specialized information about

instructors in online courses at ICTPL were displayed.

Table 4. Distribution of Demographic Variables of Teachers by Absolute and Relative Frequency

Variable	Options	Frequency	Percentage
Age	Less than 35	4	13.3
	35-40	13	43.3
	More than 40	13	43.3
Education	MA student	1	3.3
	MA degree	10	33.3
	PhD student	5	16.7
	PhD degree	14	46.7
The Field of Study in University	Persian Language and Literature	15	50.0
	Teaching Persian to non-Persian Speakers	7	23.3
	Linguistics	7	23.3
	Other	1	3.3
Experience Teaching Online Persian Courses	Between 1-2 years	4	13.3
	Between 2-4 years	16	53.3
	Between 4-6 years	6	20.0
	More than 6 years	4	13.3
Experience Teaching Face-to-Face Persian Language Courses	Between 1-2 years	1	3.3
	Between 2-4 years	7	23.3
	Between 4-6 years	2	6.7
	More than 6	20	66.7
Average Weekly Online Teaching Hours in the Last Four Years	Between 2-6 hours	12	40.0

	Between 6-10 hours	6	20.0
	Between 10-20 hours	9	30.0
	More than 20 hours	3	10.0

Based on Table 4, it can be seen that the majority of teachers fall within the age range of 35 to 40 years and over 40 years, accounting for 43.3% of the total. Furthermore, 46.7% of teachers hold a doctorate, indicating a high level of academic qualification. In terms of teaching experience, 66.7% of teachers have taught face-to-face courses for more than 6 years, demonstrating their extensive expertise in the field. These findings suggest that the teachers possess the necessary experience and proficiency to effectively deliver the lessons. Additionally, the data on the history of virtual training reveals that a significant proportion of teachers (53.3%) have engaged in virtual teaching within the last two to four years. Regarding the distribution of instructors, 50.0% specialize in Persian language and literature, making them suitable for specialized courses and advanced levels. The remaining 23.3% of instructors who specialize in linguistics are well-suited for teaching basic levels. This balanced distribution ensures that the necessary expertise is available across different proficiency levels, fostering effective language instruction.

Table 5. Distribution of Teachers' Opinions on Online Teaching by Absolute and Relative Frequency

Variable	Options	Frequency	Percentage
Online Teaching Training for Teaching Persian as a Second Language for ICTPL's Instructors*	Reading books and articles	16	53.3
	Participation in educational workshops	26	86.7
	Passing specialized units in the university	6	20.0
	None	4	13.3
	Other	10	33.3
Priority-based Impact of ICTPL's Programs on Enhancing Knowledge and Skills for ICTPL's Instructors*	The First Priority: ICTPL's Educational Workshops	24	80.0
	The Second Priority: Enhancing Collaboration among ICTPL's Instructors through Messenger Groups	22	73.3
	The Third Priority: Dedicated Educational Support of ICTPL	22	73.3
	The Fourth Priority: Dedicated Technical Support of ICTPL	23	76.7

Comparing the Effectiveness of Face-to-Face, Virtual, and Blended Training Methods	Face-to-Face	13	43.3
	Virtual	0	0.0
	Blended	17	56.7
	No Difference	0	0.0
The Impact of Digital Resources from ICTPL on Enhancing Teaching Presence	Slightly effective	2	6.7
	Moderately effective	1	3.3
	Neutral	6	20.0
	Very effective	14	46.7
	compeletly effective	7	23.3
The type of system used during the online Persian language course	Computer	1	3.3
	Laptop	27	90.0
	Tablet	2	6.7
	Cell Phone	0	0.0
The superiority of the platform platform based on the indicators of availability, efficiency and simplicity in Persian language online education	Adobe Connect	7	24.1
	BigBlueButton	2	6.9
	Zoom	1	3.4
	Skype	15	51.7
	Other	4	13.9
The status of Internet access during the Persian online teaching course	I always had access to the high-speed Internet	3	10.0
	I usually had access to the high-speed Internet	21	70.0
	I sometimes had access to the high-speed Internet	5	16.7
	I rarely had access to the high-speed Internet	1	3.3

*The total percentages will not add up to 100% in the case of these two questions due to the use of multiple answers and prioritization formats, resulting in a different calculation method.

Based on Table 5, it is evident that a significant majority of teachers (86.7%) have undergone preparation through educational workshops to be ready for online ICTPL courses. This highlights the importance of conducting workshops as a fundamental requirement for online educational systems. Additionally, the completion of university units in the field of virtual education has not proven to be adequate or effective for teachers. This observation suggests that these units may lack efficiency within the academic educational system.

The results of the next question are further supported and confirmed by the fact that 80% of teachers considered ICTPL's online training workshops as their top priority for improving

JOURNAL OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE RESEARCH, Volume 13, Number 4, winter 2023, Page 525 to 541

their knowledge and skills in Persian language online courses. Additionally, the high percentages assigned to other priorities such as enhancing collaboration among ICTPL's teachers through messenger groups, and dedicated educational and technical support of ICTPL, demonstrate the effectiveness of the educational services provided by ICTPL. These services have effectively addressed the essential needs of instructors in online courses.

In the following question, it can be seen that the teachers have assessed the effectiveness of blended education at 56.7%. Subsequently, face-to-face education received the next highest percentage. However, the significant issue here is the lack of significance given to virtual education alone. This may indicate the challenges faced by teachers in conducting online classes during the COVID-19 era, where they lacked access to language learners. Additionally, it highlights the issues related to infrastructure and technical equipment available to both teachers and language learners. The majority of language learners are from Iraq, where electricity and internet problems are prevalent, further hindering the necessary and sufficient access to online courses for teachers. Moreover, teachers themselves faced difficulties within the country, such as limited access to all platforms. These factors contributed to virtual education not being favourable for them. Simultaneously, the high percentage of combined education indicates a general acceptance of virtual education as a supplementary or integrated part of the overall educational approach. The preference for face-to-face education, accounting for 43.3%, reflects the traditional viewpoint of teachers towards second language education.

In the upcoming question, it is evident that 46.7% of teachers found the resources provided by the digital library of ICTPL to be impactful in enhancing their teaching abilities. The digital library offered over three hundred files to the teachers.

According to the findings, Skype is considered the top platform with a 51.7% preference, followed by Adobe Connect. These platforms were chosen based on the needs assessment of teachers and language learners. Adobe Connect was utilized for European language learners, while Skype was preferred for Arab language learners. Skype requires less internet bandwidth compared to other platforms and offers essential educational tools with sufficient efficiency. These findings align with the research of Pouranen and Verdin (2020), who assert that learners perceive video conferences as a timely option, with Skype being a suitable tool due to its ability to foster a more personal teacher-learner relationship (p. 286). In terms of creating a sense of presence, Lehman emphasizes the importance of technology and platform selection, stating that technology should not be a distraction but rather user-friendly, allowing learners to engage as if they were in an in-person class (Lehman, 2010, p. 38).

In this section, we will analyze the results of the questions from the questionnaire. The tables are categorized based on the indicators of instructional design and organization, facilitating discourse, and direct instruction.

Table 6. The Components of Instructional Design and Organization

Indicator	Agreement and usage	Disagreement and misusage	Agreement and misusage	Disagreement and forced usage	Not paying attention to the use of this method	Chi-square test result
Setting curriculum	22 (73.3)	1 (3.3)	5 (16.7)	0 (0.00)	2 (6.7)	553/38=x^2 0.001=sig
Designing methods	27 (90.0)	0 (0.00)	2 (6.7)	0 (0.00)	1 (3.3)	400/43=x^2 0.001=sig
Establishing time parameters	18 (60.0)	1 (3.3)	10 (33.3)	0 (0.00)	1 (3.3)	800/26=x^2 0.001=sig
Utilizing medium effectively	25 (83.3)	1 (3.3)	4 (13.3)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	200/34=x^2 0.001=sig
Establishing netiquette	27 (90.0)	0 (0.00)	1 (3.3)	0 (0.00)	2 (6.7)	400/43=x^2 0.001=sig

The analysis of table 6 reveals significant results from the chi-square tests conducted on the 5 indicators (sig=0.001<0.05), demonstrating a notable difference in agreement or disagreement among the teachers regarding the various components. The data indicates that the teachers have widely agreed with and implemented all 5 indicators. Notably, the highest percentage (0.90) is attributed to designing methods and establishing netiquette. This high percentage emphasizes the importance of providing clear educational scenarios to language learners and minimizing any potential confusion. Additionally, it highlights the teachers' recognition of the significance of establishing netiquette, particularly in addressing disorders and anomalies that may arise among Arabic-speaking language learners, who represent the majority at ICTPL. The next most agreed and applied component is utilizing medium effectively, with an emphasis on the chat section for enhancing writing and reading skills in synchronous online classes.

The acceptance and implementation of the setting curriculum by more than 70% of the teachers indicate that the learners are well-informed about the programs and assignments they can expect in different lessons. To establish clarity regarding course expectations and necessary coordination, Parrish et al. (2021) highlight the significance of early communication through synchronous online sessions at the beginning of the educational course (p. 482).

Establishing time parameters is a component that has a lower percentage (60%) compared to the other mentioned components. However, it is a common problem in online courses, causing significant anxiety for language learners. The lack of time poses challenges in conducting group

JOURNAL OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE RESEARCH, Volume 13, Number 4, winter 2023, Page 525 to 541

activities in virtual spaces outside of the main class. Approximately 30 percent of the teachers agreed with this component, although they could not implement it effectively. According to Parrish et al. (2021), finding suitable time slots for class group meetings as supplementary activities outside of the main classroom is reported as a challenge. Additionally, teachers need to find ways to estimate the time required for learners to complete activities in order to maintain a balanced learning experience (p. 482). Ward et al. (2010) also highlight the problem of learners facing a substantial time commitment to understand all the lessons, activities, and access resources in the course. Hence, determining time parameters in online courses can be a challenging task.

Table 7. The Components of Facilitating Discourse

Indicator	Agreement and usage	Disagreement and misusage	Agreement and misusage	Disagreement and forced usage	Not paying attention to the use of this method	Chi-square test result
Identifying areas of agreement/disagreement	19 (63.3)	3 (10.0)	8 (26.7)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	400/13= x^2 0.001=sig
Seeking to reach consensus/understanding	25 (83.3)	0 (0.00)	2 (6.7)	0 (0.00)	3 (10.3)	800/33= x^2 0.001=sig
Encouraging, acknowledging, or reinforcing student contributions	29 (96.7)	0 (0.00)	1 (3.3)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	133/26= x^2 0.001=sig
Setting climate for learning	22 (73.3)	2 (6.7)	6 (20.0)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	400/22= x^2 0.001=sig
Drawing in participants, prompting discussion	29 (96.7)	0 (0.00)	1 (3.3)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	133/26= x^2 0.001=sig
Assess the efficacy of the process	27 (90.0)	0 (0.00)	2 (6.7)	0 (0.00)	1 (3.3)	400/43= x^2 0.001=sig

The facilitating discourse has achieved the highest percentages among all indicators, surpassing the instructional design and organization as well as the direct instruction. This shows the effectiveness of this indicator in enhancing language learners' speaking and listening skills. Table 7 demonstrates that chi-square tests for all components were meaningful (sig=0.001<0.05), indicating an influential difference in consensus or disagreement among Instructors regarding the indicator. Instructors significantly agree with the various methods of facilitating discourse, as evidenced by the frequency and percentage of agreement across all six indicators.

The highest percentage of agreement and application was observed in the components of "encouraging, acknowledging, or reinforcing student contributions" and "drawing in participants, prompting discussion" reaching 96.7%. Considering that language learners are not in the real environment to learn the language and the communication is only limited to the time of virtual language lessons. Consequently, the teachers are very agreeable with these methods and have included the necessity of their direct application in listening and speaking skills. In support of the importance of "drawing in participants, prompting discussion" in the synchronous discussion, research by Dahmardeh and Eghtesad (2022) has highlighted various factors that influence language learners' readiness to communicate. These factors include transient and momentary variables such as the attitude of the interactions towards the peers they are interacting with, supportive relationships and positive interaction between the instructor and the learners, and the subject of interaction/activity (p. 177).

The component of "identifying areas of agreement/disagreement" with about 60%, on the one hand, reveals the teachers' unfamiliarity with various platform features, and on the other hand, it highlights the challenges of classroom management in the online environment and the utilization of all available tools.

Table 8. The Components of Direct Instruction

Indicator	Agreement and usage	Disagreement and misusage	Agreement and misusage	Disagreement and forced usage	Not paying attention to the use of this method	Chi-square test result
Present content/questions	11 (36.7)	12 (40.0)	1 (3.3)	4 (13.3)	2 (6.7)	667/17=x^2 0.001=sig
Focus the discussion on specific issues	29 (96.7)	0 (0.00)	1 (3.3)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	133/26=x^2 0.001=sig
Summarize the discussion	21 (70.0)	2 (6.7)	4 (13.3)	0 (0.00)	3 (10.0)	667/32=x^2 0.001=sig

Confirm understanding through assessment and explanatory feedback	22 (73.3)	2 (6.7)	3 (10.0)	1 (3.3)	2 (6.7)	667/53=x^2 0.001=sig
Diagnose misconceptions	29 (96.7)	0 (0.00)	1 (3.3)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	133/26=x^2 0.001=sig
Inject knowledge from diverse sources, e.g., textbook, articles, internet, personal experiences (includes pointers to resources)	22 (73.3)	1 (3.3)	5 (16.7)	1 (3.3)	1 (3.3)	333/55=x^2 0.001=sig
Responding to technical concerns	22 (73.3)	2 (6.7)	6 (20.0)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	400/22=x^2 0.001=sig

Based on the findings from table 8, it is evident that chi-square tests for all indicators were statistically meaningful (sig=0.001<0.05). According to the teachers' responses, there is a significant difference in their agreement or disagreement with the indicator. The frequency and percentage of agreement and disagreement specify that teachers strongly agree with the various methods of direct instruction mentioned in the study's six components. Parrish et al. (2021) have similarly highlighted that in group activities, learners have a great desire for direct teaching and instructor feedback.

The "present content/questions" component has a relatively low percentage (36.7). This suggests that, on one hand, direct instruction is deemed less significant by ICTPL teachers and is viewed as a traditional method that should be supplanted by facilitating discourse components to explore alternative effective educational methods. On the other hand, given that language learners often engage in traditional exercises accompanied by answers, the teachers' capacity to monitor the learners' responses has been diminished. In contrast, "focus the discussion on specific issues" has one of the highest percentages with 96.7%. One specific issue that arises is the recognition by teachers at ICTPL that teaching electronic educational content requires more time compared to face-to-face lessons. In response to this, teachers acknowledge the need to create a content body for themselves by sourcing from one or multiple sources. This content body is then tailored to the time constraints and language proficiency level of the learners, ensuring they receive appropriate and beneficial instruction. Another notable aspect of this method is its effectiveness in highlighting more complex educational issues, which aligns well with ICTPL's final exam that focuses on

such complexities. Additionally, the component of “diagnose misconceptions” stands out with a high percentage of 96.7%. This indicates that teachers were attentive to the language difficulties faced by learners and placed importance on addressing and bringing them to the average level of the class.

The components of “summarize the discussion” with 70% agreement and “responding to technical concerns” with about 73% agreement have shown lower levels of agreement and usage compared to other components. This indicates a need for greater attention to improve these areas. The first component is crucial for stabilizing language learners' learning and is influenced by the time constraints faced by teachers in online courses. The second component highlights the low level of technical knowledge among online course instructors, particularly during critical situations like the COVID-19 pandemic, emphasizing the importance of enhancing computer skills and implementing solutions in this regard. Bolliger and Martin (2018) have observed that it has not been important for course instructors to use different interactive educational platforms such as Kahoot to interact with learners. This problem is caused by the fact that learning and using a large number of necessary platforms must be taught before online courses. Additionally, Ward et al. (2010) have reported the challenges faced by online instructors in addressing technical problems due to insufficient technology skills, while Martin et al. (2012) found that learners expressed difficulties related to technology aspects such as webcam usage, internet connectivity, microphone functionality, and audio delays during synchronous interactions.

Approximately 70% of the teachers have agreed with the components of “confirm understanding through assessment and explanatory feedback”, and “inject knowledge from diverse sources”. The first component highlights the importance of assessing learners' levels to enable progression to higher levels and maintain a balanced overall class level. The second component emphasizes the presentation of content from various sources to enhance education and leverage the capabilities of the virtual environment, which is closely linked to digital literacy. The role of teachers in this context is also significant.

5. Conclusion

This article examines the concept of Teaching Presence (TP) at ICTPL’s online courses, using the framework developed by Anderson et al. (2001). TP is considered one of the most imperative aspects of online education, categorized into instructional design and organization, facilitating discourse, and direct instruction. The main objective of this research is to investigate TP in the online courses offered by ICTPL over the past four years, and analyze the findings considering the center's educational system. The results indicate that teachers have utilized all components of TP during this time, with a particular emphasis on facilitating discourse.

The findings from the first and second parts of the questionnaire reveal that the teachers at ICTPL have prior experience and preparation in virtual education. It is evident that they did not begin the courses without adequate training. Furthermore, a majority of the teachers are PhD students or PhD graduates, specializing in their respective fields. ICTPL has also organized training workshops specifically designed to meet

JOURNAL OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE RESEARCH, Volume 13, Number 4, winter 2023, Page 525 to 541

the needs of the teachers and better prepare them for online courses. Additionally, the teachers have benefited from support groups on messaging platforms, as well as receiving specialized educational and technical assistance during the courses. The study recognizes digital educational resources as the primary and complementary facilities necessary for online course instructors.

Teachers' attitudes towards virtual education as the sole method of education during a specific period in a course are generally not favourable. It is crucial to address this negative perception by enhancing infrastructure, upgrading technical equipment, and addressing the challenges faced by teachers. Additionally, the significant percentage of blended education indicates that ICTPL teachers consider virtual education as a supplementary or integrated component of the second language education system. Lastly, the fact that 40% of the teachers indicated their preference for face-to-face education reflects that many teachers are still adhering to traditional views on second language education.

The preferred platform for virtual courses was Skype as the top choice, followed by Adobe Connect. This indicates that the selection of the platform is considered an important step for starting virtual courses. The needs of learners, including their place of residence and the difficulties of internet connection related to this, were taken into account when assessing the platforms in all Persian language courses.

The TP questionnaire revealed that teachers have extensively utilized all indicators, with a particular emphasis on facilitating discourse. In the first indicator, the highest level of agreement and application was observed in two components: "Designing methods" to clarify educational scenarios, and "Establishing netiquette" to address behavioral issues and disruptions among language learners from diverse cultural backgrounds. The significance of establishing netiquette can be attributed to the majority of language learners at ICTPL being from Arab countries. These learners may lack the necessary knowledge and preparation for online education, and cultural differences and unfamiliarity with the effectiveness of online teaching methods can lead to disturbances in the virtual classroom.

In the component of establishing time parameters, a high level of agreement was observed. However, it was not always possible to apply, because one of the common problems in online courses is the lack of time. Many teachers did not use this method because, in synchronous online classes, the language level of the learners cannot be accurately measured because of the easy access to resources such as online dictionaries, and because of this disparity, the teacher sometimes has to review the previous content outside of the designated topic. Therefore, as a result, they face a lack of time.

In terms of setting the curriculum, more than 70% of the teachers stated that they presented the curriculum to the language learners, ensuring they were informed about the future learning path. It is crucial to emphasize this aspect in teacher training courses before the commencement of training programs. It is worth noting that the curriculum also requires digital resources. Therefore, unless digital resources is prepared for each session and aligned with the curriculum, its significance may not be fully recognized by teachers, and they may perceive it as a cliché.

In the second indicator, which focuses on facilitating discourse, it was found that teachers strongly agreed with the proposed methods in all

components and effectively implemented them. The findings indicated that the components of "encouraging, acknowledging, or reinforcing student contributions" and "drawing in participants, prompting discussion" had the highest level of agreement and effectiveness, both with a 96.7% agreement rate. High participation in activities inside and outside the classroom and high involvement of language learners with classroom discussions are two components that largely resolve the lack of presence in virtual courses.

In the last indicator, which examines direct instruction, it was also found that teachers generally agreed with the methods and their implementation in most components. However, there was a significant opposition and misusage of the method of presenting materials/questions compared to other components. It appears that the perception of this method as traditional has led teachers to seek alternative approaches to direct teaching. One such alternative could be focusing the discussion on specific issues. Additionally, the level of agreement and misusage of the component of responding to technical concerns faced by teachers highlights the need for computer skills training for them, as well as injecting knowledge from diverse sources, that rely on computer proficiency. This issue is a common challenge in online courses, and it is crucial to address it by providing comprehensive solutions to enhance teachers' digital literacy.

Ultimately, the quality and effectiveness of second language education in the online environment are influenced by various factors, such as technical infrastructure, the experience and knowledge of educational institutions and teachers, and the global position of the second language. It is essential to change teachers' attitudes towards online education and to understand the infrastructure, methods, processes, and results of this type of education in the world's leading languages to recognize its efficiency and inevitability. Key steps include developing electronic materials, designing suitable educational programs for synchronous online education, conducting theoretical and practical training workshops for teachers, translating up-to-date books in this field, and preparing language learners for the methods and processes of synchronous online education before starting the course. Additionally, creating regulations and guidelines for synchronous online education, addressing internet disruptions and limitations for international communication, and evaluating the implementation of these solutions should be the focus of future research in promoting Persian language education to non-Persian speakers.

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