

## Online English Language Learning at the Secondary Stage through the Lens of Community of Inquiry Framework

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### Abstract

*The COVID-19 pandemic posed an unprecedented challenge to education systems worldwide, and online learning emerged as a solution to address this crisis. However, there is limited research that analyses online learning through the lens of a robust theoretical model. Several models and theories of online learning focus on collaborative learning, among which the Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework is one of the most widely used. This framework comprises three interdependent elements namely social presence, cognitive presence and teaching presence (Garrison, Anderson and Archer, 2000). In the context of school closures during the pandemic, the present study aimed to examine the experiences of learning English through online mode at the secondary level with respect to all three elements of the CoI framework. The study employed survey method. The sample consisted of 200 Class 10 students and eight English teachers from four Kendriya Vidyalayas in Bhubaneswar, Odisha. The collected data were analysed qualitatively, and interpretations were drawn accordingly. The analysis, based on the CoI framework, revealed that the online learning platform provided a resourceful environment for collaborative English language learning, thereby ensuring social presence. It supported self-directed learning, highlighting cognitive presence. Digital tools and techniques used in the online mode were helpful for teachers in organising learning experiences meaningfully. However, achieving learning objectives across all language skills was difficult, and assessment and evaluation in the online mode emerged as a significant concern.*

**Keywords:** Community of Inquiry (CoI), teaching presence, social presence, cognitive presence, online English language learning

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### Introduction

In the twenty-first century, English has emerged as a universal language, making the world more accessible, sharable and familiar to all, despite variations in habits, cultures, traditions, regions and idiosyncratic aspects (Rao, 2019). Learning English requires appropriate learning environment, sufficient exposure and ample opportunities for listening, speaking, reading and writing. Qualified and skilled teachers put their expertise into improving the teaching-learning process for students through

planning, execution and assessments (Abdul Sani and Yunus, 2018). The strategies employed by teachers in classrooms can significantly help learners learn languages (Liviero, 2017), and the learning process can be designed in a student-friendly manner that encourages collaboration and higher-order thinking by providing individual attention (Oxford, 2020). But it is not easy to optimise the process of learning English, an unfamiliar language to many students at the school level. During school closures, it becomes all the more challenging to provide adequate and apt opportunities for language learning

through the mode of online education. Nonetheless, schools enthusiastically adopted online learning, where students and teachers were connected via the Internet and formal teaching-learning took place virtually through platforms like Google Meet, Zoom, Google Classroom, Email, WhatsApp, etc.

However, according to UNICEF (2021), in India, 80% children aged 14 to 18 years reported loss of learning during the COVID-19 pandemic compared to the period when they were physically attending schools. In this context, it becomes pertinent to analyse the experiences of learning English in the online mode, using an established and tested framework for online learning, such as the Community of Inquiry (CoI).

Many studies on online learning have examined various factors contributing to effective online education, such as teachers' expertise, the suitability of the learning environment and learners' information gaps (Turchi, Bondar and Aguilar, 2020; Zhang, et al., 2020). These studies highlight the importance of organising and enhancing online teaching and learning by fully understanding its potential (Hodges, et al., 2020; Branch and Dousay, 2015).

Additionally, emerging theories and models in online learning, such as Online Collaborative Learning (OCL) by Linda Harasim (2011), focus on the potential of the Internet, while the Connectivism Theory by Siemens (2004) recognises the growth of information resulting from vast data communications networks. According to Bransford, Brown and Cocking (1999), effective online learning environments are characterised by the integration of four overlapping elements — community-centeredness, knowledge-centeredness, learner-centeredness and assessment-centeredness. The CoI framework, developed by Garrison, Anderson and Archer (2000), is a widely used theoretical framework for building an online learning community. It represents a process of constructivist learning, where the learning experience is meaningful and deep, developing through three interdependent elements, i.e., social

presence, cognitive presence and teaching presence, as shown in figure 1.

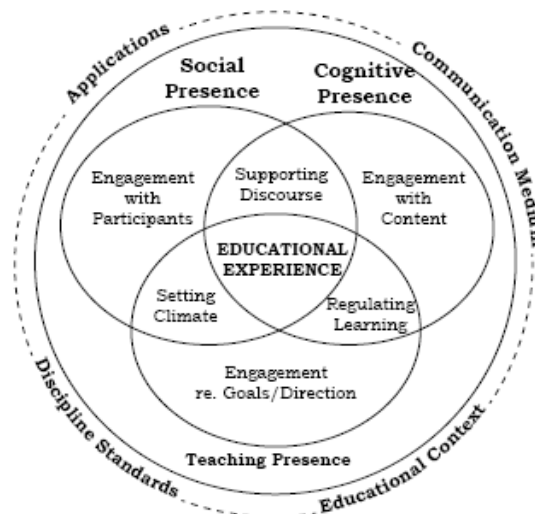


Figure 1: Community of Inquiry Framework

(Source: <https://www.thecommunityofinquiry.org/content/images/thumb.framework>)

1. **Social Presence:** It refers to the presence of a group of learners sharing a common interest in learning, where they collaborate, exchange ideas and communicate with each other to foster a learning environment. So, social presence signifies participants' ability to connect with a group, communicate and create a purposeful, trusting environment. The learners focus on building interpersonal relationships and expressing their individual personalities.
2. **Cognitive Presence:** Cognition means mental activity or the process of forming thoughts, constructing knowledge, perceiving ideas, etc. The quality of cognitive presence indicates the quality of learning. A learner's ability to acquire knowledge, construct meaning and demonstrate understanding by engaging in discourse represents their cognitive presence.
3. **Teaching Presence:** Teaching presence refers to the teacher's role in planning, supporting and directing students' social and cognitive presence to promote meaningful and purposeful learning. Through teaching presence, the teacher

takes the lead in designing, facilitating and directing the learning activities.

Krzyszowska and Mavrommati (2020) provided evidence that, in the absence of a blueprint for online courses, the CoI framework can provide consistent support in aligning the learning design with the socio-constructivist approach in online education. This view is further supported by Garrison (2009), who argued that collaborative and constructivist approach to learning is generating growing interest in online learning communities and highlights the importance of a pedagogical framework for cultivating an online community of learners. Konstantinidis and Gorla (2016) also emphasised that the CoI framework is an important tool for monitoring and supporting the development of a learning community. Kaban (2021) found a positive correlation between the implementation of the CoI framework and student satisfaction with their courses. Akyol and Garrison (2008) suggested that the design, integration and implementation of the CoI elements should be based on the intended purpose, the technological context of application and the participants involved in the learning experience. Swan, Chen and Bockmier (2020) identified significant connections between Rogerian constructs, such as the level of regard, empathy and the concept of teaching presence within the CoI model. Sanders and Vega (2020) highlighted the need for further research to identify effective practices for fully online K-12 education across all subject areas and to validate the applicability of the CoI framework in the K-12 context.

The primary aim of online learning is to establish a strong social presence that fosters a climate of trust and comfort. Second language learners, in particular, require more careful consideration, methodical approaches and activities (Aziz, 2000) that may be possible by adopting an online learning environment, which facilitates monitoring, mentoring, questioning and shaping specific learners' knowledge and understanding. Mo and Lee (2017) examined the effects of community on students' perceptions of

second language proficiency and confidence in relation to teaching, social and cognitive presences within EFL (English as a Foreign Language) online learning community. The findings suggest that these three presences are interconnected and positively influence second language proficiency and learners' self-confidence. The CoI framework, as outlined by Garrison, et al. (2010), offers an effective model for online learning that comprises three interconnected components — teaching presence, cognitive presence and social presence, which work together to create a meaningful online learning environment.

The reviewed studies collectively highlight the vital role of the CoI framework in enhancing online learning experiences. Various studies demonstrate how CoI aligns online learning design with socio-constructivist principles, supports the formation of effective learning communities and improves student satisfaction. The framework's three components — teaching presence, cognitive presence and social presence — are essential for creating a supportive online learning environment. However, further research is needed to validate its applicability across diverse educational settings and subject areas.

## Rationale of the Study

India experienced one of the longest school closures due to multiple waves of the COVID-19 pandemic, which necessitated the shift to online teaching-learning as a substitute for the conventional physical classrooms. Schools used various online platforms to maintain the continuity of teaching and learning. In line with this, the Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan (KVS) also implemented online teaching-learning processes in its schools through platforms like Google Meet, Google Classroom, WhatsApp, Zoom, Microsoft Teams, etc. With the evolving needs and increasing reliance on online platforms in the teaching-learning process, it becomes important to consider the established learning

models and assess their compatibility and relevance in varied contexts.

González and Herrera (2015), as well as Olpak, Yagci and Basarmak (2016), suggested the potential of using the CoI framework to create a positive learning environment and to design enriched language learning experience in English. Strategies employed by teachers in the classroom can significantly support students in language learning (Liviero, 2017). So, teaching presence can play a vital role in stimulating students' cognitive and social presence, enabling collaborative language learning. The CoI framework focuses on teaching presence along with social and cognitive presence, where learners can interact, exchange ideas and communicate freely in collaborative settings, thus creating an appropriate environment for developing core language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing).

Several efforts have been made to use the CoI framework in analysing online courses, especially in the domains of higher education

and professional learning. However, limited attempts have been made to study and analyse English language learning at the school level using this framework. Given that CoI is an established model for online learning, it would be valuable to analyse English language learning at the secondary school level through its three core components.

## Research Objective

1. To analyse online English language learning at the secondary school stage with respect to:
  - (a) Cognitive presence
  - (b) Social presence
  - (c) Teaching presence
2. To explore the challenges faced by students in online English language learning
3. To explore the concerns, issues and challenges faced by teachers in designing and implementing online pedagogical practices for English language learning

**Table 1: Research Objectives, Tools and Sample for Each Research Question**

| S. No. | Research Questions                                                                                                            | Research Objectives                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Tools              | Sample                                                                                              |
|--------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1.     | How are cognitive, social and teaching presences integrated into online English language learning?                            | To examine the experience of online English language learning by secondary school students with respect to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• cognitive presence</li> <li>• social presence</li> <li>• teaching presence</li> </ul> | Questionnaire      | A total of 200 students from four Kendriya Vidyalayas in Bhubaneswar (50 students from each school) |
| 2.     | What challenges do students face in establishing effective social and cognitive presence in online English language learning? | To explore the challenges faced by students in online English language learning                                                                                                                                                            | Questionnaire      | A total of 200 students from four Kendriya Vidyalayas in Bhubaneswar (50 students from each school) |
| 3      | What concerns and challenges teachers face in designing and implementing online processes for English language learning?      | To explore the concerns and challenges faced by teachers in designing and implementing online pedagogical practices for English language learning                                                                                          | Interview schedule | Two teachers each from four Kendriya Vidyalayas in Bhubaneswar (total eight teachers)               |

## Methodology

Survey method was employed for the study. Students and teachers from four out of six Kendriya Vidyalayas (KVs) in Bhubaneswar participated in the study. A total of 50 randomly selected Class 10 students and two teachers from each of the four KVs were chosen, resulting in a sample of 200 students and eight teachers. For the students, a questionnaire consisting of 26 objective items based on different elements of CoI was developed by adapting the design of the questionnaire developed by Arbaugh, et al. (2008). A 5-point Likert scale was used to record students' responses, where SA stands for 'strongly agree', A for 'agree', NS for 'not sure', D for 'disagree' and SD for 'strongly disagree'. The questionnaire also

included four open-ended questions aimed at gathering insights into the challenges faced by the students and their suggestions for improving online English language learning. For teachers, a semi-structured interview schedule consisting of 21 questions covering all three elements of the CoI framework was administered. The students' responses were collected through Google Forms, while telephonic interviews were conducted with the teachers due to constraints imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Analysis and Interpretation

The collected data were analysed based on different dimensions of the CoI framework, i.e., teaching presence, social presence and cognitive presence.

**Table 2: Components of the CoI Framework and Its Dimensions**

| CoI Components     | Dimensions                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|--------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Teaching Presence  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Designing and organisation of online classes</li> <li>• Facilitation by the teacher</li> <li>• Directing instruction</li> </ul>                       |
| Social Presence    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effective expression by students</li> <li>• Open communication</li> <li>• Group cohesion</li> </ul>                                                   |
| Cognitive Presence | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Triggering events</li> <li>• Exploration by students</li> <li>• Integration of knowledge and information</li> <li>• Resolution by students</li> </ul> |

## Teaching Presence in Online English Classes

Regarding the design and organisation of online English classes, over 70% students agreed that teachers clearly explained the topics and syllabus to be covered within the allotted timeframe. They also agreed that the teachers provided clear instructions for

the planned activities related to reading, writing and speaking, as well as for their expected participation in these tasks. The teachers shared that they needed to plan the lessons in advance, including all related activities, and provide the link to the online class both to the respective class and to the regional office of KV for monitoring purposes.

**Table 3(a): Analysis with Respect to Design and Organisation of Online Classes**

| Statements                                                                                                           | SA % | A %  | NS % | D %  | SD % |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| The teacher clearly communicated important course topics and syllabus to be covered.                                 | 29.8 | 54.5 | 5.2  | 5    | 4.5  |
| The teacher gave clear instructions on how students should participate in learning activities during online classes. | 27.8 | 48.5 | 12.6 | 10.1 | 1    |

|                                                                                         |      |      |      |     |   |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|------|------|-----|---|
| The teacher communicated all important dates and timeframes for each learning activity. | 20.7 | 52.5 | 14.6 | 8.1 | 4 |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|------|------|-----|---|

**Table 3(b): Analysis with Respect to Facilitation by Teacher**

| Statements                                                                                                                             | SA % | A %  | NS % | D %  | SD % |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| The teacher guided the students in understanding course topics, which helped clarify their doubts.                                     | 32.8 | 49.5 | 9.1  | 4.5  | 4    |
| The teacher helped keep the students engaged and actively participate in the classroom discourse (communication process).              | 29.3 | 49.5 | 11.1 | 6.6  | 3.5  |
| The teacher helped keep the students engaged in various communicative tasks, which supported the development of their language skills. | 14.1 | 45.5 | 22.7 | 12.1 | 5.6  |
| The teacher encouraged the students to explore new concepts and ways of learning the English language.                                 | 24.7 | 46   | 13.6 | 11.1 | 4.2  |
| The teacher helped develop a sense of community among students as they learned English together.                                       | 20.2 | 40.9 | 20.7 | 12.6 | 5.6  |

Over 80% students agreed that the teacher facilitated the class in understanding the course objectives and clarified their doubts. The teacher kept the students engaged in communicative tasks, which are important for English language learning. Over 60% students agreed that the teacher helped develop a sense of community among the students through open communication and various classroom activities. The

teachers shared that they used a variety of tools during classroom interactions. The students also suggested that more such opportunities should be created in online English language classes to maximise engagement in communicative tasks, such as role-play, dialogue delivery, reflective presentations, etc. They also emphasised the need for individual attention to each student, especially in the online mode.

**Table 3(c): Analysis with respect to Directing Instruction**

| Statements                                                                                                                                   | SA % | A %  | NS % | D % | SD % |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|------|------|-----|------|
| The teacher helped focus discussion on relevant topics that helped students learn the English language.                                      | 17.7 | 64.6 | 9.1  | 5   | 3.6  |
| The teacher provided timely feedback, which helped students understand their strengths and weaknesses, particularly in the English language. | 24.2 | 43.4 | 14.6 | 9.6 | 8.1  |

Over 80% students agreed that the teachers directed discussions only towards relevant topics. More than 65% students shared that the teachers provided timely feedback, which helped them understand their strengths and weaknesses in both spoken and written English.

A strong teaching presence was evident in the students' responses. Similarly, the teachers

reflected that planning for a topic, including the use of learning resources and language learning activities, helped in making online English language learning effective. It also supported the active effective engagement of students in the online mode.

All teachers emphasised the need for and importance of using online resources for English language learning, as they enhance

the overall effectiveness of the learning process. The students also suggested that teachers should integrate various online

resources to make language learning more effective and engaging, which could help capture and retain students' attention.

### Social Presence in Online Learning

**Table 4(a): Analysis with Respect to Effective Expression by Students**

| Statements                                                                                                                    | SA % | A %  | NS % | D %  | SD % |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Interacting with classmates in the online mode created a sense of belongingness.                                              | 18.2 | 38.4 | 25.8 | 13.1 | 4.5  |
| The students formed distinct impressions about some of their classmates, which contributed to their learning and development. | 29.3 | 47.5 | 13.1 | 5    | 5.1  |
| Online English language learning is beneficial for developing language skills through social interaction among classmates.    | 22.7 | 39.4 | 17.2 | 16.7 | 4    |

Only 56% students agreed that interacting with classmates online created a sense of belongingness. Over 75% agreed that they were motivated to learn further by the effective expression by their fellow students. More than 60% students agreed that online English language learning is effective for

developing language skills through social interactions among classmates. Teachers shared that they used various tools to assist them in online English classes like Mentimeter (polling software), Google Docs for collaborative assignments, task-based WhatsApp groups, etc.

**Table 4(b): Analysis with Respect to Open Communication**

| Statements                                                         | SA % | A %  | NS % | D %  | SD % |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| You felt comfortable conversing through the online medium.         | 18.2 | 27.3 | 23.2 | 16.2 | 15.2 |
| You felt comfortable participating in classroom discussions.       | 12.6 | 27.8 | 20.7 | 22.7 | 12.6 |
| All students were actively participating in classroom discussions. | 19.7 | 37.9 | 15.2 | 16.2 | 11.1 |

Only 40% students agreed that they felt comfortable participating in online class discussions. Over 30% opined that offline classes were better and showed reluctance with the online mode. Others suggested that strong motivational support was required from teachers in online classes, and felt that technical interruptions were also a

reason for students' disinterest and lack of attention. This indicates that participation in online English classes was low, highlighting the need for robust technical support in online education. Meanwhile, teachers shared that students were less hesitant during classroom conversations in the online mode.

**Table 4(c): Analysis with Respect to Group Cohesion**

| Statements                                                                         | SA % | A %  | NS % | D %  | SD % |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Online classroom discussions helped the students develop a sense of collaboration. | 14.6 | 43.4 | 21.2 | 14.1 | 6.6  |
| The students' points of view were acknowledged by their peers.                     | 18.2 | 47.5 | 23.2 | 10.1 | 1    |

Over 60% students agreed that online discussions helped in collaborative learning and enabled them to acknowledge each other's point of view. This fostered group cohesion, which supported collaborative English language learning. At the same time, the students also suggested that more such opportunities be provided to collaborate and socialise in online English language classes, which may enhance English language skills and retain students' interest.

The responses of both students and teachers reflected that collaborative learning took place in the online mode. The group tasks assigned to the students motivated them to work together. The students organised group-wise online meetings to prepare for the assigned activities like debates, role-plays, group discussions and brainstorming sessions—all of which are important for developing language skills. As the overall participation was not satisfactory, teachers proposed that a 30:1 student-teacher ratio

as ideal for effective teaching and maximum student engagement in online learning.

### Students' Cognitive Presence in Online Learning

Over 50% students agreed that online classes helped develop their curiosity for further learning. More than 80% agreed that the questions asked by other students during brainstorming sessions, online discussions and other language learning activities increased their interest in learning new things. A strong cognitive presence was reflected in students' responses. To make online English language learning more effective, they suggested that teachers incorporate more activities. One student said, "Teachers should share recorded videos of online classes so that students can refer to those if they miss a class or need to clear their doubts. Teachers should also motivate students in online classes to maintain their confidence and curiosity."

**Table 5(a): Triggering Events**

| Statements                                                                 | SA % | A %  | NS % | D %  | SD % |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Online classroom activities helped develop students' curiosity.            | 15.2 | 38.9 | 25.8 | 14.1 | 6.1  |
| Questions asked by others increased their interest in learning new things. | 32.8 | 54   | 5    | 4.2  | 4    |

**Table 5(b): Analysis with Respect to Exploration by Students**

| Statements                                                                                                                    | SA % | A %  | NS % | D % | SD % |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|------|------|-----|------|
| Students explored different sources to answer questions raised during class discussions, which helped enhance their learning. | 22.2 | 55.1 | 16.7 | 3   | 3    |
| Brainstorming sessions and searching for relevant information helped students resolve content-related questions.              | 21.7 | 49   | 23.2 | 0   | 6.1  |

Over 70% students agreed that classroom discussions and brainstorming sessions motivated them to explore and learn. However, they suggested that every student should get the opportunity to participate in these activities. One student

suggested, "Teachers should address students by their names in online classes, which was not the usual practice. This would help us feel a personal connection with the teacher and also enhance our attentiveness in class."

**Table 5(c): Analysis with Respect to Integration of Knowledge and Information**

| Statements                                                                                                                                       | SA % | A %  | NS % | D %  | SD % |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Combining information from online discussions helped students answer questions that arose during course activities.                              | 18.2 | 54   | 18.2 | 6.6  | 3    |
| Combining information from online discussions helped students answer questions raised during course activities and while working on assignments. | 16.7 | 48.5 | 18.2 | 11.6 | 5.1  |

With Respect to the integration of knowledge and information, over 70% students shared that knowledge and skills related to the English language developed during online classes, which helped them in answering questions raised during various course activities and while working on assignments. One of the teachers said, "Try to break a concept or lesson into smaller units to such an extent that

the young minds crave new knowledge by raising a lot of questions. It also motivates them to participate in classroom discourse by sharing their opinions and experiences." The students suggested that teachers should provide with more reading materials and resources like audios and videos, and recommend online applications for language learning, as these make online learning more interesting and engaging.

**Table 5(d): Analysis with Respect to Resolution**

| Statements                                                                                                                                     | SA % | A %  | NS % | D %  | SD % |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Online class discussions helped improve students' communication skills in English.                                                             | 11.6 | 44.9 | 21.2 | 14.1 | 8.1  |
| Students are able to apply the knowledge gained through online English language learning to their work and other non-class-related activities. | 14.1 | 53   | 24.7 | 5    | 3.2  |

Over 50% students agreed that online class discussions helped improve their communication skills in English, and they were able to apply those skills and knowledge to other related activities in daily life.

The teachers suggested that open questioning during classes encouraged cooperative and collaborative learning of the English language. They agreed that assigning various group tasks like role-play, dramatisation, and group projects or assignments, helped in developing communication skills. One teacher shared an instance of teaching a lesson titled 'The Treasure Within' in Class IX, which is based on an interview-style conversation between Bela Raja, editor of Sparsh, a newsletter from the Resource

Centre at The Valley School in Bengaluru, Karnataka, and Hafeez Contractor, one of India's leading architects, by using the role-play method. However, time constraints in online classes posed challenges in achieving learning objectives for all language skills for every student. Assessment was also a challenging task for teachers in the online mode. On the contrary, students felt that online examinations were a relief from exam-related fear and anxiety. They shared that participating in language activities was easier and more interesting, as they felt more confident during online classes. This indicates that the fear of making mistakes is reduced in the online mode due to physical distance from peers and teachers.

## Major Findings

### Regarding Teaching Presence

1. With respect to the design and organisation of online classes, teachers were efficient and provided the necessary support for English language learning.
2. The teachers kept the students engaged in communicative tasks, which helped develop in them a sense of community through open communication.
3. The teachers directed the discussions to focus only on relevant topics. Their feedback helped the students understand their strengths and weaknesses in both spoken and written English.

Therefore, according to the students' responses, there was a strong teaching presence, which facilitated online English language learning.

Analysing the teachers' responses revealed that online teaching requires more planning, as it helps engage students effectively in learning activities and manage time effectively. Planning the topic, including the use of learning resources and learning activities, is essential to encourage active student participation; otherwise, the class tends to become passive. Informing students about the discussion topic in advance through WhatsApp groups or Google Classroom helps them come prepared with prior knowledge of the topic. The teachers emphasised the importance of using multiple online resources as these help capture students' attention and achieve the learning objectives. Most of the teachers noted:

1. Students felt less hesitant compared to offline classes and tried to communicate more freely, a view that was also shared by the students.
2. Peer participation motivated students, encouraging greater involvement in classroom discussions.

Some of the challenges that the teachers experienced while conducting online classes are as follows.

1. Only 60 to 70% students attended classes regularly, and among them, 60% to 70%

showed interest in participating in class activities. The rest were passive listeners, and it was challenging to motivate and encourage participation because of the physical distance — students could leave the online class with just one click. Questioning was also difficult for the same reason.

2. Five out of eight teachers agreed that they faced difficulties in clearing students' doubts during class hours because of time constraints. However, all teachers confirmed that there was a provision for students to post their doubts on Google Classroom and WhatsApp groups. The common doubts were discussed in the next class. The personal doubts were answered individually through WhatsApp or Google Classroom.
3. All teachers acknowledged that managing time and completing the syllabus was challenging, often requiring extra classes. They also had to conduct combined classes for multiple section to complete the syllabus. Achieving the learning objectives for every student and managing large class sizes were also challenging.

### Regarding Social Presence

Online English language learning is effective for developing language skills through social interactions among students. The students agreed that online classes helped them acknowledge each other's point of view, which helped in concept formation. They were motivated by each other's performances in online English learning, which encouraged them to improve their communication skills further. The teachers accepted that the online learning environment helped develop a sense of social belonging among students. Various collaborative activities led to the formation of informal groups (like on WhatsApp), where students cooperated to prepare English language tasks and develop their communication skills. However, the teachers identified certain challenges, with the biggest being managing online classes of 50–60 students.

The following points were observed.

- It was difficult to involve all students in classroom activities. So, the teachers used the method of rotation of roll numbers on different days to maximise participation.
- About 20% to 30% students did not participate at all even, despite continuous prompting.
- Paying individual attention to each student was difficult in online classes, which is important in language learning.

All teachers proposed that a 30:1 student-teacher ratio would be ideal for effective teaching and management of online class activities. They emphasised the need to bring changes to the current mode of online learning to enhance its effectiveness. This could be achieved by ensuring the following. Adequate technological support for both teachers and students — a point highlighted by students as well.

- A well-structured timetable prepared by the management.
- A dedicated space for both students and teachers, along with maintaining an appropriate student-teacher ratio.

### Regarding Cognitive Presence

1. Online classes developed curiosity for further learning.
2. Participation in classroom activities enhanced the interest in learning the English language and improved the students' communication skills in English.
3. The students agreed that the knowledge and language skills developed during online English learning could be applied to other related activities in daily life.

The teachers' responses aligned with those of the students. For the development of LSRW skills, they agreed that assigning various group tasks was beneficial for the students. Working in groups fostered collaborative learning among the students. They worked together on different written projects, debates, role-play activities, group

discussions and brainstorming sessions. This collaborative approach supported the development of various language skills in the students.

It was easier to develop speaking, reading and writing skills in online classes than listening skills. Developing listening skills was difficult as the students were not in physical contact with the teachers. A teacher could evaluate their listening abilities only by asking questions, which was limited due to time constraints and the large number of students in a class.

### Challenges Faced by Teachers

The teachers said that it was difficult to achieve the learning objectives for every student to the desired level because of the following reasons.

1. Low participation in classroom activities from the students' side and time constraint.
2. Non-submission or delayed submission of tasks by the students.
3. A few teachers tried to speak to the parents to observe and monitor the tasks of their wards, but only a few cooperated to the desired level.
4. All the teachers agreed that assessment and evaluation through online examinations were difficult. They highlighted the following issues related to online evaluation.
  - (i) Students were not submitting their answer sheets on time, and in some cases, the teachers had to call parents to collect them.
  - (ii) Some students used unfair means to score high marks, which defeated the very purpose of assessment and evaluation.
  - (iii) Many students submitted answer sheets in incorrect format, making them difficult to evaluate.
  - (iv) Evaluating online written scripts was time-consuming, and timely feedback could not be provided to the students.

- (v) The management did not allot sufficient time for evaluation.
- (vi) One of the teachers said, "There should be sincere monitoring at the students' end by their parents or guardians to ensure active participation and presence. The monitoring should also cover the assessment and evaluation process, as well as the timely submission of various assignments."

## Result and Discussion

It was found that online learning has the potential to improve English skills and knowledge, as students were engaged in communicative tasks that helped develop a sense of community. The students agreed that they were able to acknowledge each other's points of view and were influenced by each other's performances during online English language learning. This motivated them in concept formation and in improving their English language skills. At the same time, they also suggested that teachers should create more opportunities for collaboration and socialisation in online English classes and encourage individual participation.

Similar findings by González and Herrera (2015) suggested the possibility of using the CoI framework to design learning experiences for higher-level language learning. In alignment, Kaban (2021) found that the influence of a community of inquiry influenced students' satisfaction levels and the support provided by teachers in online collaborative learning environments.

Studies reveal that online discussions are helpful in promoting collaborative learning. In the present study, the researchers found that students felt confident and comfortable communicating through the online medium. Besides, online English learning contributed to the development of communication skills through social interactions and open discussions. However, achieving the learning objectives for all language skills (LSRW) was challenging. Possible reasons included technical issues, a high student-teacher ratio,

limited control over students' behaviour, and delays in assessment and feedback through the online platform. Over 65% students reported poor Internet connectivity, limited opportunities for frequent participation in communicative tasks, and little or no feedback and motivation from teachers in online English language classes.

The students suggested that teachers should incorporate more engaging activities and use various online resources to make online language learning more interesting. On the other hand, the teachers shared that they did not have sufficient time to integrate a variety of language activities and or to involve most students in online classes. Providing ample reading opportunities for each child was difficult. Background noise and Internet disruptions were barriers to developing effective listening skills. The teachers also found it difficult to evaluate students' listening skills because of the same reasons. Moreover, they faced difficulty in assessing written assignments and providing individual feedback, which are important for the development of writing skills. Additionally, many students did not submit their work on time or in the prescribed format. The teachers accepted that evaluating soft copies of assignments was time-consuming and required significant effort, as it was not easy to sit in front of the screen for hours.

Despite these challenges, the activities organised by teachers, collaborative participation by students and their preparation for group-based classroom activities enhanced students' interest in learning English. Besides, the students were able to apply the language knowledge and skills developed during online learning to other related activities in daily life. One of the teachers said, "The students formed different WhatsApp groups to collaborate on the assigned tasks, which helped develop social belonging and language skills among them."

Mo and Lee (2017) noted that teaching, social and cognitive presences are interconnected, and positively influence second-language

proficiency and self-assurance. Similarly, Hodges, et. al. (2020) and Konstantinidis and Goria (2016) emphasised that to make online teaching-learning more productive and organised, it is essential to understand its use and potential. The CoI framework offers an effective and valuable tool to monitor and support the development of a learning community. Olpak, Yagci and Başarmak (2016) also found that online learning provides a practical approach for creating a deep and meaningful experience for English language learning.

Teaching presence is important as it facilitates learning through effective planning, designing and directing of online instruction. Strategies employed by teachers in classrooms can support language learning, and the learning process can be designed in a student-friendly manner that promotes collaborative learning (Liviero, 2017; Abdul Sani and Yunus, 2018). In the present study, a strong teaching presence was reflected in both students' and teachers' responses. Planning the topics, selecting appropriate learning resources and incorporating language learning activities, along with the use of online language learning tools, contributed to making online

English language learning more effective. It also supported the effective engagement of students in collaborative ways in the online mode.

## Conclusion

There is a need to adopt innovative methods and practices to make English language learning easier and more interesting. The emerging and evolving trends in the use of technology in education require planning and implementation to achieve maximum benefit. The CoI model has been established by various researchers as a framework for integrating technology with pedagogy and content knowledge, and for implementing it to online learning. In this model, teaching presence, along with cognitive and social presence, makes the learning process collaborative and enhances learning outcomes.

The present study analysed online English language learning through the lens of CoI elements and their integration. It provides evidence that the CoI framework holds potential for effective implementation in online teaching-learning processes at the school level.

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