

Introduction to OLJ Volume 26, Issue 3

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On behalf of our editorial board, authors, reviewers, staff, and the Online Learning Consortium (OLC), which sponsors our work, I am pleased to present another issue of *Online Learning*. Our June issue contains a broad collection of articles grouped into four sections. The first group of papers relate to faculty and professional development, followed by a group of empirical studies on a range of issues. This issue also features two qualitative studies, a book review, and a review of literature.

In “Improving Retention and Student Success Online Utilizing the Community of Inquiry Framework”, Michelle L Rosser-Majors, Sandra Rebeor, Christine McMahon, Stephanie Anderson, and Yolanda Harper of University of Arizona Global Campus, join Andrea Wilson of Walden University and Laura Sliwinsk of Colorado Technical University to investigate faculty professional development on the COI framework and its impact on several important outcome measures. Using the concept of instructor presence as a single term to capture teaching presence, social presence and cognitive presence, the authors developed a series of modules designed to support faculty to implement these concepts effectively in their online courses. Courses were evaluated with a rubric by multiple raters before and after the training to assess whether improvement was achieved. The authors also investigate course pass rates, course drop rates, and faculty satisfaction with the professional development experience. The researchers found that exposure to the training modules positively and significantly affected course pass and drop rates while controlling for several other potential predictors (e.g., years of experience teaching) of these outcomes. However, there was an interaction with overall annual performance assessment whereby more successful faculty benefited more from the training. Faculty were also satisfied with the experience of participating in the training. The results suggest that this form of faculty development may be helpful for improving essential student outcome measures in online environments and that more research is warranted.

The next paper in this section is “Online Presentations with PowerPoint Present Live Real-Time Automated Captions and Subtitles: Perceptions of Faculty and Administrators” by Anymir Orellana, Georgina Arguello and Elda Kanzki-Veloso of Nova Southeastern University. One way to make instruction more inclusive is through Universal Design for Learning. Within UDL, the use of live captioning is recommended to may make instructional materials such as lecture more accessible. A relatively recent advance in captioning was recently made available through Microsoft PowerPoint Live (MSPL) automated captioning and subtitles, now available in more than 60 languages. This software, which is commonly used, may represent a cost-effective mechanism by which institutions can support accessibility and compliance with federal legislation. However, relatively little research has been conducted on its usability and utility in instructional settings. This study investigates challenges, potential uses, and benefits participants encounter as presenters and as viewers with MSPL. Overall, the study found that participants did not encounter technical challenges that they could not overcome, though there were some technical difficulties. Network speed was a significant obstacle that prevented proper use of MSPL. In general, results indicate that MSPL is an easy-to-use and helpful tool to provide captions/subtitles for English and Spanish-speaking audiences. Interestingly, few study participants identified increased accessibility for the hearing impaired as a use of the software but were instead more focused on the language translation functionality. The authors recommended more research with other audiences to improve our understanding of this tool.

In “From Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT) to Sustained Remote Teaching (SRT): A Comparative Semester Analysis of Exchange Students’ Experiences and Perceptions of Learning Online During COVID-19” William Stewart of Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, together with Youngkyun Baek and Patrick Lowenthal of Boise State University investigate the experiences of exchange students in Korea during the second wave of the pandemic there. The authors investigated the shift that has occurred as emergency remote teaching (ERT), implemented in haste and with little planning, has gradually become sustained remote instruction, supported by more knowledge, experience, and resources. The study is based on two main questions, the first of which asks whether exchange students’ experiences with remote teaching, support, and course structure change when ERT is sustained over consecutive semesters. The second question investigates whether ERT improve when it becomes Sustained Remote Teaching (SRT). Using Performance Improvement Theory as a guide to their study, the authors find that only 20% of the benchmarks for improvement saw statistically significant positive change with mean score increases ranging from roughly 4-10%. The study concludes the lack of improvement in most benchmarks may be a cause for concern given the sizeable financial and human resources invested in educational continuity from the onset of the pandemic.

In “Relationships Between Online Student Engagement Practices and GPA Among RN-to-BSN Students” Kathryn Rioch and Jennifer Tharp of National University of Health Sciences at The King’s College note that online nursing programs are growing rapidly to address a national nursing shortage in the US. Success and persistence in these programs are tied to student engagement with the academic and social environments in which they study. In online environments, this may be a function of students’ experiences of the development of an effective and supportive academic and social community. Using the Community of Inquiry framework as a measure of engagement, the authors seek to determine relationships between the subscales of the COI survey (teaching, social, and cognitive presence) and student reported GPA. The authors conclude that some of the variances in reported cumulative GPA can be accounted for by levels of online engagement within this study population. The study includes recommendations for practice based on these findings.

The next paper in this section is “Predicting Social Presence in Videoconference-supported LMS Courses: Mediation through L2 Writing and Speaking Strategies” by Daniel Bailey of Konkuk University’s Glocal Campus, South Korea, and Norah Almusharraf and Asma Almusharraf of Prince Sultan University, Saudi Arabia. This study investigated how second language writing and speaking strategies relate and how they shaped the development of social presence in fully online English as a Foreign Language courses. The researchers examined how both linguistic strategies impact social presence and knowledge construction in courses that use the LMS for writing tasks and videoconferencing for speaking activities. The results showed that all variables have a positive relationship.

The next paper, “Academic performance in distance education: Quizzes as a Moderator Variable and Students’ Perception and Expectation through Linguistic Analysis” is by Laura Parte and Lucía Mellado of National Distance Education University of Spain. This study examined the relationship between assessment types and student behavior, linguistics styles, and academic performance. The main objective of this study was to examine the effect of assessment modalities on academic performance. The results show that both quiz modalities (self-evaluation and summative quizzes) are positively associated with academic performance.

Also, on the topic of learning assessment is “A Comparison of Three Assessment Types on Student Engagement and Content Knowledge in Online Instruction” by Lynda Randall and Jessica Jaynes of California State University, Fullerton. This study examined the efficacy and utility of a multimedia

discussion tool for enhancing student retention of content knowledge. Specifically, this mixed methods study examined the effectiveness of the tool in promoting retention of key concepts, as well as student perceptions of the efficacy of the tool in enhancing their learning. The authors suggested that the process of creating presentations with the tool support more active and engaged rehearsal strategies than conventional learning activities such as reading. Results indicated that the more active learning supported by the tool led to greater retention of content and that student liked using the tool.

The COVID pandemic has caused a great deal of turmoil in the education sector, but it was particularly difficult for younger students in primary schools. The next paper is “An Overnight Educational Transformation: How did the Pandemic Turn Early Childhood Education Upside Down?” by Sinem Aslan, a research scientist at Intel Corporation; Qi Li, a lecturer at Open University of China; Curtis Bonk, Professor of Instructional Systems Technology at Indiana University; and Lama Nachman, an Intel Fellow and director of the Human & AI Systems research lab there. This study investigated how public and private school teachers experienced online learning in early childhood education during the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, the authors ask how teachers experienced online learning in early childhood education since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, what challenges such teachers had when teaching online, and what suggestions they had for addressing these challenges. Using interviews with 15 teachers, the study explored issues such as what a typical day looked before and after the onset of the pandemic, teachers’ priorities for online learning, role of parents, monitoring student emotions, during online learning, student learning outcomes and other themes. The study highlighted the teachers’ efforts to implement developmentally appropriate learning activities for students despite the rapid transition to online instructional environments.

In “Facilitating Cognitive Presence Online: Perception and Design” by Julie McCarroll and Peggy Hartwick of Carleton University, the authors seek to demonstrate how lesson design, scaffolding, and a blend of synchronous and asynchronous delivery methods contribute to students’ experiences of cognitive presence as described by the four phases of the Community of Inquiry framework. This study surveyed students from three sections of an English for Academic Purposes course delivered entirely online. The authors also analyzed lesson plans seeking to document cognitive presence. Both students and instructors completed the standard COI survey. While student participants consistently reported lower levels of CP than teachers in the triggering event and exploration phases, results were mixed for the integration and resolution phases. Notably, student-reported experiences of the triggering event, integration, and resolution phases, increased with each iteration of the lesson plan, signifying that task design and facilitation play a key role in students’ experience of cognitive presence.

The next paper in this section is “The Effects of Nudges on Students’ Use of the Diagnostic Assessment and Achievement of College Skills” by David Franklin and Heidi Andrade of the University at Albany, SUNY, Jason Bryer of the City University of New York, Angela Lui, of Rutgers University, and Diana Akhmedjanova of Khalifa University. The purpose of this study was to understand the effects of nudges (various kinds of reminders) on online students’ use of the Diagnostic Assessment and Achievement of College Skills (DAACS) assessments and on their first semester course completion. DAACS is a suite of free, online assessments, feedback, and resources intended to improve student success in college. Results show that some nudges influenced students’ completion of the DAACS assessments and on accessing the feedback. Numerous types of nudges were sent; *performance* nudges did have a positive effect on students’ completion of the DAACS compared to a control group, while the *social norms* nudges did not. The study provided insight on the impacts of other kinds of reminders that encourage learners to access resources known to be helpful to their success and suggests directions for future research.

In “Face-to-Face vs. Online Asynchronous Teaching in a Conservation Biology Course” authors Carrie Wells and Michelle Pass of the University of North Carolina at Charlotte join Jane Walsh of the

University of Kentucky investigate student performance in two modes – a face-to-face section of a biology course and an asynchronous online section of the same course. The authors argue that pedagogy rather than technology account for course outcomes, all else being equal. They collected data on course performance, a collaborative writing assignment, and on survey items. They conclude, as have thousands of previous studies, that no significant differences exist between the two instructional environments.

The “Impact of Attitudes, Beliefs, and Cognitive Reflection on the Development of Critical Thinking Skills in Online Students” is by Boban Simonovic, Katia Vione, Dean Fido, Edward Stuppel, James Martin, and Richard Clarke of the University of Derby in the United Kingdom. These authors argue that there is little consensus on how to define, measure, and nurture critical thinking (CT) skills through educational effort in online environments, despite the wide appeal of critical thinking as central to the goals of higher education, productive employment, and effective civic participation. Through their research, the authors integrate contemporary accounts of CT into an intervention designed to improve students understanding of CT and their academic performance. Their findings are that CT can be taught and that an intervention based on “how to think” can help online students develop CT, strengthen their confidence in it, and help students improve their academic performance.

The final paper in this section is “Effect of Feedback with Video-based Peer Modeling on Learning and Self-efficacy” by Wadi Eghterafi, Mary C. Tucker, and Icy (Yunyi) Zhang, of the University of California, Los Angeles and Ji Yun Son of California State University, Los Angeles. The goal of this study was to determine the relative efficacy of various approaches to providing rich, process feedback in asynchronous online instruction. The authors tested the effect of three types of feedback on students’ learning and transfer of concepts. Randomly assigning 57 students to a worked example condition, 54 to a mastery condition, and 51 to a coping condition, they found that students in the mastery condition rated their self-efficacy higher and scored higher on a delayed class quiz than students who viewed a worked example. The results show how the design of feedback can lead to measurable differences in student learning.

The next section includes two qualitative investigations. Jonathan Becker and Michael Schad of Virginia Commonwealth University are the authors of the first of these, “Understanding the Lived Experience of Online Learners: Towards a Framework for Phenomenological Research on Distance Education”. This paper has three broad goals including advocating for phenomenological research on distance education, critically reviewing existing phenomenological research in the field, and developing a comprehensive framework for future phenomenological research on distance education. Arguing in part that phenomenological research on the lived experience of online learners can help us see these experiences in a new way the authors note that this perspective can help educators and be more empathic teachers. Further, they claim that much of the existing phenomenological research on distance education suffers from poor conceptualization and design and is not methodologically rigorous. Finally, the authors provide a more comprehensive framework for new phenomenological investigation relevant to online and distance instruction.

The second qualitative study is “A Case Study Approach to Exploring Resilient Pedagogy during Times of Crisis” by Katie Clum, Liz Ebersole, David Wicks, and Munyi Shea of Seattle Pacific University. In this study, the authors conduct interviews with students and faculty to better understand the application of resilient pedagogy in the global pandemic including instances of extensibility, flexibility, and redundancy, which are principles of this approach to education. The paper included case studies of previous disruptions to education in South Africa, New Zealand, and the United States to shed light on the emergency remote teaching (ERT) during COVID. The authors concluded that effective implementation of ERT will ultimately look more like authentic online learning and reflect attributes of resilient pedagogy, including institutional and pedagogical extensibility, flexibility, and redundancy.

The next two sections include reviews; the first is a book review and second is a literature review. In the book review Don Olcott of the University of South Africa provided a summary and some

recommendations on the second edition of “Leading the eLearning Transformation of Higher Education: Leadership Strategies for the New Generation”. His summaries will help readers identify sections of the book which may be relevant for their interests. Olcott finds that the book has strengths but also offers some suggestions on what may be missing for a potential third edition.

The final paper in this issue is “Community of Inquiry Framework: Research Trends Between 2000-2020 by Yusuf Ziya Olpak of Kırşehir Ahi Evran University, Turkey. Research on the Community of Inquiry model is vast, and this article attempts to provide some parameters on this longstanding area of investigation in online learning. Specifically, the author sought to answer the following questions about Social Science Citation Index (SSCI) published articles on the COI including preferred keywords and words in the abstract; when, where and who is publishing on this topic; what academic disciplines are represented; who the study subjects are and what are the course delivery methods, and which articles are most widely cited. This kind of scoping article can be useful to provide the contours of a branch of inquiry.

We hope that these new studies provide guidance for researchers and practitioners seeking to understand how students and faculty learn, teach, and assess in online environments. Please read, share, and cite this work and consider submitting your own rigorous original research to OLJ.