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## **THE PERCEPTIONS OF ENGLISH PREPARATORY SCHOOL INSTRUCTORS ON ONLINE EDUCATION THROUGH THE COMMUNITY OF INQUIRY IN THE COVID-19 PROCESS**

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### **Abstract**

The purpose of this study is to investigate the perceptions and experiences of English preparatory school instructors from the perspective of the Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework in online education settings during the Covid-19 pandemic. The study employs a mixed-methods research design, specifically concurrent triangulation design. The quantitative phase of the study includes a survey completed by 140 prep school instructors using snowball sampling. The survey examines the perceptions of participants concerning the three elements of the community of inquiry, teaching presence, social presence and cognitive presence, as well as the challenges the participants faced during online education. The qualitative phase comprises semi-structured interviews with 6 of the participants who took the survey. The interview questions focus on the advantages and disadvantages of online education along with the participants' efforts to create interaction in their classes. Data from the survey were analysed using SPSS in the form of descriptive statistics with means, percentages and standard deviations. The interviews were recorded, transcribed and coded through thematic content analysis. The results of the survey indicate that while a slightly significant positive correlation was found between overall COI, teaching presence and social presence with online teaching experience, no significant correlation was found between online teaching experience and cognitive presence with an  $r$  score close to .0. Furthermore, prep school instructors create interaction during online teaching using collaborative tasks, Web 2.0 tools and personal information from students. The findings from the interviews suggest the following emerging themes: assessment and feedback, social interaction and getting to know students, convenience, technical problems, and attendance issues.

## **Introduction**

Countries were faced with a challenging situation when Covid19 hit the world in May 2019. As of the beginning weeks of 2021, more than 100 million cases have been reported (WHO Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Dashboard, n.d.). People are losing their loved ones in different parts of the world, while at the same time trying to cope with the emotional side of being in lockdown. The education sector was affected as deeply as all other sectors. Because of the health risks, many schools closed and immediately switched to online education at the start of the crisis. Campuses and school grounds were left empty, and teachers had to speak to their students through a screen. As a result of such a big transition, problems followed: internet connection problems, motivation issues, anxiety, being at home with other members of the family all the time, etc. Many reports were published to offer solutions to the problems. For instance, Dorn et al., (2020) suggested differentiating education according to needs and context, designing systems unique to the online situation, and forming real relationships.

To be able to reach students more effectively during these hard times, the importance of collaboration and interaction has been emphasized. Scull et al., (2020) found participation and engagement to be important concepts during online education. Collaboration helps students enhance their learning process through many benefits. For example, Panitz (1997) reported 67 advantages of collaborative learning. Webb et al. (1997) expressed the benefits of collaborative learning for, especially low achievers. Liman Kaban (2021) reported that collaborative activities resulted in a satisfactory learning environment and that there must be an interaction between teachers, students and the content.

The *Community of Inquiry* model is a collaborative learning approach for the online environment and was created by Garrison et al. (2000). It features three main elements, which are social presence, teaching presence and cognitive presence. All these features interact with each other and are considered important for an effective online learning situation.

With the current Covid19 online education systems in mind, this article aims to examine teachers' perceptions of the online learning process through the lens of Community of Inquiry. In the literature review section, collaborative learning, online collaborative learning and the Community of Inquiry model will be explained. Subsequently, the data will be presented with the survey results regarding teachers' perceptions and interviews with six of the teachers, followed by a discussion of these findings.

## **Purpose of the Study**

It has been known that the education system was affected due to the pandemic, and it has been a major concern. Due to the health threats, schools instantly transitioned to online classes. During these challenging times, to grasp students more successfully, it is important to promote a constructive and engaging atmosphere in the classroom, as it lets students learn and connect. Collaboration allows students to develop their academic experience by offering several advantages. The *Community of Inquiry* model is a collective learning method for the online atmosphere and was developed by Garrison et al. (2000). There are three main aspects which are social presence, teaching presence and cognitive presence. Each of these aspects are interdependent, and the framework requires to have all the features running together to be successful. With the features of CoI in mind, therefore, regarding the findings and the analysis, the purpose of the study is to provide insight about the overall perceptions and experiences of the instructors during the online learning process through the perspective of Community of Inquiry (CoI) during the Covid-19 pandemic.

## **Literature Review**

### ***Collaborative Learning***

Although collaborative learning has received considerable attention in recent years, especially with the rise of online platforms, the concept is in fact not new. According to Gaillet (1994), collaborative learning has a long history. Working as a professor of logic and philosophy between 1774 and 1826, George Jardine invented a method for peer review to be used in writing classes. Jardine believed that when learners engaged in collaborative tasks, they would improve interpersonal skills which are important traits for both academic and work life. Jardine argues that a sense of community and learners' taking responsibility are important in the classroom. Bruffee (1984) explains that the term *collaborative* was coined in the 1950's by English middle school teachers and a biologist.

Collaboration is a concept which encompasses a wide range of approaches. For this reason, researchers do not seem to agree on a specific definition of collaborative learning (Dillenbourg, 1999). Roschelle and Teasley (1995, as cited in Dillenbourg, 1999) define collaboration as "a coordinated, synchronous activity that is the result of a continued attempt to construct and maintain a shared conception of a problem". Panitz (1999) states that "Collaboration is a philosophy of interaction and personal lifestyle where individuals are responsible for their actions, including learning and respect the abilities and contributions of their peers."

It may be better to view collaboration as more than just a classroom technique. The term implies a way of handling problems where learners share authority and responsibility, and they respect each other's contributions and together reach consensus (Panitz, 1999). In collaborative learning, there is a paradigm shift from teacher-centeredness to learner-centeredness (Smith & MacGregor, 1992). Emphasis is on learners' interactions where they may have to deal with intragroup conflicts as they improve their interpersonal skills.

Dillenbourg (1999) discusses the importance of interaction while collaborating. Because collaborative learning requires interaction among learners, this interaction results in different cognitive mechanisms than individual learning, such as reduced cognitive load and knowledge elicitation. However, the availability of conditions for interaction may not automatically mean that interaction will occur. A concern is how to raise the chances for interaction to take place. Four ways are suggested:

- setting up initial conditions;
- specifying roles based on a scenario;
- scaffolding interactions by specifying interaction rules;
- monitoring and regulating interactions as a facilitator, rather than a tutor.

Laal and Ghodsi (2001) list four major advantages of collaborative learning: social, psychological, academic benefits, along with innovative techniques for assessment. Panitz (1999) describes an increased understanding among learners as a possible major benefit of collaboration. Collaborative learning also adds to the range of activities in the classroom, and in doing so, does not necessitate complete abandoning of traditional techniques (Smith & MacGregor, 1992). The tasks resemble real-life tasks and prepare learners for business or governmental positions for later in their lives (Bruffe, 1984).

An issue is how to assess student learning at the end of a collaborative process. Dillenbourg (1999) maintains that assessment might be difficult because the collaborative process or product may be vague to assess. Whether to assess individual performance or group performance is another question. Perkins (1993, as cited in Dillenbourg, 1999) states that “assessing group work through individual performance would be as meaningless as assessing a painter without his brush.”

### **Online Collaborative Learning**

The emergence of the Internet has led to rapid developments in education and interaction. Harasim (2012) explains the formation of collaborative learning in the internet environment under the title of Online Collaborative Learning Theory as a model where students are reinforced and supported for studying together on a certain focus and as a result, learning is created by actively creating knowledge. In this context, OCL has a three-



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step system, which includes idea generation, idea organization and intellectual convergence respectively, and these steps together form the foundations of the knowledge community. (Figure 1) Studies in the field of OCL have also considered the participation and role of teachers and teacher candidates in the process and researched their perceptions and views. In a study, it has been revealed that online collaborative learning can be an incentive for teachers at points such as salary, certification, and personal goals (An et al., 2008). In a study conducted by Sansone et al. (2019) with pre-service teachers' on OCL perceptions, it was stated that working in online groups was a positive source of motivation not only individually but also in group integrity. Along with this, it was stated that there can be enrichment in knowledge and skills with OCL through metacognition and creativity.

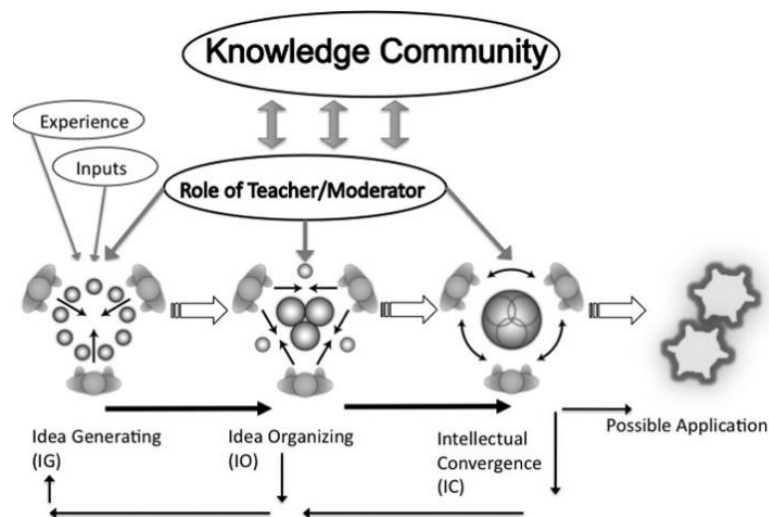


Figure 1. Online Collaborative Learning (from Harasim, 2012; p.95)

OCL has also created various perceptions and thoughts on students, another stakeholder in the education process, and numerous studies have been found in the literature for this. In the student community-oriented study conducted by Waugh et al. (2016), students emphasized a supportive and collaborative learning environment and stated that the amount of communication in the process gradually increased. In a study conducted in the United States, the OCL process of the students was evaluated with the Community of Inquiry model, and it was found that as the students better understood the assessment and instructions in the process, they cooperated better and enabled them to connect with their peers and learn better (Faja, 2013). In a study conducted with graduate students, the perceptions of students from diverse cultures on OCL were studied and the students stated that it offered a cross-cultural opportunity in the knowledge construction process and small group work (Kumi et al., 2017).

It can be stated that the relationship between OCL and various variables in social issues is also investigated in the literature. For example, in a study examining the connection between students' perception on technology and OCL, it was emphasized that collaborative studies influence students' intrinsic motivation and the development of social ties in this process (Magen Nagar et al., 2018). In the research on OCL, the stress state of the students has also become a subject of research. In the studies conducted by Jung et al. (2011), the importance of self-efficacy on OCL stress was emphasized and it was stated that Japanese students' collaboration process and use of technology can cause stress on OCL as well. Studies on the connection of OCL with 21<sup>st</sup> century skills can be found in the literature. In the study conducted by Simpson (2010), OCL and critical thinking were studied, and the study conducted over book rap, it was stated that OCL is a situation that supports the critical thinking process through student engagement. In the studies conducted in 2020, interactions between online collaboration and the Covid-19 process were also examined. In the study of Järvelä et al. (2020) on group interactions in the pandemic process, it was stated that a well-developed collaborative learning process can increase group performance and have an impact on metacognition. Demuyakor (2020) conducted research on online learning in pandemics in higher education institutions and revealed the difficulty of community building, social interaction, and collaboration in this study. In summary, in these studies in the literature, it can be stated that OCL has effects on teachers and students in cognitive, social, and other fields.

### ***Community of Inquiry (Col)***

Garrison et al. (2000) extended and implemented the theories of Lipman (2013) and Dewey (1959) as a theoretical basis for online learning. The first premise was that preparation for higher learning is more incorporated into a student/teacher inquiry community (Lipman, 1991). Lipman (2003) proposed that analytical or reflective thought and curriculum methodologies ought to be built by a community of inquiry. This presumption also corresponded to the educational theory of Dewey (1959), which defined education as a mutual remodelling of background. The surroundings of the analysis were an experience of collaborative and constructional learning in a research environment.

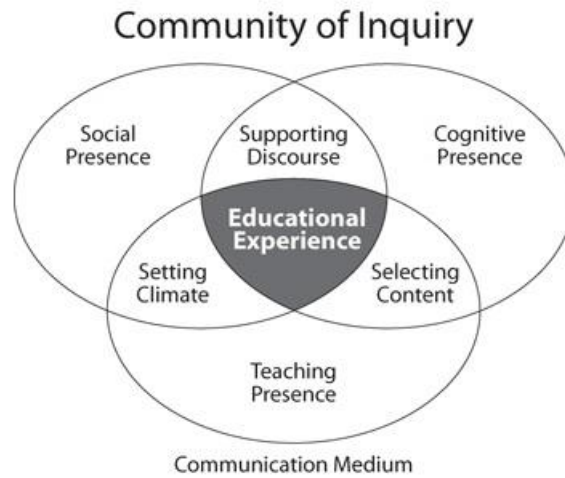


Figure 2. Community of Inquiry Image (from Anderson & Koole, 2013)

Garrison (2011) defines a community of inquiry (CoI) as a community of individuals working collaboratively to build personal sense and shared understanding through intentional critical discourse and reflection. The CoI framework advocates deep methods instead of surface learning approaches and attempts to create the conditions needed for improved cognitive processing. Among various theories of online education, the CoI model concentrates on simple philosophical and epistemological concepts and theories of learning. In this way, the CoI system represents a mechanism to create a clear in-depth learning atmosphere by building up three components: social presence, cognitive presence, and teaching presence (see Figure 1). All three presences must be matched to have a successful investigative mechanism and to achieve better order learning.

Akyol and Garrison (2011) in more than 10 years of study, CoI theoretical framework has verified its tremendous ability to build, direct and analyse e-learning methods, tactics, and techniques – notwithstanding the fact that the dimensionality of the CoI theoretical framework components and dynamics are validated. The primary implication is that the CoI system has contributed to a rigorous analysis of how to use distance education to promote strategic thought and improved learning outcomes. The theoretical structure of the CoI is adopted to contribute a design of metacognitive knowledge, online discourse, and the control of reflection.

Considering the previous studies in the literature, this study aims to examine the perception of English preparatory school instructors' online education within the framework of Community of Inquiry (COI) and seek answers to the following research questions:

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- What are the perceptions of teachers in online teaching environments from the perspectives of Community of Inquiry (COI)?
- How do university English preparatory school instructors create interaction during Covid-19 pandemic?
- What are instructors' experiences with online collaborative learning during Covid-19 pandemic?

## **Methodology**

### **Research Design**

This study employs mixed methods research design with a quantitative survey and qualitative interview phase. The mixed methods approach is preferred for several reasons. Creswell (2009) states that such an approach strengthens understanding and that results from one approach supports those from the other. In particular, the concurrent triangulation design is chosen for this study due to time constraints to collect data. As for the timing of data collection and analysis, qualitative and quantitative data will be collected concurrently, analysed separately, and findings will subsequently be compared. As Creswell (2009) indicates, concurrent data collection may be necessary when time limits impose a constraint. This also prevents revisiting the data collection site multiple times. Quantitative and qualitative data are regarded to have equal weight in this research, and thus contribute with equal importance. Findings from both types of data support each other and strengthen the findings. Morse (1991) also mentions that methodological triangulation, the use of more than one types of data, enhances the power of the findings, and helps address an issue more effectively.

A visual diagram which summarizes the process in this study can be found below. In this diagram, a mixed methods notation is used where capital letters for both qualitative and quantitative abbreviations imply equal importance, and arrows between the collection and analysis phases suggest a sequence.

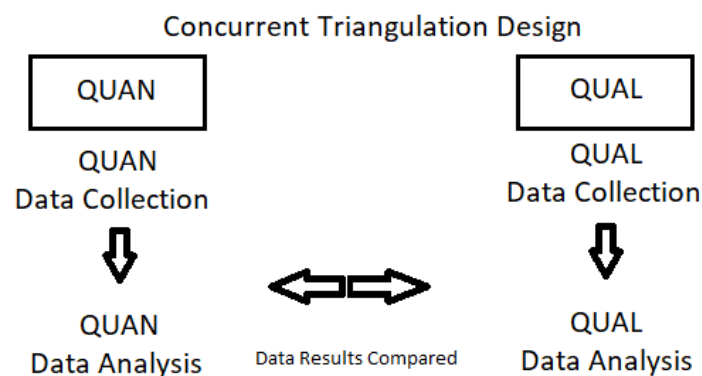


Figure 3. A Visual Diagram of the Research Design (Taken from Creswell, 2009)

### ***Setting and Procedures***

The present study aims to investigate the perceptions of prep teachers in online teaching environments from the perspective of CoI. In that sense, the context of this study is prep schools in Turkey. As the sampling method of the study is random, many instructors from various universities around Turkey participated to study. In general, the students in Turkey take a proficiency exam to establish whether they would start their departments immediately or a prep year is required. According to the results of the exam, the students are replaced to appropriate level classes to learn English. (A1, A2, B1, B2, C1). The levels are determined by CEFR. The general duration of the prep program lasts seven months and four modules which includes skills and main course classes. Some of the institutions provide an integrated approach, whereas some of them offer skill-based instruction. At the end of the program, students reach a level where they have common skills in English.

For this study, various prep schools from universities around Turkey are sampled, including public and foundational ones. Although there are slight differences in their program, one significant is common for this term; all schools offer online education. The general aim of all prep programs is to deliver quality English language education to students who are non-native speakers of English; and further, to equip them with the English language skills they will need to express themselves competently in the context of English medium instruction within their departments. Along with this the programs assure for the instructors an encouraging environment for professional development, critical thinking skills and digital skills. The students receive 20 hours of instruction on average. Each lesson lasts 45 minutes, and all the schools employ a communicative-based approach to teach a foreign language.

In prep schools, the instructors are graduates of ELT, ELL, or Linguistics. Many of them are graduates of MA, however, there are some who are current MA students. Their age ranges to 23 to 50. Their teaching experience ranges 1 to 20. All of them deliver online lessons currently. The schools are based in Turkey.

The data collection tool, which is a survey, will be sent to instructors online. The participation is voluntary. The participants will do the survey online and send it through Google Forms. Also, the interviews will be held online due to the current situation. The overall data will be collected once the optimum number of instructors are surveyed.

### ***Participants***

The population of this study is the EFL instructors in Turkey whereas the sample is the EFL instructors at English preparatory schools of universities. Certain generalizations about the population who are EFL instructors in Turkey can be made with the data which

was collected from the narrowed target group sample as EFL teachers at preparatory schools of three foundation universities and one state university.

This study was carried out with 140 (109 females, 31 males) EFL instructors working at English preparatory schools of foundation and state universities located in Turkey. Among 140 participants, regarding the age groups, 5 of the instructors were under the age of 25. 31 instructors were between the ages of 25–29 years old, 67 instructors were between the ages of 30–39 while 29 instructors were between 40–49 years old. Lastly, 8 of the instructors were between 50–59 years old. With respect to the highest level of education, out of 80 participants, 49 instructors hold a bachelor's degree whereas 81 instructors have a master's degree. Lastly, 10 instructors hold a doctoral degree.

On behalf of years of teaching experience, among the 140 participants, 34 instructors had 1–5 years of experience, 39 instructors had 6–10 years of experience and teaching experience of 34 instructors was 11–15 years. In addition, 12 participants had 16–20 years of teaching experience. Finally, 21 participants had more than 20 years of teaching experience.

Regarding the online teaching experience, 32 instructors have been teaching online for 1 to 6 months whereas 81 instructors have been teaching online for 7 to 11 months. In addition, 20 instructors have been teaching online for 1 to 3 years while the 4 instructors had 4–5 years of online teaching experience. Finally, 3 instructors have been teaching online more than 5 years.

With respect to the language levels that instructors teach, out of 140 instructors, 19 instructors teach A1 level, 58 instructors teach A2, 34 instructors teach B1 level, 17 instructors teach B2 level, and 11 instructors teach C1 level. Finally, 1 instructor teaches C2 level.

Additionally, in terms of daily internet consumption, 72 teachers have been online 1 to 6 hours, 58 teachers have been online 7 to 12 hours and lastly 10 teachers have been online more than 13 hours in a day.

Furthermore, on behalf of the existing students, out of 140 participants, 6 instructors had 2 to 10 students, 52 instructors had 11 to 20 number of students, 63 instructors had 21 to 30 number of students and 9 of the instructors had 31 to 49 number of students. Finally, 10 of the instructors had 50 to 99 students.

Regarding the specific area instructors teach, out of 140 instructors, 84 of them teach language-based courses and 49 of the instructors teach skill-based courses. In addition, 2 of the instructors teach both language-based and skill-based courses. Regarding the other

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areas, one instructor teaches content-based courses, one teaches SAP health, the other one teaches integrated skills supported by grammar handout and finally one teacher gives teacher training courses.

For the sake of this study, participants will be selected randomly to apply random sampling. During the selection process, random sampling will be applied for both quantitative and qualitative data to gather in depth information about the phenomenon.

**Data Collection**

Table 1: COI Survey Instrument

Presence Categories	Sub-Categories	Item Number
Teaching Presence	Design & Organization	4 Items
	Facilitation	6 Items
	Direct Instruction	3 Items
Social Presence	Affective Expression	3 Items
	Open Communication	3 Items
	Group Cohesion	3 Items
Cognitive Presence	Triggering Event	3 Items
	Exploration	3 Items
	Integration	3 Items
	Resolution	3 Items
TOTAL		34 Items

In this mixed research study, data was collected in a single time with survey and semi-structured interview as qualitative and quantitative. The Community of Inquiry (COI) Survey (Arbaugh et al., 2008) instrument was used for quantitative data with minor adaptations to collect the data online via Google Forms. The original COI survey is a presence survey that consists of three parts and includes general evaluation of education through presences by students (Table 1).

Since this study includes the evaluation of teachers' online education process, the emphasis on teacher perspective and online education was added to the items with 5-points Likert scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree (Appendix A). In the first section of the survey, demographic information questions were included in the form of gender, age, educational status, and the institution of work. In the second section of the survey, items related to teacher presence were given under three headings. In the third section, questions about social presence were given under three headings. In the fourth section, cognitive presence questions were given under four headings. The use of surveys benefits researchers because of its economical and fast turnarounds (Creswell, 2009). The use of Google Forms facilitates the reporting of question-oriented and participant-oriented outputs, supports the electronic storage of information in the system and the security of participant information. To increase the reliability of the interview, the original survey and the adapted version was

presented to the field expert and her opinion was taken. Besides, Cronbach's Alpha was used to calculate internal consistency due to adaptations made on the survey. In the qualitative part of the study, 10 participants were selected with purposeful sampling and semi-structured interviews were held with these participants to detail the opinions of the participants on the subject. It has been stated to the participants that the interviews were used for research purposes and will be recorded, and their consent has been obtained. According to Creswell (2009), interviews provide an advantage in increasing the in-depth explanation of the study by adding the thoughts and experiences of the participants. Furthermore, interviews can provide a multidisciplinary approach by creating a balance between empathetic engagement objective awareness with individuals' views and common points (Miles et al., 1994). For the participants to express their opinions more easily, the questions were given in Turkish, and the answers were collected in Turkish. These questions are:

- What are the advantages and disadvantages of the online education process?
- What are you doing to create classroom interaction in this process?

### **Data Analysis**

All responses of the participants were exported via Google Forms for the quantitative part. Quantitative data items were analysed in the form of descriptive statistics with means, percentages, and standard deviation. The data obtained from Google Forms were transferred to SPSS and tables and trends will be given through demographics and presences. For qualitative data analysis, first interview audio recordings were written down. The analysis was done as thematic content analysis by hand. According to Miles et al., (1994), thematic content analysis enables researchers to create a systematic and organized cognitive map for the common themes and patterns. After the participants' responses were examined in general terms, codes were created in chunks, and categories and themes were created based on these codes. Interpretation of the created theme and important codes has been made in the further sections. For the reliability of the created themes and codes, a cross-check was made by the researchers and the results obtained were compared. The interpretation of all the information obtained from data analysis is available in the findings and discussion sections.

### **Findings**

This section shows the findings based on the research questions. Findings are presented as both quantitative (COI Questionnaire) and Qualitative (Semi-structured interviews) data. While the first research question focuses on teachers' perceptions of online education by addressing Community of Inquiry elements and items, the second research question targets the findings of teachers' collaboration in online education. On the other hand, the



third question aimed to reveal teachers' experiences of collaborative practices in online education.

### **Quantitative Findings**

In this part of the study, the first research question focusing on quantitative data will be discussed. The data obtained with the COI Questionnaire was analysed using the Pearson Correlation Coefficient with the SPSS v26 tool. The findings of the quantitative analysis related to the research question are presented below with tables.

#### *Findings related to the 1<sup>st</sup> research question*

Descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation coefficient were applied to questionnaire data focusing on COI elements and online teaching duration data.

To determine the effect of the Community of Inquiry model on the online teaching experience of the instructors, descriptive statistics with means and standard deviation examined for overall COI and COI elements. Table 2 below shows the mean and SD of the overall COI and COI elements for the sample group. As shown in the table, the mean score of the overall questionnaire is 3.95 with a standard deviation of 0.89. For the sub-headings of the Community of Inquiry, the mean score of the teaching presence is 4.16 with a standard deviation of 0.82 while the mean score of social presence is 3.71 with 1 standard deviation. The last component of model, cognitive presence has 3.90 mean score with a standard deviation of 0.87.

Table 2: The Means of the COI Questionnaire

Group	M	SD	N
COI Overall Questionnaire	3.95	0.89	140
Teaching Presence	4.16	0.82	140
Social Presence	3.71	1.00	140
Cognitive Presence	3.9	0.87	140

To find out the item-based descriptive scores, mean and standard deviation for each element is calculated. The result of the item-based descriptive statistics is shown in Table 3 below. For the teaching presence, mean score of item 2 “I clearly communicate important course goals.” is 4.39 with a 0.79 standard deviation as the strongest element, followed by item 11 “I help to focus discussion on relevant issues in a way that helps the students to learn.” with 4.30 mean score and standard deviation of 0.88 and item 10 “My actions reinforce the development of a sense of community among the students.” with a 4.28 mean score and a standard deviation of 0.87.

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Table 3: The means of the Teaching Presence Items

Item	Mean	SD	N
T1	4.25	0.74	140
T2	4.39	0.79	140
T3	4.14	0.80	140
T4	4.26	0.81	140
T5	4.07	0.81	140
T6	4.09	0.82	140
T7	4.09	0.89	140
T8	4.00	0.89	140
T9	4.19	0.81	140
T10	4.28	0.87	140
T11	4.30	0.88	140
T12	4.08	0.81	140
T13	4.07	0.79	140
T14	4.12	0.80	140

For the category of social presence, item 7 “I feel comfortable disagreeing with my students while still maintaining a sense of trust.” selected as the strongest element with 4.02 mean and standard deviation of 0.90 followed by item 1 “Getting to know my students gives me a sense of belonging in the course.” with 3.98 mean score and a standard deviation of 0.86 and item 6 “I feel comfortable making my students interact with other students.” With 3.96 mean score and a standard deviation of 0.95.

Table 4: The means of the Social Presence Items

Item	Mean	SD	N
S1	3.98	0.86	140
S2	2.94	1.20	140
S3	3.56	1.07	140
S4	3.8	0.99	140
S5	3.73	1.07	140
S6	3.96	0.95	140
S7	4.02	0.90	140
S8	3.66	1.02	140
S9	3.82	0.95	140

Table 5: The means of the Cognitive Presence Items

Item	Mean	SD	N
C1	3.71	0.91	140
C2	4.24	0.83	140
C3	3.91	0.98	140
C4	4.04	0.84	140
C5	3.86	0.94	140
C6	4.21	0.78	140
C7	4.07	0.76	140
C8	4.04	0.80	140
C9	3.65	0.92	140
C10	3.72	0.87	140
C11	3.67	0.94	140
C12	3.64	0.86	140

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For the category of cognitive presence, item 2 “My course activities pique curiosity on students.” is the strongest element with the mean score of 4.24 and a standard deviation of 0.83 followed by item 6 “I have my students use online discussions so that they can appreciate different perspectives.” with 4.21 mean score and a standard deviation of 0.78 and item 4 “I make students use various sources of information to approach the problems that arise.” with the mean score of 4.04 and a standard deviation of 0.84 and item 8 “I enable the students to create explanations and solutions with the learning activities.” with the mean score of 4.04 and a standard deviation of 0.80.

To find out the correlation level and significance between the Community of Inquiry model elements and online teaching experience of the sample group, Pearson Correlation Coefficient was performed. The results of the Pearson Correlation Coefficient are shown in the Table 6. As illustrated in the table, there is a positive and slightly significant correlation between the online teaching experience of the sample group and overall COI model;  $P > .05$ . The correlation score of 0.069, which is near to 1, shows that between COI model and online teaching experience, there is a small strength of association.

Table 6: Pearson Correlation Coefficient

		Online Teaching Experience	COI Model
Online Teaching Experience	Pearson Correlation	1	0.069
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.446
	N	140	140
COI Model	Pearson Correlation	0.069	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.446	
	N	140	140

To make a more detailed interpretation about the sub-categories, correlation scores between sub-categories and online teaching experience calculated separately as well. The results of the correlation score of the teaching presence and online teaching experience is given in the Table 7. As shown in the table, there is a positive and slightly significant correlation between online teaching experience and teaching presence category;  $P > 0.5$ . The correlation found for online teaching experience and teaching presence as 0.097, which can be assumed as small strength of association with a close score to .1.

Table 7: Pearson Correlation Coefficient

		Online Teaching Experience	Teaching Presence
Online Teaching Experience	Pearson Correlation	1	0.097
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.254
	N	140	140
Teaching Presence	Pearson Correlation	0.097	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.254	
	N	140	140

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Table 8 below shows the correlation level between social presence and online teaching experience. As shown in the table, the correlation between these two items indicates a slightly significant positive correlation with 0.086 correlation r score:  $P > 0.5$ . It means there is a small strength of association between social presence and online teaching experience with a score near to .1 r score.

Table 8: Pearson Correlation Coefficient

		Online Teaching Experience	Social Presence
Online Teaching Experience	Pearson Correlation	1	0.086
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.311
	N	140	140
Social Presence	Pearson Correlation	0.086	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.311	
	N	140	140

Lastly, for the category of cognitive presence, Table 9 shows the correlation level between cognitive presence and online teaching experience. As shown in the table, there is no correlation between online teaching experience and cognitive presence  $P > 0.5$ . The correlation found for online teaching experience and cognitive presence as 0.025, which can be assumed as no strength of association with a close score to 0.

Table 9: Pearson Correlation Coefficient

		Online Teaching Experience	Cognitive Presence
Online Teaching Experience	Pearson Correlation	1	0.025
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.733
	N	140	140
Cognitive Presence	Pearson Correlation	0.025	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.773	
	N	140	140

Overall, the results show that considering the online teaching experience and COI model, while a slightly significant positive correlation was found between overall COI, teaching presence and social presence with online teaching experience, no significant correlation was found between online teaching experience and cognitive presence with an r score close to .0.

### **Qualitative Findings**

After completing the quantitative phase of the study with a questionnaire, qualitative study conducted with semi-structured interviews with 6 participants. Two main questions were asked as planned and clarification and verification questions were added with the sequence of the interviews. The data obtained with semi-structured interviews were coded by the researchers, and then categories and themes were created. The findings of the qualitative data analysis are given below in connection with the second and third research questions.

### *Findings related to the 2<sup>nd</sup> research question*

In this part of the study, the second research question is focused on, and the distribution of interaction-oriented elements is included.

Table 10: Interaction-based Themes

Interaction	Use of Collaborative Tasks
	Use of Web 2.0 Tools
	Use of Personal Information

The themes that emerge from the interviews with teachers regarding interaction are use of collaborative tasks, use of Web 2.0 tools, and use of personal information themes. In the interviews, it was determined that the participants had problems with interaction at first, and then they tried to find solutions to these problems in the axis of the themes specified.

### ***Use of Collaborative Tasks***

Use of collaborative tasks has been determined as one of the methods frequently used by teachers to provide and strengthen interaction in online lessons. It was understood that this had positive outcomes in the lessons. For example, according to the 1st interviewee, it was stated that collaborative tools influence student-student interaction:

*“...We had collaborative task days in face-to-face education. They were doing numerous studies in groups. We started doing this online as well, and thus, we created student-student interaction...”*

This view was supported by the 2<sup>nd</sup> interviewee as follows:

*“And I started to use group work or pair work activity. There were some breakout rooms for the online tools. I mean, I changed the rooms between the students so that they can be pairs, or they can be in a group with the other team.”*

It is also expressed by the 2<sup>nd</sup> interviewee that the collaborative studies provide interaction with students as well as engagement:

*“...And I got into the room, and I was just very excited because I didn’t expect my students to be so engaged as that.”*

Moreover, interviewee 6 emphasized the importance of motivation and attention in interaction and collaborative tasks by adding.

*“To motivate them, I try to spare at least one-third of the lesson to speaking to interactive activities. It is pair work or group work and speaking and playing games.”*

In addition to all these, she explained the focus of the students in this process as follows:

*“They really liked games with each other, but mostly they like interacting with each other in groups.”*

Considering the findings on collaborative tasks and interaction, it can be stated that positive reflections are obtained from the teacher interviews.

### **Use of Web 2.0 Tools**

The second point that teachers discuss interaction is to include various Web 2.0 tools in the process. Teachers explained how they used Web 2.0 tools for interaction in the process by giving examples from several tools. For example, interviewee 1 gave examples of Web 2.0 tools and explained that his interaction was positively affected as follows:

*“...I started to use the web tools we used in the classroom, also online. I think the interaction within the lesson has increased with web tools such as Padlet, Voicethread, Nearpod.”*

Interviewee 2 supported this idea by offering the following similar web 2.0 tools:

*“...I use them online, online, different applications, like for instance: Google jamboard, popplet, padlet, I mean, they are very useful.”*

Moreover, she reported that such tools are also good for engaging students and increasing their curiosity as follows:

*“They want to see it more. for that reason, that was another effective way for me to keep up the interaction because they were asking questions, even if they do not understand they just ask “Oh, teacher, what does it mean?”*

Interviewee 3 expresses that Web 2.0 tools are beneficial in terms of interaction in groups and discussion questions as follows:

*“I used Mentimeter and Jamboard a lot. I make them groups and ask them to discuss the questions on Mentimeter and Padlet.”*

Furthermore, comments that Web 2.0 tools are also advantageous in terms of synchronous interaction have been made by interviewee 6:

*“I use Google Documents, and make groups with the students. I ask them to use Google Documents to write jointly at the same time. They really liked it and found it really helpful, beneficial for each other because they interact, speak to each other and at the same time, they write it, they can make the changes.”*

Considering the interview outputs, the participants achieved positive results in terms of the interaction of Web 2.0 tools.

### **Use of Personal Information**

The last interaction method used jointly by the participants is the use of personal information. Positive and negative outcomes were obtained in this regard. For example, Interviewee 4 has stated that it has started this process quite well:

*“I started the year by asking them to write to me, to send me an email telling me about themselves, telling me anything that they would like, personal or not, or just how many siblings they do have and things like that.”*

He added that he categorized all this data in numerous ways to use it while creating interaction afterwards:

*“...first of all, I made lists of students according to their likes and dislikes for example, which student does what, what kind of music he listens...”*

He stated that at the end of this process, which he progressed by transforming from small groups to large groups, he achieved positive outcomes:

*“...they are talking to each other; they are interacting with each other all the time.”*

It is possible to encounter similar outputs during the interview with Interviewee 6:

*“...it's like you put students into groups and you can also change their groups, their pairs. In this way, they start to get to know each other better...”*

Interviewee 2 also stated that he used personal questions to learn more about students:

*“So, it was like, you know, I was asking personal questions. I was asking, you know, more and more on individual questions.”*

However, he stated that he could not get the outputs he expected in this regard:

*“...but then I saw that it wasn’t very well ... They did not, Even Some of them didn’t listen to each other.”*

In this context, it has been revealed that personal information has positive results in some groups as well as negative results in some groups.

#### *Findings related to the 3<sup>rd</sup> research question*

Six themes were created from the survey open ended questions and these themes are assessment and feedback, social interaction, convenience, technical problems, getting to know the students, and attendance issues.

### **Assessment & Feedback**

Assessing and evaluating students’ progress was another issue described by most of the participants. When their experiences were asked about the online teaching process, the difficulty of assessing students’ improvement in online settings was mentioned by instructors. Some of them investigated this issue in terms of cheating and plagiarism. They mentioned the difficulty of determining if the students are doing their exams on their own or not. For instance, Interviewee 1 explained her experiences:

*“...the school decided not to use locker applications during the tests. However, because of this, visible copying and plagiarism problems occurred in student works. To prevent this, we started sending the questions randomly from the pool system, but we still know that the students somehow continue this plagiarism”.*

Even if many institutions started to take some precautions, the assessing issue was considered as an ambiguous process. Like Interviewee 1, Interviewee 2 shared her experiences and emphasized the difficulty of observing students’ development. She stated:

*“They might, you know, if you give them writing homework, they might just do it from Google Translate. And it was a problem for me because I was asking their own thoughts, their own ideas, and their own learning process.”*

*“So, I couldn’t see their writing, how much actually, how developed the writings were at the end of the term.”*



Interviewee 4 also dwelled on the same point but additionally argued that this is similar with traditional settings, and it is up to students who are willing to learn or not:

*“We don’t even know whether they do their exams on their own or not, so you just have to trust them, we’ll let the one who wants to learn and let the others who don’t, get away with it, and that’s the same whether you’re teaching at school or online.”*

Some of them evaluated this issue from a distinct perspective rather than cheating, as Interviewee 1 suggested, the assessment process is challenging as you do not evaluate it on paper, but from a computer, which is tiring. Not all the experiences were negative in terms of assessment and evaluation. According to the answers given by the participants, assessment in online education has some advantages as it develops students’ skills of technology and collaboration. Interviewee 1 shared her experiences as follows:

*“A more reflective evaluation process was formed for the students in this process. The final and midterm exam decision of the school also affected us, and we updated our assessment mostly as individual and group projects. Students evolved both technologically and as 21st century skills by making a variety of presentations, videos, poster work, and discussion forums and they became more focused in their learning process.”*

Assessing students’ improvement via exams is not sufficient. Teachers need to evaluate their students’ progress regularly by giving feedback to their work. When the participants shared their experiences, they also emphasized their problems and solutions they found about giving feedback. Different strategies were employed by different instructors. As Interviewee 1 explained her experiences about giving feedback to students’ writings homework:

*“At first, I was forgetting the beginning and end of the sentence while I was reading. Later, I started using audio feedback to solve this. I was able to create specific and overall feedback by recording my thoughts piece by piece.”*

Other participants who experienced the same problems, produced different solutions. Interviewee 2 found diverse ways to overcome feedback problems such as utilizing peer feedback and online collaborative feedback tools:

*“I use some online documents like I was giving them online feedback, I was writing something, and I was asking a question. I was asking a question. And then they were writing the answer question to the documents, and they were doing it simultaneously. So, I was able to give them feedback online*

*while I am seeing them. They were while they were writing, I was seeing them. So, it was an effective way for me to give them more accurate, more fluent feedback. And sometimes I was using it for peer feedback. And it was also a good one because they were seeing each other online and they gave feedback to each other.”*

### **Social interaction**

Most of the teacher participants interviewed complained about the difficulty of creating social interaction in the online lessons. Some of them reported overcoming such difficulties by using some techniques. For instance, interviewee 1 stated that he had difficulty interaction in class in the beginning because the students had their cameras turned off, but he later found a solution and “the interaction within the lesson has increased with web tools such as Padlet, VoiceThread, Nearpod.” Interviewee 2 had the same problem regarding turned-off cameras since she thought not seeing the students meant a lack of eye contact and body language. She believed that seeing them through cameras was necessary to understand their needs and added that using breakout rooms worked as a solution because.

*“They were asking questions to each other, and they seemed more enthusiastic because they were joking and they were making fun of it.”*

Interviewee 5 looked at the camera issue at a different angle: She considered seeing students’ homes as something we did not have during face-to-face education because.

*“You know more about their privacy, this is interesting because if they turn on their camera, you can see where they live, so you can see their room, their bedroom, their living room.”*

Besides using cameras in class, another concern for the interviewed teachers was trying to get to know the students. They reported trying diverse ways to know their students on a personal level. For instance, interviewee 4 explained that she began every lesson with a song while the students waited for her to start the lesson. At the beginning of the semester, the same teacher asked her students to write personal emails to her and talk about themselves in the emails.

*“[She tried] to memorize anything, any small information that they thought valuable to give to me.”*

She added:

*“... all I made lists of students according to their likes and dislikes for example, which student does what, what kind of music he listens, what kind of sports she has done, oh these two, they play tennis so I should talk about this, I should mention them and put them in a Breakout room together and things like that.”*

Interviewee 6 mentioned that even they had the group work opportunities via breakout rooms, the class still lacked the cooperation, or the real atmosphere. It should be added that this teacher mostly had his camera turned off because of connection problems.

### **Attendance Issues**

Most teachers interviewed reported issues related to attendance. For interviewee 1, being present as a student was something that she expected from her students mainly because student presence was necessary for her to understand their needs and interests, and to connect with them. She stated that she only saw some students.

*“Maybe three or four times. Just that is it for the whole semester. They do not like it. And I needed it.”*

Not all interviewees reported attendance as a disadvantage. Interviewee 2 explained that students were at home and had nothing else to do; therefore, they came back to online class immediately after the break. In contrast, during face-to-face education, she explained that she told.

*“the ten minutes and then they come after 20 minutes. Some of them are not extremely strict about time even if I told them over and over, they didn’t do it.”*

However, she mentioned one drawback regarding this issue, as well.

*“Some of my students didn’t, you know, you don’t always know what the problem of the students is not coming to the class. I mean, sometimes there is a technical problem. You might trust your students.”*

As a result, interviewee 2 felt there could be a connection between a student being absent in class and technological problems; yet, she had doubts in her mind. In the situation with interviewee 5, she had attendance problems in the class with which she had communication problems. She had another class where everything seemed to run

smoothly, but in this class which she could not find a common ground in terms of communication,

*“The number of students who attend my classes and my partner’s classes, I can say that, is like between 5 and 8. This is the number of students and when you have them, the thing is they don’t laugh at your jokes, they are like robots.”*

Interviewee 6 related attendance problems to the availability of the lesson recordings, because students knew they could watch the lessons later even if they were absent. The teacher reported that he

*“Used to have full attendance, especially starting from the beginning. But now, most of the term went by fifty percent of attendance. And it dropped even by half so far, at the last four weeks, I must say. Just 6 or 6, between 7 to 10 students started to attend classes.”*

He considered another factor for poor attendance, which was the long hours of classes. He explained that students might have found sitting for four full hours in front of the computer too long.

### **Convenience**

The other theme elicited from the interviews is “Convenience”. Most of the participants stated that their experience of the online education process is convenient, and they reported some personal advantages about the online education process. In addition, participants expressed their opinions that the process is time-saving and comfortable when they compare the online education process with face-to-face education. For example, interviewee 3 expressed his opinions on convenience as follows:

*“First of all, regarding the advantages... I can say that it is convenient, easy to conduct, easy to follow both for me and for my students, no preparation is needed in terms of physical activities. So far everything has been good for me, there is a safe environment, and I haven’t encountered any problems at all.”*

Like interviewee 3, interviewee 4 felt the same in terms of the convenience of the online education process and shared her personal feelings about the process as advantages. Interviewee 4 reported her feelings as follows:

*“Should I talk about personal advantages? OK... then setting up a lesson in the comforts of my own house makes everything easier and I feel less tired*

*when I'm starting the first lesson in the morning for example, so as I am less tired, I am more relaxed, I am usually relaxed in the classroom."*

Furthermore, interviewee 4 gave an example about why she felt comfortable and convenient during the process as follows:

*"For example I start every morning by playing a fun song so whenever I start the lesson whenever the students start coming into the Zoom, I greet them, I welcome them by dancing and playing a good song to them so it is much better than the classroom because in the classroom the only thing that I can do is just to say" good morning, how are you, are you awake yet", or things like that... so here it feels more personal."*

In analogy to the opinions of the interviewees above, participant 5 shared his feelings on personal advantages of the online education process as follows:

*"Like most people, I can begin with, not having to get up at 6 in the morning, for example, because this was my usual time. Now almost I save 2 hours from the morning, and then, going to school and coming back home, this is like 3 hours, so I can say that I save almost 5 hours a day. You do not have to get up early, this is a big advantage. If you do not live so close to the campus, and this is the biggest advantage I can say. And of course, you teach from the comfort of your home. You see this is my armchair. I mean I am comfortable. Not like you're in the class."*

Besides the 4 interviews mentioned above, interviewee 6 shared the same opinions with the other participants that the process has physical advantages for teachers. In addition, participant 6 reported the burdens of going to school. According to his experience, he mentioned that not waking up early, getting dressed and stacking in traffic was quite relaxing.

### **Technical Problems**

According to the interviews, the theme "Technical Problems" emerged as a disadvantage of the online education process. Most of the participants shared similar and common opinions on technical problems that they have been going through during the online education process.

According to interviewee 2, technical problems occurred during the process from time to time. He explained the issue as a disadvantage as follows:

*“Well... for the technical problems, some of my students didn’t, you know, you don’t always know what the problem of the students is not coming to the class. I mean, sometimes there is a technical problem.”*

Besides, he supported his opinions with an example as follows:

*“I have to say open your camera; I want you to speak. But they do not want to do it because I do not know why. They say my microphone is broken, so I cannot open it right now. I have to create other solutions for them.”*

Regarding the technical problems, interviewee 3 mentioned the technical problems as a disadvantage as follows:

*“So... Well... there might be some external difficulties and problems such as internet connection, computer, not enough equipment and so on.”*

Furthermore, interviewee 6 had similar opinions as participant 3 that internet connection is a disadvantage of the online process. Interviewee 6 supported his opinions on technical problems as follows:

*“We cannot turn on the cameras; you know... because of the internet connection. At the beginning, I always stuck to turning on the camera, but later, there were connection problems with me or the students or on the system, but we started not to turn on the cameras.”*

In analogy to the statements of the participants above, interviewee 1 reported the technical problems as a disadvantage as well. During interview 1, it was reported that to be unaware of technology in this century was the biggest problem and participant 1 explained his opinion with an example as follows:

*“We also had some technological problems. When we switched to MS Teams, there were no breakout rooms at first. It was torture to have the group work done synchronously. Fortunately, the breakout room feature was also active for MS Teams. These were one of the biggest problems because they caused a lot of glitches in the classroom. Although we publish many guidelines, brochures, helpdesks, videos, it is very sad that that’s happening still.”*

**Remote Education Tools**

As shown below in Table 11, considering the findings of the interviews in terms of remote education tools, the following tools are utilized the most by the participants of the study.

Table 11: Remote Education Web Tools

Learning Management System	Video Conferencing Tools	Web 2.0 Tools	Communication Tools
Itslearning	Zoom MS Teams Adobe Connect	Nearpod Dice Rolling Jamboard Popplet Padlet Mentimeter Classroom Screen Kahoot Quizlet Google Docs	Whatsapp

**Discussion****Discussion of findings of 1<sup>st</sup> Research Question**

When the literature is examined, it is exceedingly difficult to come across COI-focused surveys in which the participants consist of teachers. In one of these studies, Knudsen (2019) discussed teachers' evaluation of the professional development process with the COI framework. As a result of this study, considering three presences, teaching presence got the highest result, while social presence got the lowest result. Considering the overall mean scores, there is a positive alignment between the current study and Knudsen (2019) study. There are some studies conducted with teacher candidates by considering COI survey, in the literature. For example, in the study conducted by Makri et al. (2014), the relationship between pre-service teachers' education and blended learning was examined with COI, and considering three presences in this study, teaching presence got the highest result, while social presence was the lowest. This result is in line with the current study as well. On the other hand, there are no previous studies involving the relationship between both online teaching experience and COI. In line with the correlation data obtained from this study, it can be considered as a pioneer study in future studies on online teaching experience and COI.

**Discussion of findings of 2<sup>nd</sup> Research Question**

The findings obtained in response to the second research question focused on interaction and at this point, collaborative tasks, Web 2.0 tools and personal information sub-findings were obtained. In this context, considering the COI, the findings mostly match under the

title of social presence. First, Yamada and Goda (2018) focused on COI and collaborative tasks and stated that collaborative tasks have a positive effect on social presence as a result of supporting them with a good interface. Moreover, in the study conducted by So and Brush (2008), a link was found between collaborative learning and social presence, and a positive result was obtained by seeing that this link supports satisfaction. When the results of this study were examined, in-line results were obtained with these studies in the literature and a link was found between collaborative tasks and social presence. Secondly, when the literature is examined, it is possible to come across studies focused on interaction, Web 2.0 tools and social presence. For example, Cunningham (2015) focused on the effect of Voki on social presence and concluded that it is positively effective in creating a social presence in an online environment. Similarly, Holbeck and Hartman (2018) examined four Web 2.0 tools named Flipgrid, Breakout Edu, Loom and Remind on social presence and interaction, and it was determined that such Web 2.0 tools have positive effects on establishing a connection in the digital environment. This study proceeds in alignment with the studies in the literature and states that the Web 2.0 tools are positive for students' interaction. Finally, the importance of personal information regarding interaction is emphasized. At this point, Kear (2010) stated in his study that getting to know each other and creating personal profiles have a positive effect on online communication and increase social presence. Similarly, Yıldız (2009), in his study on social presence in a Web-based environment, stated that personal information sharing is a positive element for social presence and interaction by creating an affective impact. In this context, there are broadly similar results between this study and the literature, and it can be noted that it is an alignment for most parts. In short, it has been supported by the links between this study and past studies where collaboration and interaction elements are linked to social presence and create positive effects.

### ***Discussion of findings of 3<sup>rd</sup> Research Question***

The participants mentioned trying ways to increase collaboration between students and interaction between the teacher and the students. The necessity of improving collaboration and interaction has been reported in the literature. For example, Lowenthal and Dunlap (2018) found out that teachers could improve their social presence through three techniques. First, the teacher must provide individualized feedback to students. Second, the teacher must organize the lessons so that collaboration among students can take place. Third, the students must easily access the teacher when they need it. These three aspects were reported as important by the students for a positive connection to occur in class. Although the participants reported having difficulty at the beginning of the online education process regarding creating a social presence in class, they tried to overcome these difficulties by using different techniques, such as using breakout rooms to increase



interaction. This goes in parallel to Richardson et al., (2010), who suggest that teachers should use activities at the beginning of lessons to increase feelings of trust, including charts or meeting with classmate sessions. The students should be able to respond to each other's discussions. There should also be collaborative group activities such as projects and small group discussions. The participants said that they tried to get to know the students better through personal emails or talking about themselves. Similarly, Tu and McIsaac (2002) argue for the benefits of building informal and personal relationships with students. They explain that several features may help teachers enhance social presence, such as knowing the students personally, forming informal connections with students, and improving trust.

Our participants expressed that they had attendance issues, such that many students were absent most of the time. They provided several reasons, including internet connection problems, or the availability of the recorded videos. The participants also mentioned the effect of long class hours. Similar problems were reported in the literature. Nambiar (2020) examined the attendance of students during the Covid19 period and found that some students said they had connection problems or lacked the motivation to attend the classes. Another reason for poor attendance reported by Nambiar was that students felt bored during online education. Likewise, Arona and Srinivasan (2020) described that lower rate of attendance, along with less personal relationships in class and a lack of interaction were common problems faced in online classes.

One of the problems surrounding online education is the fast and evolving position of the instructor. (Berge & Collins, 1996; Coppola et al., 2001; Syverson & Slatin, 2010). From a distinct perspective, the roles of the instructors have changed positively and most of the participants in our study reported that they have been taking advantage of this transformation in terms of convenience. According to our results, we found that most of the participants stated that their experience of the online education process is convenient and reported some personal advantages. Besides, participants reported their opinions that the process is time-saving and comfortable when they compare the online education process with face-to-face education. We found that instructors' perceptions of convenience are linked to their personal advantage and satisfaction. In contrast to our findings, Capra (2011), Humphries (2012), Fein and Logan (2003) stated that one of the biggest problems confronting the teachers is their time requirement. Since preparation, organizing and teaching an online class requires some time.

The participants mentioned that technical problems have been occurring and it became a serious concern and disadvantage that affect social presence during the process of online education. Most of the participants reported similar and common opinions on technical

problems that they have been going through during the online education process. A similar statement was stated in the literature. Lack of access to computers, greater demands for time, disparities in personal preferences, opposition by students and teachers to new techniques, and absence of support facilities for students and staff and the lack of sufficient curriculum and technological support are general issues for students and teachers. (Furst Bowe, 1996; Galusha, 1997; Morrison & Lauzon, 1992).

Some of the participants stated that camera issues occurred due to the lack of internet connection during the classes. A similar statement was shown in the literature. Communication problems involve the quality of faculty communication with language boundary structures (Limperos et al., 2015; Sherry, 1996; Sundar, 2008). The evolving position of faculty often influences teacher/student contact. Instructors take their hints in a classroom in person through the verbal and nonverbal experiences of students in the classroom (Coppola et al., 2001). These affective hints are impossible to take if the faculty cannot see the faces of its students (Crawley et al., 2009).

Assessment and feedback are among the key parts of any learning process and especially for online education they may present some drawbacks but at the same time, they can offer new learning and teaching techniques (Tallent Runnels et al., 2006; p.103). The findings of this study revealed that language instructors have been experiencing challenges such as cheating and plagiarism and opportunities as improving digital skills about feedback and assessment issues during the online education process. For many instructors, cheating and plagiarism were the most problematic point in terms of assessment. Although there is no study investigating teachers' experiences about assessment in online education to the authors' knowledge, the findings are well-matched with the assumptions from previous studies as Dick et al., (2003) suggested cheating is quite common in education and it is discussed by Rowe (2004) it is hard to determine who is answering the questions at a remote site.

The participants of the study also explained the ways that they try to improve their experiences about feedback and assessment. Some of them utilized online tools, audio feedback, peer feedback, and collaboration. These strategies for better feedback were also found in another study by Liang et al., (2004) where instructors expressed that they use peers as a resource in online classes. Also, the instructors are said to use this feedback challenge as an opportunity for teamwork and collaboration. It is suggested that through online teaching the instructors realized the significance of collaborative learning and peer feedback. In that sense, the findings of the present study and the previous ones are well-matched.

Furthermore, from the perspective of CoI, feedback and assessment issues cannot be placed only in one category. They could be enhanced in terms of cognitive, social and teacher presence. In a recent study conducted by Fiock (2020) there are several suggestions listed about the components of teaching and learning. As cited from the study, using peer evaluations in the form of feedback (Rovai, 2000; Stephens & Roberts, 2017), providing frequent opportunities for testing and feedback (Richardson et al., 2009) for enhancing cognitive presence; using audio-feedbacks (Lowenthal & Dunlap, 2018; Richardson et al., 2009) integrating Web 2.0 tools into feedback process (Peacock & Cowan, 2016; Richardson et al., 2009; Stephens & Roberts, 2017), using peer review for relationship building (Lowenthal & Dunlap, 2018) for enhancing social presence, and providing constructive and timely feedback to students (Watson et al., 2017) for enhancing teaching presence are suggested. It is clearly seen from the findings of the present study that the instructors consciously or unconsciously utilized techniques and strategies that support all three presences in their online teaching experience.

### **Limitations and Further Studies**

Although this study offers some important insights in terms of collaboration with the instructors working in the English Preparatory School and the Community of Inquiry model, there are some limitations of this current study. First, one of the limitations is that it includes limited sample size and settings. Further studies can work with larger samples and multicultural groups. Also, the study data were collected in a relatively short time, and in further studies, more valid and reliable results can be obtained with longitudinal studies over a longer period and a specific treatment process. Lastly, this current study includes only instructors of English Preparatory School. A comparative study can be done by including the English Preparatory School students in future studies for a better insight into the Community of Inquiry model and online education experience.

### **Conclusion**

The present study was conducted through the perspective of CoI Framework (Garrison et al., 2000). Although the study had several dimensions, the instructors' perceptions on their own social, cognitive, and teaching presence level indicated that even the online education had severe effects at the beginning, one of the most important stakeholders have now progressed more, especially in terms of CoI. The study also served as a self-reflection in which the instructors evaluated their own online teaching process, and the teaching presence subcategory was the highest among all implying that they perceive themselves as highly present or struggling to be during online education. Also, the English instructors now have sufficient self-confidence about their own teaching. As the results of the present study showed that in terms of CoI, the instructors' perceptions are relatively positive, their

voices also revealed that this specific process cannot be considered without its drawbacks. The instructors commonly had to deal with assessment & feedback issues, technological/technical problems, less social interaction with students. What is implied from their voices is that many problems that were experienced seemed common and even without getting any help, the instructors found similar solutions to those problems. High perception levels in CoI, voices from the instructors and common issues that arose from the study about online education have several implications for further studies to explore more about the sub-themes obtained from the findings and their relations to other variables.

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