MOVING TOWARDS ENGAGING ONLINE PEDAGOGICAL COMMUNICATION: FROM DISTANCE TO PRESENCE

EVOLUINDO PARA UMA COMUNICAÇÃO PEDAGÓGICA ENVOLVENTE ONLINE: DA PRESENÇA À DISTÂNCIA

Btissam Chinkhir
ORCID 0009-0006-2581-642X
Humanities and Education Laboratory, ERDLM, ENS, Abdelmalek Essaadi University
Tétouan, Morocco
btissam.chinkhir1@etu.uae.ac.ma

Marwan Serrar
ORCID 0000-0002-5841-4906
Humanities and Education Laboratory, ERDLM, ENS, Abdelmalek Essaadi University
Tétouan, Morocco
marwan123@gmail.com

Ahmed Ibrahimi
ORCID 0009-0004-8879-5561
Humanities and Education Laboratory, ERDLM, ENS, Abdelmalek Essaadi University
Tétouan, Morocco
aibrahimi@uae.ac.ma

Abstract: Socio-pedagogical communication is a crucial mechanism that holds a central place in teaching situations, particularly in distance learning. This trending form of teaching remains a vast field of research that must address real constraints. The distinctive feature of pedagogical communication intersecting with digital media is to shape the destiny of distance learning and counter the risk of dropout. Faced with new dimensions of the problem posed by distance and therefore absence, all current pedagogical mobilizations embrace the socio-affective aspect as an entry point to build a pedagogical presence. It is evident that a prominent social presence in distance learning promotes inclusive education. The reflections conducted by Daniel Peraya (2011), extending Geneviève's initial questioning (1993), emphasize the importance of the relational dimension in any online training system, as illustrated by works published in the journal *'Distances & Savoirs'*. Thus, the notion of *'distance-absence'*, often perceived as a barrier, is gradually giving way to that of 'proximity-presence' (Jézégou, 2014). This transition invites us to examine the conditions for effective distance learning, particularly from the perspective of presence (Lafleur, 2017). Finally, the socio-affective function, which can be called 'online connivance', plays a key role in building pedagogical presence: a semio-didactic approach developed by Guichon (2017). How can the relationship between 'distance-absence' transform into a dynamic of 'proximity-presence' in distance learning systems? How does the consideration of the socio-affective aspect, particularly through the concept of 'pedagogical presence', contribute to reducing the risk of dropout? To what extent does online 'connivance', as described by Guichon (2017), constitute a determining lever for maintaining a significant educational relationship despite geographical distance?

Keywords: from remote presence; socio-emotional aspects; connivance; social salience.

Resumo: A comunicação sócio-pedagógica é um mecanismo essencial que ocupa um lugar central nas situações de ensino, particularmente no ensino à distância. Esta forma de ensino em tendência continua sendo um vasto campo de pesquisa que deve enfrentar restrições reais. A característica distintiva da comunicação pedagógica em interseção com as mídias digitais é moldar o destino do ensino à distância e combater o risco de evasão. Diante das novas dimensões do problema colocado pela distância e, portanto, pela ausência, todas as mobilizações pedagógicas atuais se apropriam do aspecto sócio-afetivo como ponto de entrada para construir uma presença pedagógica. É evidente que uma presença social proeminente no ensino à distância promove uma educação inclusiva. As reflexões conduzidas por Daniel Peraya (2011), expandindo o questionamento inicial de Geneviève (1993), enfatizam a importância da dimensão relacional em qualquer sistema de formação online, como ilustram os trabalhos publicados na revista *'Distances et Savoirs'*. Assim, a noção de *'distância-ausência'*, frequentemente percebida como uma barreira, está gradualmente dando lugar à de 'proximidade-presença' (Jézégou, 2014). Esta transição nos convida a examinar as condições para um ensino à

distância eficaz, particularmente sob a perspectiva da presença (Lafleur, 2017). Por fim, a função sócio-afetiva, que pode ser chamada de 'conivência online', desempenha um papel fundamental na construção da presença pedagógica: uma abordagem semio-didática desenvolvida por Guichon (2017). Como a relação entre 'distância-ausência' pode se transformar em uma dinâmica de 'proximidade-presença' nos sistemas de ensino à distância? Como a consideração do aspecto sócio-afetivo, particularmente através do conceito de 'presença pedagógica', contribui para reduzir o risco de evasão? Em que medida a 'conivência' online, como descrita por Guichon (2017), constitui uma alavanca determinante para manter uma relação educacional significativa apesar da distância geográfica?

Palavras-chave: da presença à distância; aspectos socioafetivos; conivência; saliência social

1. INTRODUCTION

A new beginning is emerging. The transition to remote learning should not make us forget the essential: social relationships. A mobilizing pedagogical communication affirms that it has a concern for the learner, which is to fulfill a responsibility towards him. Thus, the educational policy is committed to ensuring that training becomes a lifelong mode, both personally and professionally.

Since Geneviève Jacquinot's initial questioning (1993) on "Remote presence", the reflection on educational communication in a digital context has continued to evolve. Thematic studies followed one another, in 2011 in the journal "Distances and Knowledgehave shown how much geographical distance, while being real, can be intertwined with a system that promotes relational proximity. In this vein, Jézégou (2019) has focused on modelling the "(D.Peraya, B.Charlier, & N.Deschryver, 2014)E-learning presence" by emphasizing the importance of the quality of exchanges, whether synchronous or asynchronous, and by emphasizing the lived experience of learners and trainers. At the same time, Guichon (2017) proposed to consider the "Online Educational Presenceas a progressive construction, in which the trainer must play on markers of availability, responsiveness and authenticity to strengthen the learners' perseverance.

This work converges towards the idea that it is no longer simply a question of transmitting at a distance, but of making the learning environment sufficiently interactive, warm and stimulating so that distance is not an obstacle to the feeling of proximity. Learners, like trainers, need an environment where human relations can unfold despite geographical distance: through the regularity of individualized feedback, the use of various channels (videoconferences, forums, chats, etc.), the implementation of collaborative activities or the promotion of the expression of emotions and empathy. Based on 'semio-didactics', Guichon (2017) shows that the construction of a 'salient presence' requires multiple signals of commitment: encouraging oral participation, making one's listening explicit, approving each person's interventions, or highlighting the difficulties encountered in order to better support them.

Thus, moving towards engaging online educational communication implies moving from a paradigm focused on the dissemination of content to a posture where " remote presence" becomes an end in itself. It is not a question of cancelling the distance, but of transcending it thanks to relational devices and strategies designed to strengthen the confidence, motivation and cohesion of the group. It is this work on "remote presence" that anchors the pedagogical act in a dynamic of co-construction of knowledge, in which learners do not suffer from distance but experience it, on the contrary, as an opportunity to develop new forms of interaction and commitment.

1.1 Distance and proximity: presence in question

Digital technology envelops our lives; Receiving and calling to respond is one of the figures of our daily lives. The use of digital technology is increasingly intensified by instructional designers. Technological tools draw the dividing line between those who teach, tutor and learn. Remote presence, a real challenge that requires the innovation of participatory pedagogical practices in combination with technological innovation. While the spin-offs of new technology are advancing mediated interaction techniques, pedagogical communication imbued with social constructivist theories is a key factor in the development of the new technology. All educational systems focus on compensating for the absence with the establishment of collaborative environments and spaces for exchange. The 'know at home' (Lamy, 1985) is the purpose of the platforms made available to students using tools for processing, storing, disseminating information and instant individual or group chatting. Because the techno-pedagogical device is positioned as an intermediation, it "modifies the subject's relationship to knowledge, to action, to others [...] but also contributes to transforming knowledge, action and relationships. » .(D.Peraya, B.Charlier, & N.Deschryver, Les dispositifs hybrides dans l'enseignement supérieur :questions théoriques, méthodologiques et pratiques, 2014)

In a face-to-face learning context, direct interactions between individuals, both verbal and non-verbal, take place through language "All human activity is part of a space-time made up of sharing conveyed by language» . Learners gather at a specific place and time to participate in an online learning activity without being forced to move, however, physical proximity does not exclude actual presence. At the same time, distance learning, generally associated with geographical separation, can paradoxically create a feeling of proximity between participants, especially those who feel comfortable and daring outside the traditional course. Thus, the notions of distance and proximity are not limited to the physical dimension, but largely depend on the experience of the interactants.(A.Jézégou, 2019)

The dichotomy 'distance-absence' is at the epicentre of the reflections since this inherent couple in all e-training is linked to " the lived experience of learners and trainers as psychological and social subjects in the relationships they have with each other(Jézégou, 2019). As long as it is possible to feel close to people who are geographically distant, and thus to perceive their presence despite the separation; the distance moves away from its obviousness to more closely resemble a symbolic aspect. Of course, one can be physically present while being absent from a psychological or emotional point of view: attending a class without having called out to each other is a form of absence. This is why absence seems to have more to do with a psychological dimension than with distance as such. «It goes without saying that the physical presence of the teacher is not always the guarantee of his psychological presence, his availability and his ability to listen." (J.Geneviève, Apprivoiser la distance et supprimer l'absence, ou les défis de la formation à distance, 1993)

From symbolic absence, Geneviève highlights the need to distinguish the physical absence of the teacher from his human or psychological absence in the pedagogical act. Contrary to a vision "Manicheanism" according to Geneviève, who would systematically associate presence in class with the quality of the pedagogical relationship, she reminds us that physical proximity is not always synonymous with availability, listening and effective support"as if any face-to-face situation was always an opportunity for a dual, rich and productive relationship" (J.Geneviève, Apprivoiser la distance et supprimer l'absence, ou les défis de la formation à distance, 1993). A teacher can be present in front of his learners or vice versa while remaining mentally or relationally absent.

In addition, the author also emphasizes that it is possible to compensate for the physical absence of the teacher or peers thanks to adapted communication technologies: "the combined transmission of image and speech would perhaps succeed in suppressing absence... (J. Perriault, 1990). The concepts of "Co-learning or " Collaborative learning " illustrate how digital tools

(e-mail, teleconferencing, deferred communication) can, if used judiciously, recreate a dynamic network of learners and maintain fruitful exchanges. Thus, "geographical distance" (B.Blandin, 1999)is not necessarily to be confused with human absence: it can be compensated for by a technological and pedagogical device conducive to relational commitment.

This symbolic character of distance modifies the interactions between the three poles of 'Pedagogical triangle': the mediator of knowledge (teacher), the accompanist of learning (tutor), or learners in relation to each other. For a learning subject will be possible with a « distance proximal». (L.S.Vygotsky, 1987)The social dimension in distance learning has no limits, in fact we are constantly taking advantage of the potential offered by peer confrontation (Vygotsky, 1930, 1985). As for Lamy (1985), he speaks in terms of "Telematics user-friendliness" in a "Remote campus' to designate group learning is carried out through sharing and exchange in e-mail, computer-assisted teleconferences and in the presence of tutoring. While Linard (1992) states that "(P.Perrin, 1992)It's easy to drift into a one-on-one with one's own cognitive activity to strengthen the use of collaborative learning. (M.Linard, 1992)

However, even these high-profile communications raise new problems (from a technical, organisational and even ethical point of view) that will have to be dealt with great care. The challenge remains not to borrow what exists, but to design spaces and learning methods where the human presence remains at the heart of the pedagogical relationship, despite physical distancing. Picking up on her article "Distance, proximity and presence in e-Training", the author (Jézégou, 2019) rejects a purely dichotomous approach that would aim to strictly separate "distance" and "proximity". On the contrary, he relies on the dialogical principle (Morin, 1977; 1986; 1990) to emphasize that these two notions, although in tension (antagonistic and competing), remain both complementary and inseparable: "This principle of disjunction consists in systematically dissociating (disjoining) what is perceived as opposite, although inseparable and complementary " (E. Morin, 1977).

In everyday language, these two notions are often considered to be opposites, or even hierarchical: proximity is more positive (conviviality, solidarity, authenticity), while distance evokes the distance suffered, the absence of emotional or social ties. The research of the American anthropologist Hall (1971) on proximity has even reinforced this bias, by formulating a proxemic "law" according to which what is close is considered more important than what is far. However, the author emphasizes that this functional opposition is not universal. Although antagonistic in their immediate sense, distance and proximity are also complementary and interdependent: each takes on meaning in relation to the other, and neither can be considered naturally superior. Rather, their respective value depends on various contextual, situational and temporal elements, as well as on the singular individual and/or collective perceptions that come into play. What makes proximity desirable or distance feared in one context can therefore be reversed in another. On the other hand, " dialogical thought associates them with each other in order to overcome the contradictions resulting from their antagonism, their competition and complementarity " (E. Morin, 1990).

It is argued that the relationship between distance and proximity should not be considered according to a purely dialectical logic, i.e. seeking to merge or erase their differences in order to obtain a single synthesis; one does not exclude the other. On the contrary, the dialogical perspective (Morin, 1986) postulates that notions that are a priori opposed can cooperate and form a "complex unity", which respects both their singularity and their complementarity. In this context, the notion of presence (Jézégou, 2012) plays a fundamental role: it consolidates this complex unity because of its anchoring in the human relationship, an essential dimension of the sociability of any individual.

In e-Learning, where learners and trainers are geographically separated but connected via digital communication spaces, it is precisely this presence that helps to reduce distance and create proximity. In other words, despite physical distancing, interactions orchestrated and

mediated by digital tools make it possible to maintain or even strengthen social ties and mutual engagement. Consequently, neither distance nor proximity can be unconditionally preferred; Their scope and meaning evolve according to the situation and the actors involved, which places them in a competitive relationship where one or the other may in turn prove to be the most relevant.

In distance learning, the Trilogy: Distance, Proximity, Presence, highlighted thanks to social web technologies, online tools and services. "Presence « asserts itself as a pivotal dimension: the stronger it is, the more the distance tends to diminish, and the more the proximity becomes more intense. In other words, presence is part of a "continuum" whose extreme poles are distance and proximity. Thus, digital environments, when well exploited, not only reduce geographical distance, but also foster a richer educational and social relationship, where the feeling of proximity no longer depends strictly on physical co-presence.

It should be noted that the notion of presence in the context of online training, highlighting its two main dimensions: "imaginary" and "objective". (A. Jézégou, 2012). It turns out that the presence in e-Training has a double facet. On the one hand, it is based on an imaginary dimension : a learner exposed to the feeling of isolation can appreciate or even metaphorically feel the presence of a geographically separated trainer or group thanks to the different technological channels (forums, videoconferences, emails) and the quality of the interactions (feedback, support). These exchanges, although virtual, generate a subjective feeling of closeness; they feed a "fantasized" presence at a distance, made up of emotional and socio-affective feelings, which attenuate the perception of physical distance.

At the same time, presence can also be palpable and experienced: it is concretized in objective facts, such as the regularity and richness of mediatized social interactions. When a trainer and learners communicate frequently, exchange resources, collaborate on projects, or encourage each other, they produce a form of real presence, even at a distance. This dimension is based on the implementation of recurrent communication and on the effective involvement of stakeholders in a digital environment.



Figure 1. The *continuum* of presence in the dialogical couple "distance-proximity"
Source: A. Jézégou, 2019.

Presence in the context of e-Training is located on a continuum linking distance and proximity. The more it is supported, the more the geographical gap is compensated, and sometimes even transcended. In this perspective, presence becomes a dialogical mediator (Jézégou, 2012) between two apparently contradictory poles. It sheds light on the way in which distance, far from being reduced to an obstacle, can be modulated by the modalities of exchange, technical and pedagogical support, and the strength of the socio-emotional bond. We therefore observe a permanent articulation between the imaginary and the objective, the symbolic and the concrete: presence "at a distance" is both a subjective feeling and a communicative phenomenon rooted in effective practices, whose central role is to maintain commitment and the feeling of belonging, despite physical distance.

Thus, the imaginary and objective dimensions of presence coexist in the context of e-learning. The imaginary generates a conscious sense of proximity, while the goal translates into real, factual proximity. These two aspects combine to reduce the perception of distance in

distance learning, creating a balance between emotional interactions and concrete social interactions. According to Jézégou (2012), the perception of presence in e-learning therefore goes beyond the simple geographical distance to become part of a relational dynamic where interaction, whether felt or experienced, becomes the driving force behind proximity.

1.2 In FAD, what distance(s) are involved?

The notion of distance in distance learning has become considerably more complex since its origins. If initially it was mainly a response to physical or geographical constraints, today it takes on multiple dimensions that intersect. So what distance(s) are they?

Linked to a cartographic of distances, the concept was first listed by Geneviève (1993): spatial, temporal, technological, social, cultural and economic distance, but sees distance pedagogical is the most difficult to tame, as Serres (1992) proclaims. between the sources of knowledge and all those who want to learn or train ». Michel Serres, in his 1992 report, pleaded for a review of distance learning methods, stressing the importance of reducing teaching distances. He proposed innovative ideas to create a "University without distance", where the interaction and presence of teachers and students would be strengthened, thus promoting more integrated and human learning.This double definition of pedagogical distance recalls two of the axes of Jean Houssaye's (1988) pedagogical triangle: the first links the teacher and the learner, i.e. the axis of teaching, while the second joins the learner and the sources of knowledge that I would reinterpret in terms of resources, thus including the teachers themselves: this is the axis of learning». (D.Peraya, 2014)

The first distance to overcome is Space concerning everything that prevents travel to the training center. Geographical distance is not only a handicap for the learner, but also for the teacher and for the institution as a whole. For this reason, there is currently a trend to create networks in order to bring together complementary skills and programmes based on the collaboration of human and financial resources, they "are based on the pooling of human and financial resources; A handicap can be seen as an opportunity: prefer not to send their staff on internships abroad to avoid the brain drain and the difficulties inherent in cultural transplantation». (F.P.F.Délégué, 1991)

Distance is also related to the time. The online teacher is more or less free to choose the right time for the broadcast, yet he is confronted with the constraint of temporal adjustment between the learner's requests and the institution's responses for a quality of supervision. Apart from the printed matter which holds the "Winning Media", other always innovative ways to "Distributing knowledge" at home and support "Coaching Strategies » of the learners' work. Another difficulty remains to be overcome: the distance technological (J.Geneviève, Apprivoiser la distance et supprimer l'absence, ou les défis de la formation à distance, 1993). The development of future scenarios, a crucial phase in FAD, involves not only the accessibility of equipment (not everyone is equipped with materials), but also the adaptation of tools (hard or soft) to pedagogical needs and their appropriate insertion.

As knowledge is democratized and popularized, online training gives a "Second chance" to those excluded from the school system because of age, employment, previous failures and refusal of the traditional teaching situation. This movement came to provide for personal needs, but the will of each country should ensure the elevation of education. Thinking carefully about taming distance socio-culturelle, «Regardless of the height of the means used, this dimension of distance is the place of the hindrance par excellence. » . The socio-cultural dimension is more difficult to manage. The observation of those trained with intellectual and economic ease are those who show themselves to be competent and motivated in FAD, while the excluded belonging to the unfavourable classes for the same reasons, show(J.Geneviève, Apprivoiser la distance et supprimer l'absence, ou les défis de la formation à distance, 1993)abandonment (C.Dussarps, 2015). Especially since it is important to recognize that the designers of EADs

devote more resources and energy to the development of teaching devices and strategies rather than to the analysis of the psychosociological and cultural conditions that hinder the learning of isolated individuals, the majority of whom suffer from illiteracy. (Geneviève, 1993, p. 59)

The research of "ethnomethodological inspiration on students' experiences and representations of learning models", say that the feeling of absence is not only due to physical isolation, an aspect that can be compensated for by means of interactive technologies, but the difficulty lies in the social and cultural aspects that are exerted on the learner, his relationship with his family and professional environment, and in the way he looks at his learning. At the heart of the current situation, marked by the dominance of competition and job insecurity, distance (J.Geneviève, Apprivoiser la distance et supprimer l'absence, ou les défis de la formation à distance, 1993)economical Not to be underestimated: "To allow the personal and social advancement of an individual, but also to recover all the human potential available to revive competition and respond to industrial challenges and the various requirements of the job market. ». (J.Geneviève, Apprivoiser la distance et supprimer l'absence, ou les défis de la formation à distance, 1993)

While Gavelle and Maitre de Pembroke (1999) add other forms of distance: relational and cognitive, which refers to the didactic distance spoken of by Kiyitsioglou-Vlachou and Moussouri (2010) and which refers to the relationship between the trainer and the learner(s). They also mention the sociolinguistic distance : "it stems from the asymmetry between the repertoire of learners and that of trainers". Esch (1995) introduces the concept of "interpersonal distance" which characterises the emotional bond between the trainer and the learner. This emotional dimension, which is more or less intense depending on the situation, plays a crucial role in the learning process. It directly influences the learner's motivation and can either facilitate or hinder their engagement in the training. In a distance learning context, this affective dimension takes on particular importance because it must be maintained despite the absence of physical presence.

Dessus (2008) provides a complementary perspective with the concept of "epistemic distance". This represents the gap between the knowledge constituted by the trainer, the result of his or her expertise, and that of the learner in the process of being built. This distance is not static but evolves over the course of learning, gradually reducing as the learner develops his or her knowledge. It requires special attention in adapting content and teaching methods. Fisher (1999) completes this analysis with the notion of "social distance", which focuses on the relationships of status and roles between the different actors in training. This distance manifests itself in the nature of relationships and interactions, influencing communication and behaviors. It can create invisible but real barriers in the learning process, especially in a context where habitual social codes are modified by virtuality.

These different dimensions of distance do not go separately, on the contrary they are constantly intertwined and interacting, creating a complex dynamic that profoundly influences the learning process. Taking them into account is essential for designing effective distance learning systems and for adapting pedagogical strategies to the specific needs of learners.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Remote social presence: a lever for online communication

The notion of presence in e-Training has aroused great interest in French-speaking research for several years. Among the facets of presence, "social presence" occupies a particularly important place, because it refers to an individual's ability to manifest himself or herself as a "human being" in the eyes of his or her interlocutors, despite geographical distance. From this perspective, social presence is considered an essential lever to nurture remote communication and hold the attention of learners.

For Jézégou (2012), social presence is both a matter of emotional feelings and the reality of exchanges. It is at the crossroads of distance and proximity: the stronger the presence is perceived, the more the geographical distance fades away in the minds of learners, giving way to a form of conviviality at a distance. In his work, Jézégou highlights the "Relational Presence: the quality and richness of mediated interactions (forums, videoconferences, messaging) allow the actors to perceive each other as "real people". This impression of "proximity is based as much on the responsiveness of exchanges as on their personalization: "The relational challenge of presence in a digital learning environment requires the configuration of interaction spaces based on the interdependence of the types of presence in support of learning. ». (M.Alexandre, 2020)

The different forms of teacher, cognitive and social presence are redefining the roles of trainer in e-learning (Deaudelin, Petit and Brouillette, 2016) offering the opportunity for an interesting and rich pedagogical experience (Kozan and Richardson (2014) in Petit et al., 2015). In this dimension of social relations, we first highlight the magnitude of the challenge represented by the transition from face-to-face training to a fully remote system, while maintaining a meaningful relationship with the learners. The guiding idea is that digital learning environments offer considerable didactic potential, making it possible to support and accompany the success of students.

In online teaching, Synchronous and asynchronous interactions are essential for maintaining smooth and regular communication. The psychoaffective dimension derives its inestimable value from its role in preventing dropout and stirring up motivation (Marchand and Loisier, 2005; Dussarps, 2015). In the same context, the consideration of psycho-affective aspects requires teachers to strengthen their "social presence" (D.Peraya, B.Charlier, & N.Deschryver, Les dispositifs hybrides dans l'enseignement supérieur :questions théoriques, méthodologiques et pratiques, 2014) on the level of intimacy felt by the learner towards the teacher who is supposed to take a step towards the trainee, and on the level of Responsiveness of the teacher should provide feedback (synchronous responses) on learners' interventions. Short, Williams and Christie (1976) initially defined "Social presence" as "the degree of salience of the other in the interaction and the resulting salience in the interpersonal relationship, the perceived importance of the other in the interaction and its impact on the interpersonal relationship. » . (J.Short, E.Williams, & B.Christie, 1976).

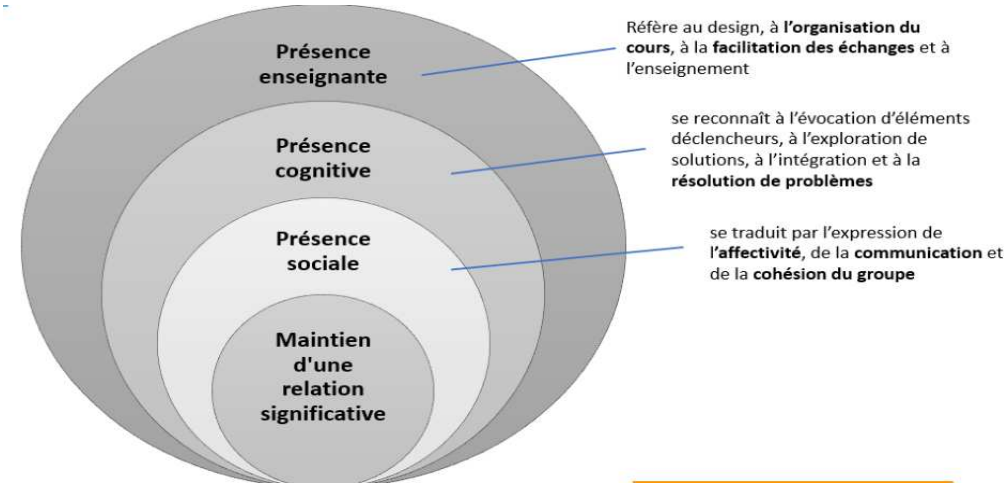


Figure 2. Interdependence of attendance types in support of learning
Source: M.Alexandre, L'enjeu relationnel de la présence en formation à distance, 2020.

Strategies and techniques put in place to counter the physical absence of a teacher in an online training course are centered around a collaborative learning core animated by exchanges as needed (Lafleur, 2017). The establishment of forums for geographically distant learners around a problem that has to solve a problematic situation together. This approach, being a source of learning at the individual and collective level, promotes social presence in e-learning. Reducing distance and generating proximity between learners, and how? Thanks to the communicative potential of online digital technologies and services and their uses by learners. Social **presence** "*resulting from a mediated interactional dynamic between the learners of the group within a digital social space, mobilizing emotional, affective, cognitive, and motivational dimensions conveyed by the use of connected artefacts*" (A. Jézégou, 2019).

The teacher becomes aware of the richness of the interactions experienced in his digital classroom. He notes in particular the diversity and personalization of the supervision, which can take three forms: " (M.Alexandre, J.Bernatchez, & D.Amyot, 2020)*proactive »* (anticipating needs, planning targeted interventions), "*Reactive*(answering questions and difficulties in real time) and "*retroactive"* (analyse a posteriori the productions or performances to adjust the support). This flexibility contributes to transforming its pedagogical role, which is no longer limited to the simple transmission of content, but extends to the fine management of learning dynamics and the creation of a supportive relational climate, even at a distance.

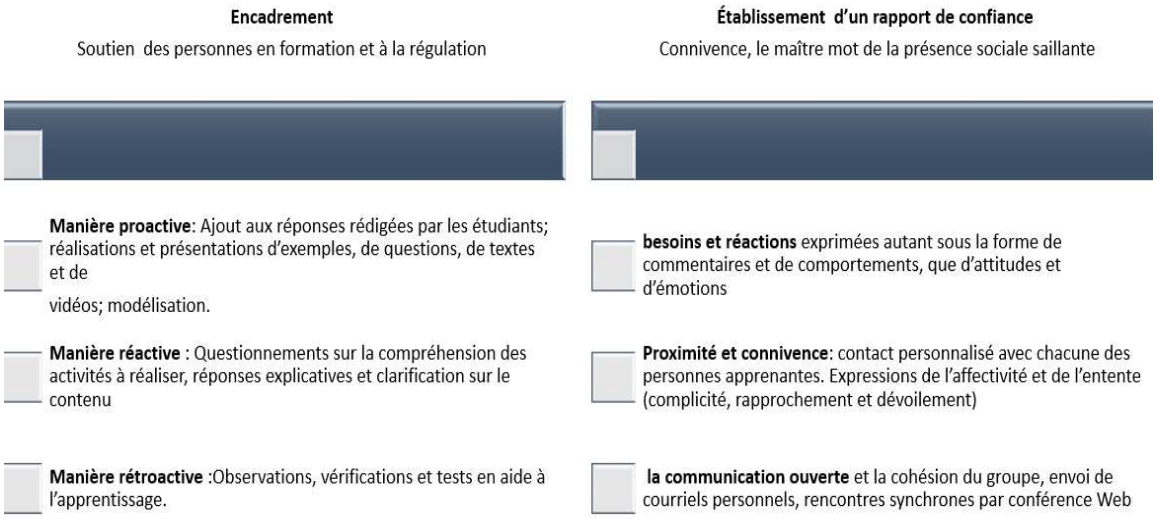


Figure 3. Teaching strategies and digital tools that can support remote attendance
Source: Lafleur, 2017.

In this passage, the emphasis is on the importance of establishing a relationship of trust to promote the engagement of students in distance education. This trust is built from the recognition of the characteristics, needs and reactions of learners, expressed not only through comments (comments, questions), but also through behaviours, attitudes and emotions. (Alexandre, et al. 2020).

Such a relationship is based on the expression of attitudes that are conducive to communication: active listening, a personalized connection with each student, and the implementation of strategies to develop a sense of affectivity and cohesion. In concrete terms, this can take the form of sending one-off messages to the whole class (via the chat and chat space), organizing synchronous meetings (by videoconference), as well as more individual telephone contacts. Upstream, prior knowledge of the group can play a decisive role. The teacher can, for example, schedule telephone contacts before the first sessions or create a space dedicated to making appointments for individual dialogue (scripted or free forum). Sending personalized emails before the start of the course also helps to establish an initial connection,

arouse curiosity and reassure learners. In the participatory approach, it is also better to plan an awareness and discovery session (objectives, procedures, distribution, deadline).

When teaching strategies and digital tools intersect, remote presence is likely to be realized. Because the support of learners and the regulation of their learning are just as crucial in person as online, presence, therefore, has less to do with physical proximity than with the quality of the pedagogical relationship and the teacher's ability to mobilize various communication devices to create a climate of trust, even at a distance.

2.2 The psychoaffective dimension for a social presence

The notion of presence in e-Training is considered according to two major spatio-temporal situations: co-presence and deferred presence. The first is the "here and now", where the interaction takes place synchronously (video-conference, chat, shared whiteboard, etc.). The second, described as "here but not now", refers to asynchronous communication (emails, forums, blogs). Beyond these two modalities, the presence in e-Learning is described as a relational dynamic experienced by learners and trainers, who, although physically distant, are connected by communication tools and services brought together within a digital space. These tools can be part of an institutional platform or freely chosen by the training actors. The essential thing therefore lies in the ability of these artefacts to promote and sustain a human relationship, both in the moment (synchronous) and deferred (asynchronous).

The dimensions of presence in the online learning environment could tame the sense of distance as a notion that has been demonized for quite a long time in online education, have transformed the way learners interact and engage in their learning process. Figure 4 explores the different dimensions of online presence, including social-affective, social-cognitive, and pedagogical presence. Each of these dimensions plays a crucial role in creating an effective and engaging learning environment.

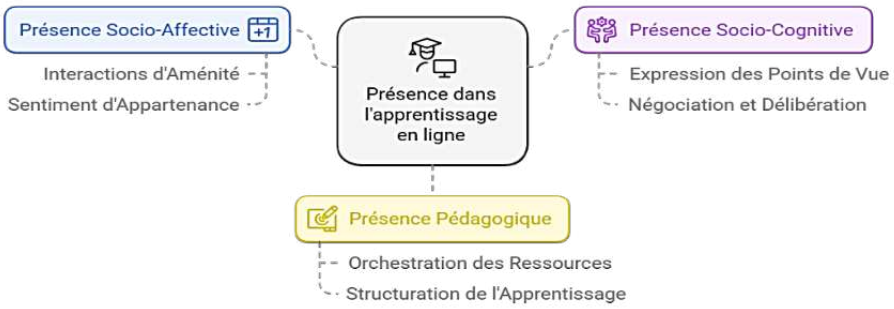


Figure 4. The Dimensions of Presence in an Online Learning Environment
Source: Jézégou, 2019.

A wide range of resources whets the appetites of educational engineering specialists, makes the presence of teachers accessible whether by sending signals: expressions and facial expressions, gestures of significant proximity to the screen or of voice rate. Such know-how/being is a skill in semiopedagogy that must be carefully adopted to promote learner involvement. At the *Socio-digital affordance* of these artifacts (Lowenthal and Mulder, 2017), the right choice of affordances and the right functionality of the webcam also develops skills *Semiopedagogical* (Guichon, 2013) and constructs the identity of online teachers. « *As a first approximation, the salience of the teacher's presence therefore relates to its remarkable character both at the perceptual level (more audible, more visible), cognitive (more understandable, more memorable), and emotional (more engaging)* » (. (N.Guichon, 2017)

Relational pedagogy based on *connivance* takes the form of behaviours and abilities to show complicity and compassion with the learner: "*interactional connivance as the result of*

the empathetic efforts of individuals engaged in an interaction in order to make the interaction possibly memorable. Thanks to the interactional potential of the device, the teacher maintains the empathic dimension through the exchange of a ritual and the adjustment of semiotic regulators (sound, lighting, gesture, webcam zoom). In a context of online interactional connivance, mutual synchronization cements the links between interactants and feeds their need to belong. Indeed, the psycho-socio-emotional aspect is reinforced by the coordination and sharing of information and knowledge.

Thanks to the ritual of interaction, active listening and the manifesto of emotions initiated by the teacher, the pleasure of being online increases: " *Confirmatory rituals of greetings, expressions of welcome, demonstrations of cordiality, interest, and pleasure in meeting each other*» . It is also appropriate to point out the major effect of revealing oneself in front of one's students by revealing certain professional and even personal points (anecdotes, smiles, confessions) that help to forge strong connections and break the weight of bullying. In a digital learning environment, the question of social presence and its pedagogical implementation is a central issue. Nicolas Guichon (2013), based on a semio-didactic approach, insists on the need to demonstrate a prominent presence in order to establish a climate conducive to exchanges and learning. This presence is not limited to a simple connection or the dissemination of content, but implies a human and relational commitment that transcends technological distance.(C.Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 1990)

For his part, Nicolas Guichon (2017) insists on "*online connivance*" as a concrete modality of social presence. Through a semio-didactic approach, he shows that non-verbal cues (facial expressions via the webcam, emojis, voice inflections), formulas of approval) or even the derisory tone promote a climate of trust and complicity. These elements, often considered secondary, are on the contrary crucial to demystify the status of trainer from its institutional straitjacket and maintain a sense of belonging, essential in a context of digital training where distance could otherwise lead to isolation.

According to Guichon (2017), it is first important **to lift part of the veil** in order to make the informal and affective dimensions of interaction, which are often relegated to the background in online training, more visible. **Sharing rituals**, emotions, even laughter, creates a friendly atmosphere and awakens in everyone the **feeling of belonging** to the group. The emergence of this collaborative dynamic is closely linked to the pedagogical posture that the teacher or trainer adopts. By opting for an open, symmetrical and authentic attitude, it fosters mutual trust, avoids an overly hierarchical relationship and demonstrates recognition of the value of each contribution. When the interlocutor perceives this desire to meet the other, he becomes more inclined to speak up, to get involved in the activities and to share his points of view.

According to Clark and Brennan (1991), for a conversation to run optimally, the interlocutors must coordinate their actions and share a set of information, so as to establish mutual understanding. This process of "*grounding*" can be defined as the set of efforts made by the participants to ensure that they understand each other. However, it is strongly influenced by the medium used for the exchange: sending an email, for example, does not imply the same "*cost*" in terms of visibility, synchrony or co-presence than videoconferencing. In other words, each communication tool offers different possibilities (or imposes constraints) to adjust one's speech, check the other's understanding and establish common ground. In all cases, the effectiveness of communication depends on the ability of the interlocutors to detect potential misunderstandings and to remedy them, which requires more or less sustained coordination work depending on the nature of the medium used.(S.Drissi, 2011)

Undeniably, the tutor fully participates in establishing a salient presence in an e-training course through his or her function *socio-motivational* (S.Ayachi-Ghannouchi & L.Cheniti-Belcadhi, 2007). It provides moral and psychological support to the learner. The roles delegated

to the tutor allow him to be attentive to the learners' listening, answer their questions, help them solve problems and manage conflicts. Indeed, if social presence reassures, motivates, and promotes a pleasant atmosphere, it constitutes the essence of the feeling of belonging to a group. (L.R.Tropp & T.F.Pettigrew, 2005)

If we look closely at the exchanges, the proximity produced by the image of the interlocutor calls into question the semiopedagogical competence that an online teacher is upset to develop. « *The combined transmission of image and speech would perhaps succeed in suppressing absence.* » . Potentially qualified, videoconferencing holds a distinctive place since it is multi-channel making the synchrony real compared to other tools (blog, forum, wiki) that only allow a deferred interaction on a single channel(J.Perriault, 1990). «*The main argument is that, in connection with other semiotic resources, the image of the teacher transmitted by the webcam in online language teaching situations seems to be a means of facilitating online interactions and creating a feeling of co-presence.* (Yamada and Goda, 2012; Guichon and Cohen, 2014).

3. RESULTING

In the dynamics of online exchanges, the dissemination of conversation is a semiotic field that fully enriches pedagogical and communicative needs (N. Guichon, 2017). The results of a study conducted by Guichon and Cohen (2014) on two groups of learners interacting online with the same teacher showed that the visibility of the interlocutor had only a minor effect on the quality of *the pedagogical interaction* (fluency, comprehension) and that the image, although not essential to mutual understanding, supports the psychoaffective dimension of the interaction. The group viewing the teacher confirms that they feel the quality of the interaction and in "*A warm social environment in which learning will be valued"* (Bernatchez, 2001).

While many technologies (forums, blogs, etc.) rely on asynchronous interaction, videoconferencing offers synchronous communication. In addition, its multichannel nature (combination of voice, image, possibly text via chat, etc.) allows a variety of **semiotic resources** to transmit information. Videoconferencing has the potential to teach a foreign language (Guichon, 2017, p.3). In his research project, which took place between 2006 and 2011 (Guichon, 2015 p.102), on a training course in which learner-teachers are placed in a position to teach French as a foreign language (FLE) to geographically distant students, thanks to a videoconferencing platform. The objective is to understand the multiple facets of online teaching activity, based on a *semio-didactic* approach. In concrete terms, it is a question of observing how professional gestures (use of multimodal channels, speech management, implementation of activities) are deployed in a space mediated by videoconferencing and can establish social complicity and create an educational presence.

At the interface between the actors (teachers and learners), the computer screen is presented as a source of a variety of information (writing in conversations, multiple documents), intervened by the webcam. Although this tool offers partial access to images and voices, it provides a semiotic analysis through the different angles "*in a didactic situation where the second language is both the tool for communication and the main objective of learning*" (Guichon, 2013 p.102). The shot studied from these angles focuses in particular on three most relevant determinants are: "*micro-events"* (smiles, frowning, etc.), the "*movement"* of the lips out of step with the words and some "*elements of the context*" such as decoration and clothing. However, the non-verbal components are generally *not very prominent*.

This study is a nodal one, highlighting the considerable semiotic value of this videoconference, "*both a complement to the oral and an essential vector of intercomprehension*" (Develotte, Guichon & Vincent, 2010). Indeed, the camera enriches online exchanges by giving access to facial expressions as well as gestures, which perform several interactional functions, obviously the non-verbal constitutes a majority part of the understanding as well as to restrict the margin of misunderstanding. A nod or a grimace of

surprise automatically prompts a learner to rephrase his or her remarks, or by a persistent look, the trainees take a serious tone. Therefore, visual cues through the webcam fundamentally participate in the construction of discourse without the emergence of technical complications being ruled out. Interviews conducted with apprentice teachers and learners nevertheless certify that the judicious use of the webcam can create a "*remote presence effect*" (Weisberg, 1999), by establishing common ground between the interlocutors, thus optimizing the quality of the pedagogical relationship.

In this excerpted approach, the use of the webcam and its pedagogical implications in a distance learning situation evokes different levels of investment from a total absence (masked camera) to maximum involvement (the interactants reveal themselves to the camera). However, this form of ultimate commitment also poses a discomfort explained by Chanay (2011), who underlines the paradoxical nature of this situation: when a teacher seeks to maintain direct eye contact, he or she simultaneously prevents himself or herself from grasping the facial and gestural expressions of his or her interlocutor. By adding another parameter that deserves to be apprehended , *"the rhythm with which the modalities are associated or dissociated, the silences, the pauses and the micro-breaks in the connection are all phenomena to be taken into account in order to restore the entire interaction*." (Chanay, 2011)

The importance given to the rhythm with which the different modalities (sound, image, chat, etc.) follow one another or overlap. Technical hazards (delays, breaks, micro-outages) also influence the overall experience, making the analysis of multimodality in videoconferencing complex. It is therefore not only a question of "activating" an additional channel, but of understanding how the teacher adjusts his or her use of the gaze, the voice and the written word to maintain a fluid interaction and ensure his or her didactic function.

4. CONCLUSION

Since correspondence, the pedagogical strategies of distance learning have pursued the same objective: to control distances in order to optimize intellectual and social exchanges. Today, with the advent of information and communication technologies, we are witnessing a change in learning methods that bring geographically distant people to interact and learn together. The starting point is that distance and its socio-pedagogical, cultural, technical and economic dimensions act on the quality of distance learning. However, building a remote presence is one of the visionary projects of interactional pedagogy.

Moreover, absence tends to be a psychological emotion that arises independently of proximity. Of course, physical presence in a class does not deduce the state of commitment, real presence is explained by interaction and involvement. As a result, distance remains symbolic and does not fall under the question of absence. Like any pedagogical relationship, the socio-affective aspect is the vector that governs the teaching-learning process. Human relationships bring learners closer to their trainers and to each other as well. In synchrony, teachers tend to master affordances and to choose the features offered by digital tools to tame distance and build a salient presence. Self-disclosure, coordination, empathy and active listening are parameters of complicity that fundamentally contribute to compensating for physical absence.

Although online communication has a distinct place, it remains fragile and distance learning can lead to rejection among students, it is essential that teachers pay particular attention to the psycho-affective aspects of the online pedagogical relationship. The ability of teachers to develop semiotic pedagogy by strategically using the different semiotic resources makes the image they convey so warm and pleasant. Highlighting the verbal and *coverbal* regulators, the connivance that gives meaning to social presence feeds it.

This article has thus linked various exploratory studies that punctuate a progressive accumulation of corpora and data collected, year after year, around the formation and

development of an artifact. While this research sheds light on both the work of the trainer and that of the designer of techno-pedagogical devices, it reveals the need to gradually grasp the complexity and depth of distance pedagogical interactions. This approach is part of an "*anthropocentric"* didactics (Rabardel, 1995), which is less interested in the supposed promises of "*technocentric*" technologies than in the actual uses made of them by the various user profiles (Guichon, 2012: 214-217).

The distance/absence couple can no longer be understood in a simplistic way in the age of e-training. The quality of a pedagogical relationship is not based solely on physical presence, nor exclusively on digital innovation, it depends above all on the way in which the support is conceived, the posture adopted by the trainer and the framework offered to learners to feel heard, encouraged and supported. The dematerialization of training is not synonymous with disruption: it opens up new perspectives for rethinking engagement, interaction and support. And if we accept to consider distance from a positive angle, as an opportunity to diversify the methods of follow-up and to build a new relationship with others, then e-learning reveals itself not as a by-product of training, but as a complementary modality full of promise. In the end, it is "*What remains is the symbolic absence, if I may say so, which, undeniably, is never suppressed or suppressable.* (Geneviève, 1993, p.60).

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