

# THINKING, FEELING, AND CREATING PRESENCE IN THE ONLINE ENVIRONMENT

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In the traditional face-to-face classroom, learners are with the instructor and other learners in the same space with a clear sense of time and proximity. In this situation, the feeling of presence is easily perceived because learners, the instructor, and other learners are together within four walls. In the online classroom, however, the feeling of presence is elusive: there are no boundaries of space or place; time is flexible; learners, instructor, and other learners are separated; the use of the senses requires adaptation; the type of interaction needs to be rethought; and instructional planning needs to be intentional and planned in advance.

Current research is finding that the creation of a sense of presence in online learning can enhance the learner-instructor relationship [1], produce a richer social atmosphere, develop a climate for high level inquiry and critical thinking [2], and generate a sense of the learners and instructor being together in the online classroom [3].

Creating a sense of presence doesn't just naturally happen, however. It is, rather, the result of awareness, understanding, intentional planning and design, and active involvement through experience on the part of the learner, the instructor, and other learners. In this environment, everyone needs to think, feel, and create a sense of presence. In this presentation, we discuss the importance of being aware of and understanding presence, what is known about presence, what a sense of presence is, what presence looks and feels like, and how presence can be created. Finally, we employ a framework, shown in the Figure 1, to illustrate the dynamic interplay of thought, emotion, and behavior that the learner experiences, and how this relates to implications for practice and recommendations for future research.

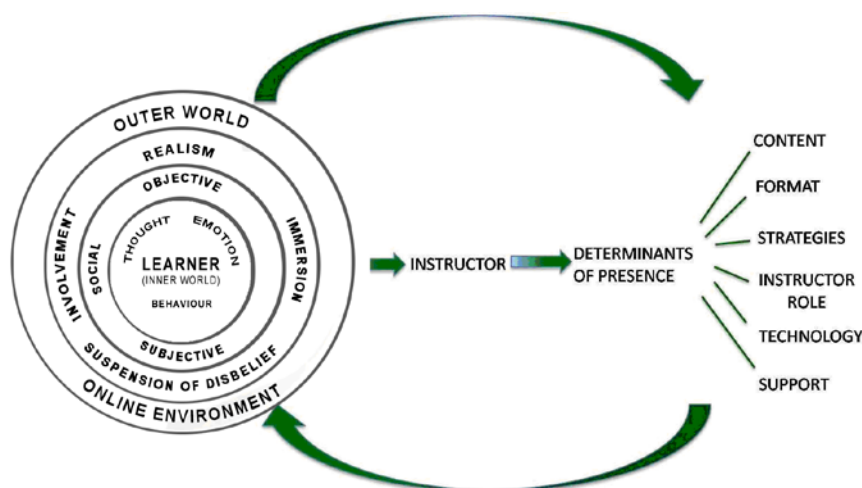


Figure 1 – Framework for Designing Online Courses with a Sense of Presence [4]

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