تصورات الطلاب للتعلّم عن بعد للمقررات العملية في تخصص الإعلام: تحليل من منظور نظرية ثراء وسائل الإعلام خلال تجربة الكويت مع كوفيد- 19

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الملخص

الهدف: لقد شكّل تفشي فيروس كورونا خلال الفصل الدراسي الربيعي لعام 2020م، تحديات جديدة أمام الجامعات في دولة الكويت، فيما يتعلّق بتدريس المقررات العملية لطلاب تخصص الإعلام. **المنهجية:** استخدمت هذه الدراسة المنهج الكمّي؛ حيث جُمِعت البيانات من خلال استبانة إلكترونية ذاتية لآراء 252 مبحوثًا من الطلبة المسجّلين في مساقات مقررات الإعلام حول تصوراتهم وتفضيلاتهم لأنماط التدريس العملي عن بعد، وتحليلها عبر الانحدار الخطي المتعدد لتحليل البيانات، مع التركيز على العوامل الأربعة لنظرية ثراء وسائل الإعلام وهي: سرعة رد الفعل، والقدرة على إضفاء طابع شخصي، وتوفير إشارات متعددة، وتنوع اللغة. **النتائج:** كشفت الدراسة أن سرعة رد الفعل كانت عاملًا رئيسيًّا في تحديد رضا الطلاب حول: مدى ملاءمة التعلّم عن بعد للمقررات العملية، ومشاعرهم تجاهه، وسهولة تقييم أعمالهم، ورغبتهم في إعادة دراسة هذه المقررات عن بعد. فضلًا عن ذلك كان للقدرة على إضفاء طابع شخصي تأثير إيجابي على مشاعر الطلاب تجاه التعلّم عن بعد ورغبتهم في إعادة دراسة المقررات. **الخلاصة:** تشير الدراسة إلى أن تدريس مقررات التعلّم عن بعد يجب أن يقتصر على المقررات ذات التوجّه النظري؛ إذ يحتاج المدرسون إلى تطبيق جميع وسائل الاتصال لتعزيز الارتباط العاطفي الذي قد يفتقر إليه التعلم عن بعد، فضلًا عن توفير بيئة إلكترونية يشعر فيها الطلاب بالراحة عند مناقشة القضايا الدراسية؛ حيث يمكن أن يزيد ذلك من تفضيلهم للتعلّم عن بعد ويحسن من قدرتهم على الفهم؛ مما يخلق تجربة تعلّم عن بعد ثرية وجذابة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التعلّم عن بعد، نظرية ثراء وسائل الإعلام، التعليم التقليدي، المواد الإعلامية العملية، جودة نتائج التعلم.

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Students' Perceptions of Distance Learning in Vocational Mass Communication Courses: A Media Richness Theory Perspective from Kuwait's COVID-19 Experience

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Abstract

Objective: The outbreak of the Coronavirus during the spring semester of 2020 presented new challenges for universities in Kuwait regarding the teaching of practical courses for mass communication students. **Method:** This study employed a quantitative approach, collecting data through a self-administered online survey. Multiple Linear Regression (MLR) was used for data analysis. The perceptions and preferences of 252 students enrolled in mass communication courses concerning online practical teaching methods were surveyed, with a specific focus on the four factors of Media Richness Theory: immediacy of feedback, capacity to include personal focus, conveyance of multiple cues, and variety of language. **Results:** The findings revealed that the immediacy of feedback was a key factor in determining student satisfaction regarding: the suitability of distance learning for practical courses, their sentiments toward it, the perceived ease of evaluating their work, and their willingness to retake such courses remotely. Additionally, the capacity to include personal focus positively impacted student sentiments toward distance learning and their willingness to retake courses. **Conclusion:** The study implies that teaching DL should be restricted to theoretically-oriented courses. Instructors need to apply all means of communication to increase the emotional connection that DL may lack, as well as provide an online ambience where students feel comfortable discussing issues. This can increase their preference for DL and improve their understanding, creating a rich and engaging DL experience.

Keywords: distance learning, Media Richness Theory, traditional learning, vocational media courses, learning quality outcomes.

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Introduction

The rapid shift to distance learning during Covid-19 meant that there was a sudden expansion of online provision to compensate for the closing of face-to-face facilities. Many teachers and students were transferred to online settings without adequate preparation, and this left many questioning the efficacy of online education. Distance learning (DL) has been widely adopted by universities during the recent Covid-19 outbreak, when academic institutions in many countries were forced to close their campuses in an effort to prevent the spread of coronavirus (Bozkurt and Sharma i; Egielewa et al. 22.; Karakose 54; Mohmmed et al. 72; Squire 55; Toquero 170). Different instructional and communication platforms were available for DL to replace traditional face-to-face learning (FtFL). However, the use of DL raised concerns about effective achievement of learning outcomes and the integrity of the educational process (Elumalai et al. 182; Iglesias-Pradas et al. 13).

Before the outbreak of Covid-19, the majority of the literature on DL looked at the expansion of online teaching and programs as a result of technological advancement and an increased enrollment in the number of students in online courses (Davis and Roblyer 400; Journell 49; Marek 279). Those studies provide an institutional perspective on DL, a perspective that looks at the efforts of institutions to support DL. There have also been studies that examined personal and pedagogical accounts of instructors involved in DL (Alqabbani et al. 462; Easton 90; Quinlan 30) . In contrast with those earlier studies, the literature on students' accounts and perspectives on DL has been limited, although research of this type has increased dramatically following the expansion of DL during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Another problem with earlier research is that it has tended to be limited to counting the pros and cons of DL. In general, it neglects influential factors. For example, previous studies have looked at students' attitudes to DL in general, where the present study explores the influence of the nature of a subject course on perceptions about DL. It achieves this by focusing on mass communication vocational courses that foreground practical application and put theory in the background. Vocational mass communication courses involve hands-on experience of television and radio content design, editing, production of Visual Communication, Radio-TV Production, Advanced Advertising Innovation, and Radio-TV Internship. Students are expected to be involved with production equipment, and they are guided and monitored by instructors who provide step-by-step supervision. As a result, the perceptions of students of vocational DL courses may not be positive. Few previous studies provide such a micro perspective of students' responses to DL.

The Ministry of Education in Kuwait, the social context of this study, gave university students the option to either complete the Spring semester of 2020 online or wait until September 2020 to resume the suspended semester offline (Alhouti

217). The sudden switch to DL raised serious concerns about the effectiveness and quality of DL for students who had not previously experienced DL. Before 2020, all provision in Kuwait was expected to be face-to-face (Alhouti 220). Kuwaiti universities, forced to adopt DL, encountered administrative and technical obstacles, as well as challenges related to the quality of education, reliability of assessment, possibility of plagiarism and dishonesty. These concerns can be significantly higher in DL than in face-to-face learning (FtFL) (Bretag et al. 687). The current study presents Kuwait, an Arab country, as a new context of research, since the majority of research on DL has explored the DL in Western, technologically advanced nations. It addresses gaps in existing research by focusing on the student perspective, analyzing micro-level factors for specific understanding, and exploring the unique cultural context of Arab culture. This approach reveals previously unexplored insights that are valuable for vocational courses, and which can shape future DL practice and research in similar contexts. The study examines students' various perceptions of DL and the outcomes of DL, using Media Richness Theory (MRT) as the guiding theoretical framework, to analyze students' accounts. MRT considers the various capacities of a channel or medium to facilitate communication of an educational experience. It specifically identifies the four factors of MRT, namely: (1) *immediacy of feedback*, (2) *capacity to include personal focus*, (3) *conveyance of multiple cues*, and (4) *variety of language in teaching*. This study investigates the predictive power of the four key factors of MRT on the outcomes of DL when it is used for the delivery of vocational courses: (1) students' perceptions of the suitability of DL for vocational courses, (2) students' personal emotional sentiments toward DL, (3) students' perceptions of the ease of evaluating DL coursework, and (4) the possibility of retaking DL courses.

Literature Review

Perspectives on DL

This study investigates how the four factors of Media Richness Theory (MRT) influence students' perceptions of distance learning in vocational courses, particularly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic in Kuwait. Before 2020, DL was adopted on a small scale and was restricted to self-study or a supplementary mode of learning used to enrich face-to-face learning (FtFL). Materials and methods of instruction in DL vary, but include audio, video, and multimedia technologically enhanced applications as well as online materials and bulletins for online interactions.

The literature on DL mainly reflects institutional and instructor perspectives, although the number of studies of student perspectives on DL has increased after the Covid-19. The institutional perspective on DL primarily deals with ways institutions handle and provide policies, opportunities, and technologies that make DL possible. On these issues, Rockwell et al. (55) indicate a list of pressing matters that institutions

have to consider when dealing with DL, such as training for instructors on online teaching, employment of quality and assessment-based online learning objectives, and adequacy of institutional support. Teachers have excellent face-to-face teaching skills but may lack proper training to effectively teach DL. The infrastructure for DL may be limited (Easton 88). Orr et al. (23) found that some common challenges facing DL are lack of incentives to teach online, limited technical expertise, and inadequate technological infrastructure.

The literature also provides instructors' perspectives on DL. Baran and Correia (99) found that instructors indicate their need for training and workshops on DL, their need for a progressive and collegial environment where DL is enhanced by peer support and assistance, and their need for institutional and managerial support. At a micro instructor-to-student level, other studies indicate challenges facing instructors in their involvement with students. They pinpoint to the inability to monitor students' engagement in online classes. Another essential element is lack of physical and social appearance and cues of faculty and students that reduce an emotional investment from instructors and students in an online class. An instructor cannot determine students' feelings of excitement, frustration, confusion, or boredom.

Recent research has paid attention to students' attitudes to DL, emphasizing emotional and psychological factors that can affect DL. Jaggars & Xu's (271) study of students' online outcomes found that the performance of students in community colleges was lower than that of students in FtFL for two reasons. The first is related to technological issues, such as the availability of fast Internet connection and computers. The second is related to psychological and social factors. Students felt that DL environments isolated them socially and reduced their commitment and motivation (Gómez et al. 1; Guest et al. 1092; Saadé and Bahli 319).

When learning online, students may be frustrated for different reasons. This frustration can be assessed according to their perceptions of and feelings about DL. One important reason for this frustration is the technology itself. If an instructor does not find the technology useful in performing different instructional tasks or that it cannot communicate and transmit ideas effectively, the outcomes of DL for students receiving instruction will be negative. Lack of hands-on experience that students need for learning on vocational courses can be an additional source of negative attitudes toward DL that may affect students' readiness for learning. As a result, a great burden lays on the capacity of technology to reproduce an educational experience that is similar to that found in a face-to-face environment.

DL Outcomes

Studies have reported mixed outcomes of DL for students, because various criteria were used to assess students' outcomes. Some studies have been orthodox

and related the effectiveness of DL to students' acquisition of knowledge and their performance in DL classes. One study during the COVID-19 pandemic in the United Arab Emirates found that a great obstacle to students' learning was related to integrity and fairness (Almuraqab 227).

Other studies have assessed DL outcomes in relation to students' preferences for DL over FtFL. The majority of studies indicate that traditional FtFL remains the preferred mode for instruction (Dinh and Nguyen 1080; Jaggars 36; Ponzurick et al. 181; Roy et al. 1; Serhan 340). Other studies indicate that students prefer going back to traditional FtFL after experiencing DL during COVID-19 (Gherheș et al. 13; Roy et al. 4). Ponzurick et al.'s (182) study of MBA students found that they reported less satisfaction with DL and also believed that DL was less effective than FtFL. However, this same study found that the convenience factor encouraged students to retake DL courses. These outcomes suggest that perceptions of DL may be determined by different factors. Similarly, Serhan (340) found that students who used Zoom in their DL had negative attitudes toward DL because it negatively affected their motivation to learn. Such a negative influence of DL on motivation suggests the involvement of inner emotional factors in determining attitudes to DL. Khalil et al. (8) found that medical college students in Saudi Arabia expressed an emotional uneasiness about adapting to DL because their medical courses are practically oriented.

One study that looked at DL across different subjects found that DL was preferred for easy subjects, because there was a less need for a "teacher explanation and interaction". But for difficult, interesting, or important subjects, students preferred FtFL (Jaggars 35). The nature of the subject may determine attitudes toward DL. In a qualitative focus group study of College of Medicine students, Khalil et al. (8) found that students had negative attitudes toward DL because the nature of their medical courses require direct feedback and hands-on experience that facilitates an understanding of their educational materials. But the students mentioned that using various cues in the delivery of information can help their understanding.

These considerations lead to several conclusions. First, the types of criterion variables that studies employ varied, producing inconsistent outcomes resulting from DL. This may indicate a complexity of the literature that needs to be considered. For example, students may indicate they want to take vocational courses online in the future, but at the same time, they may indicate that courses online are not comparable with an FtFL environment. By assessing various criterion variables as outcomes of DL, this study aims to analyze a student perspective. By doing so, this study adds complexity to understanding DL and uncovers minor details that the DL literature, in general, misses.

The present study is designed to examine four criterion variables as outcomes resulting from DL. The first is the usefulness of DL for instruction in vocational skills.

This can explain how a vocational course that is practical in nature would be perceived if taught online. The second is an emotional element in assessing students' reporting of DL courses as "interesting". Reporting a DL course as "interesting" or "not interesting" underscores level of appeal, focus, or attention the course can yield as an essential element in students' readiness to receive information online. The third measures the ease of evaluating DL coursework. This may link to DL effectiveness in terms of knowledge acquisition. Finally, the possibility of retaking DL courses can indicate a general pattern of preference for DL. By assessing different outcomes resulting from the factors of MRT, this study examines various complexities that students report about DL.

Media Richness Theory (MRT)

Media Richness Theory (MRT) hypothesizes that "communication effectiveness depends on the match between task requirements and medium capacity" (Otondo et al. 21). Since different media and communication technologies have differing capacities to provide and enhance communication, they vary in their capacities to reduce uncertainty and ambiguity in transmitting information that can be classified as "rich", "poor", or something in between. For example, face-to-face communication is very rich, because communicators can employ direct communication and bodily and physical cues in order to reduce uncertainty and ambiguity. On the other hand, written texts are considered poor, because they lack cues and instant feedback. Video conferencing somewhere in between, because it allows instant feedback but can conceal emotional intensity and body language (Daft and Lengel 560; Dennis and Kinney 269; Trevino et al. 569).

MRT defines uncertainty as lack of information and communication cues and ambiguity refer to the "confusion or lack of understanding" (Ishii et al. 124) or "multiple and possibly conflicting interpretations" (Dennis and Kinney 257). When a communication medium between two communicators reduces uncertainty and ambiguity, the medium is considered rich. Accordingly, using an appropriate medium of communication is essential for effective and quick communication because it reduces the distortion of the received message, helps users to better understand the ambiguous elements in a message, and prompts communicators' "better performance on equivocal tasks" (Dennis and Kinney 258). From an MRT perspective on DL, when a medium is matched to the tasks instructors and students are supposed to perform, it can be considered rich in reflecting a better DL experience, as it can result in achieving multiple educational objectives (Balaji and Chakrabarti 17).

MRT has four main factors that influence the richness of a medium. They are (1) immediacy of feedback, (2) capacity to include personal focus, (3) conveyance of multiple cues, and (4) variety of language in teaching. In DL, the more factors incorporated in a communication medium, the richer the medium and the more satisfactory DL is for education (Suh 296).

Personal focus

Personal focus refers to the ability of an instructor to tailor communication to students at a personal level. It reflects an instructor's ability, by using a medium, to reach out to students and establish an individualized educational experience. This involves considering the students' emotions and motivations by engaging everyone individually. From an MRT perspective, when the educational environment provision is friendly, and engages feelings and emotions, the medium is richer, and engages students' focus, attention, and involvement.

It is anticipated that this factor will be associated with students' sentiments toward DL. It is expected that students who believe that instructors give them special attention and focus in online classes will have a positive emotional attitude to DL. Nambiar (784) argues that instructors who provide individualized attention can reduce communication ambiguity and boost the humane interaction that positively impact students' interest in and attention to subjects. In contrast with this, a medium that is impersonal can result in students having negative sentiments toward DL. Another study by Adnan and Anwar (49) found that lack of personal focus was perceived by Pakistani students as a cause for their disinterest in the course and lack of enthusiasm about taught concepts and subjects. Finally, Zhou et al. (11) who employed MRT during COVID-19, found that personal focus was important in teaching English online in a Chinese university. Given that previous research highlights the importance of personalized attention in fostering positive student attitudes toward DL (Adnan and Anwar 48; Nambiar 789), the study hypothesizes that:

H1: MRT's personal focus factor will positively predict students' sentiments toward DL.

Immediacy of feedback

This study operationalizes immediacy of feedback as the capacity of a medium to foster a communication milieu where all students can engage and be part of a communication process. This factor involves allowing participation in class discussion, asking questions freely, and involvement in an exchange of instant feedback between the instructor and students. The more a medium provides these features, the richer it is.

It is anticipated that this factor will be associated with students' perceptions about the suitability of DL for teaching vocational courses, and students' perceptions of the ease of evaluating DL coursework. The more students feel free to exchange ideas and ask questions, the more they can understand the concepts being taught. The more feedback they receive, the better they will understand ideas related to vocational aspects. This in turn will make them believe that DL is suitable for teaching vocational courses. Also, the more students can exchange ideas and receive feedback, the more they will believe that evaluation of DL coursework is easy. This is because feedback can positively help them complete assignments.

Indeed, studies indicate that the capacity of a medium to allow free and open communication increases understanding of messages that reduce ambiguity (Dennis and Kinney 260). In a study during Covid-19 in the United Arab Emirates, Almuraqab (230-31) found that lack of immediate feedback and person-to-person interactions between students and their instructors was an obstacle to students' satisfaction about the suitability of DL for taught subjects. They indicated that lack of feedback negatively affected their understanding of assignments, and that many assignments could not be easily understood from written instructions and without verbal instruction. Another study found that a majority of students expressed frustration about lack of interactivity that impeded their learning (Hasan and Khan 210-11). Wang (8) argued that instructors need to integrate traditional and advanced technical methods, and as encourage students to share their feedback, ideas, and opinions that can help in understanding subjects online. In view of previous work on the immediacy of feedback factor (Dennis and Kinney 267; Hasan and Khan 211; Wang 8), the following hypotheses are proposed:

H2: MRT's immediacy of feedback factor will positively predict perceptions about using DL for teaching vocational courses.

H3: MRT's immediacy of feedback factor will positively predict perceptions of the ease of evaluating DL coursework.

Conveyance of Multiple Cues

MRT's conveyance of multiple cues factor is indicative of the multiple communication modes through which an instructor can communicate ideas and concepts about a subject. A communication mode can be visual, auditory, or written. An instructor can also teach subjects using multimedia and graphics. From an MRT perspective, the more communication cues are used, the greater a medium's capacity to reduce ambiguity and distortion.

It is expected that conveyance of messages using multiple cues is positively associated with the suitability of DL for vocational courses and perceptions about the ease of evaluating DL coursework. Adnan and Anwar (48) found that students in Pakistan mentioned that lack of communication cues was a main cause for an ineffective DL experience. Similarly, Sujarwo et al.'s (135) indicated that lack of communication cues, and dependence on audio communication was a challenge for students on DL courses. Another study found that students appreciated DL when instructors employed diverse web applications as communication cues that helped them to understand educational materials (Xhaferi and Xhaferi 86). Although it has been recognized that multiple cues are vital for reducing ambiguity in DL (Adnan and Anwar 49; Sujarwo et al. 134), how these cues influence the perceived suitability of DL specifically for vocational training is not well understood. Therefore, the study tests the hypotheses that:

H4: MRT's conveyance of multiple cues factor will positively predict perceptions about using DL for teaching vocational courses.

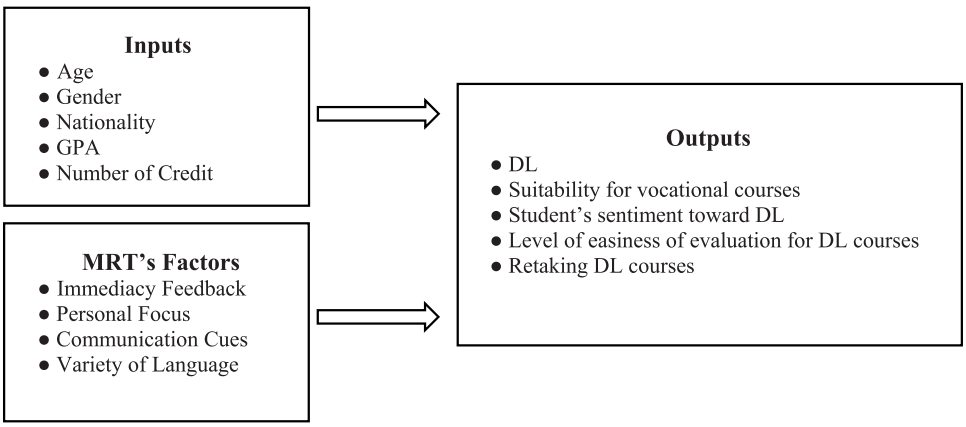
H5: MRT's conveyance of multiple cues factor will positively predict perceptions about the ease of evaluating DL coursework.

Variety of Language

Variety of language refers to the use of language symbols that widens the range of delivery of meaning as well as the formality/informality embedded in a communication context. A DL environment that is media-rich with language and symbols is more comfortable and satisfying for an educational subject. The less formal a communication context is, the more it is perceived as likeable (Shepherd and Martz Jr 117). Students know that DL classes are more flexible in meeting their needs (Suh 295). Ponzurick et al.'s (185) study found that students who believed that DL courses were convenient were encouraged to retake DL courses. To test the main points drawn from previous literature on the variety of language (Palvia et al. 659; Ponzurick et al. 186; Shepherd and Martz Jr 116), the following hypothesis is posited:

H6: MRT's variety of language and informality of communication context factor will positively predict retaking DL courses (See Figure 1).

H7: The interaction effects between MRT's immediacy of feedback and conveyance of multiple cues factors will positively predict different perceptions about DL coursework.



These hypotheses, grounded in MRT, provide valuable insights into the factors shaping students' perceptions and experiences in DL environments. By analyzing the influence of these variables on student engagement, satisfaction, and academic outcomes, the study's findings have the potential to guide practical improvements in DL settings, especially in the context of vocational education.

Method

Sampling procedures and data collection

This study employed an online self-administered survey to examine students' perceptions of vocational mass communication courses being taught via DL during the coronavirus outbreak in the Spring semester of 2020. Media vocational courses were not previously taught online, as they require practical work and hands-on physical experience on studio equipment, as well as video shoots, video production, and television/radio broadcasting. The participants in this study were students enrolled in various vocational courses in mass communication at Kuwait University during the COVID-19 Pandemic. They were enrolled in face-to-face vocational courses at the start of Spring semester 2020 that were later moved to online instruction for the last six weeks of the semester. The research design responded to the pandemic crisis while maintaining a time-efficient approach. The research period was shortened but it allowed for both the pilot study and the complete survey to meet the established research objectives. The process of video shooting and editing in vocational media courses follows an iterative pattern which overlaps instead of following a linear sequence. Students often re-record their footage after receiving feedback during the editing process.

To gather data, the researcher contacted faculty members teaching the vocational mass communication courses, explaining the study's purpose and survey administration process through individual phone calls. Following this, instructors received an email containing a link to the online survey, enabling students to participate at the start of their distance learning class. 345 students were enrolled in vocational mass communication courses during the semester, and were invited to participate in the survey. Participation was voluntary. The survey link included a written informed consent statement in Arabic at the beginning of the questionnaire.

The survey consisted of 31 survey items. The survey was originally written in English and then translated to Arabic to prevent language fluency from being a confounding variable. A pilot study consisted of 40 students enrolled in vocation courses who were tested to verify the validity of the questionnaire in terms of understanding, meaning and simplicity of the questions. Their responses were excluded from the study. The survey items were developed to match the specific instructional challenges of media production and broadcasting courses for ensuring both contextual and content validity. The self-administered online format used in the survey helped to reduce social desirability bias and enabled participants to provide more honest responses. The survey took about 20 minutes to complete. Participants were assured that all information provided would be maintained as confidential.

Predictor Variables

The first set of predictor variables were demographics. The demographics included gender, age, nationality, Grade Point Average (GPA), and number of completed credit hours. For gender, the respondents indicated themselves as being male or female. For age, the respondents selected from a list of ordinal options. For age, the respondents selected from a set of ordinal categories representing age brackets: 18-22, 23-27, 28-35, and 36 or more years old. Although these categories are ordered, they do not represent continuous interval data, as the distances between groups are not equal or precisely defined. Each respondent indicated their nationality as either Kuwaiti or not. The GPA options were, Less than 2.00, 2.01-2.67, 2.68-3.00, and 3.00 or more. Finally, for number of passed credit hours, the options were, 30 credit hour or fewer, 31-60, 61-90, 91 or more.

The second set of predictor variables was the factors of MRT. Before distributing the final version of the survey, a pilot study was conducted with 40 students who were involved in vocational courses at the university (from the Mass Communications Department). This was done in order to check the reliability of the questionnaire and whether the participants understood the questions. After the pilot study, three questions were modified to be better understood (Table 3). A Likert scale of 5-points was utilized for students' responses (1 = Strongly disagree, 5 = Strongly agree).

An exploratory factor analysis was conducted for the factors related to MRT: (1) immediacy of feedback, (2) capacity to include personal focus, (3) conveyance of multiple cues, and (4) language and information of context. This analysis used Principal Components for extraction (an Eigenvalue of at least 1) and Varimax rotation of more than 0.50 (Table 1). A factor analysis is usually used to group together survey items of similar nature to make up a component or factor. The analysis yielded four MRT factors with high Cronbach Alpha reliability scores. The resulting factor solution explained 60.57% of the total variance. The four MRT factors were 1) Immediacy of Feedback (M = 3.23, SD = 1.24, eigenvalue = 4.08, α = .87), 2) Conveyance of Multiple Cues (M =3.49 , SD = 1.18 , eigenvalue = 3.64, α = .87), 3) Personal Focus (M = 3.66 , SD = 1.14 , eigenvalue = 2.54, α = .70), and 4) Variety of language and informality of context (M = 3.17, SD = 1.18 , eigenvalue = 1.23, α = .68) (Table 1).

Students' Perceptions of Distance Learning in Vocational Mass Communication Courses: A Media Richness Theory Perspective from Kuwait's COVID-19 Experience

Table 1

A rotated factor analysis of factors predicting DL (N = 252)

Survey items	Descriptive statistics		Factors			
	M	SD	1	2	3	4
Factor 1: Immediacy of feedback (M = 3.23; SD = 1.24)						
Distance learning has allowed me to participate in virtual class discussions more than traditional education.	3.08	1.31	.831	.236	.120	-.061
Distance learning encouraged me to ask more questions during the lecture than the traditional education course.	3.21	1.32	.811	.232	.195	.049
Distance learning gives more room for discussion during the lecture than traditional education.	3.10	1.29	.739	.308	.174	.179
The distance learning environment reduces shyness compared to the traditional education environment.	3.65	1.17	.671	.148	.233	.073
Using the microphone feature encouraged me to participate in the distance learning course.	3.86	1.09	.597	.317	.203	.046
Distance learning has allowed me to work in a group project with fellow students more than traditional education.	2.52	1.27	.591	.255	.157	.332
Factor 2: Conveyance of multiple cues (M =3.49; SD = 1.18)						
The course professor's use of several technologies (YouTube - Google - Video production) to explain the practical material in distance learning helped me understand the subject better than traditional education.	3.66	1.23	.346	.727	.273	-.040
Using Multiple ways of explanations in distance learning such website design, editing, professional photography is more helpful than traditional courses.	2.65	1.19	.259	.690	-.163	.202
Screen sharing in distance supports understanding of the steps of working practical programs (Adobe - Final Cut-Canva).	3.31	1.06	.125	.663	.260	.178
Distance learning gives the student more independence in honing his/her talents through applications than traditional education.	3.48	1.23	.459	.629	.191	.026
The course professor's utilization of the resources available on the web in distance learning, such as YouTube, Twitter and Google Search explains the practical materials and contributed to the understanding of the course.	3.73	1.10	.176	.587	.431	-.135

Cont. Table 1

A rotated factor analysis of factors predicting DL (N = 252)

Survey items	Descriptive statistics		Factors			
	M	SD	1	2	3	4
Distance learning contributed to increasing knowledge of practical material thanks to the Voice Message feature with the professor to answer my inquiries in a friendly manner.	3.54	1.23	.452	.559	.393	-.042
The presence of the feature of recording lectures and returning to them later gives preference to distance learning over traditional education in better understanding the practical material without emotion distress.	4.10	1.12	.213	.539	.136	.141
The speed of the professor's response to the course with the student in distance learning makes me emotionally feel better than traditional learning.	3.47	1.35	.382	.502	.462	-.082
Factor 3: Personal focus (M = 3.66 ; SD = 1.14)						
The professor was constantly communicating with us through various communication platforms during the distance learning course.	3.97	1.00	.170	.065	.767	.073
The course professor in distance learning encouraged us to participate in the course's development.	3.57	1.19	.332	.150	.647	.155
Distance learning allows sufficient time for the professor to discuss in virtual office hours in a friendly environment.	3.45	1.23	.179	.408	.643	.039
Factor 4: Language and informality (M =3.17; SD = 1.18)						
The lecture environment was not formal in the distance learning course.	3.11	1.22	.066	.018	-.016	.825
Dividing students into groups in distance learning helps to create a social atmosphere in the course.	3.23	1.15	.123	.211	.379	.501
Eigenvalue			4.08	3.64	2.54	1.23
% of variance explained			21.47	19.20	13.38	6.51
Alpha (reliability scores)			.87	.87	.70	.68

Note: Loadings over 0.50 appear in bold

Criterion Variables

This study includes four criterion variables. They were the suitability of DL for teaching vocational courses, vocational courses as being "interesting" when taught online, level of ease of evaluating DL coursework, and attitude to retaking DL courses.

Respondents rated each variable, on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly disagree, 5 = Strongly agree).

Participants' Profile

141 (56%) were males and 111 (44%) were females. The majority of individuals (N = 183, % = 73) in the sample were aged 18-22. 44 (18%) were in the age ordinal 23-27. 20 (8%) were between 28 and 35. And only 5 (2%) were aged of 36 or above. Of the sample, 221 (88%) were Kuwaiti nationals and 31 (12%) were non-Kuwaitis. Eleven (5%) of the respondents reported they had a GPA of less than 2, 72 (30%) had a GPA between 2.01 and 2.67, 88 (33%) between 2.68 and 3.00, and 80 (32%) had a GPA of over 3.00. Finally, 14 (6%) students had passed 30 credit hours or fewer, 36 (14%) had passed between 31and 60, 45 (18%) had passed between 61 and 90, and 156 (62%) had passed 91 credits or more.

The students' perceptions of DL were generally negative. Student averages were less than the mid-point average of 3 out of 5. This was the case for suitability of DL for teaching vocational courses (M = 2.55/5, SD 1.14), DL courses as being "interesting" when taught online (M = 2.80/5, SD = 1.31), and ease of evaluating DL coursework (M = 2.44/5, SD = 1.17). The only attitude that was a little higher than 3 was the one related to retaking DL courses (M = 3.36/5, SD = 1.39).

Data Analysis

The research used Multiple Linear Regression (MLR) to study how demographic variables and Media Richness Theory (MRT) factors predicted the four study criterion variables. The predictor variables were entered in two blocks: demographics (Block 1) and MRT factors (Block 2). Standard diagnostic tests were conducted to ensure the assumptions of MLR were met, including assessments of outliers (Standardized Residuals), multicollinearity (Tolerance and VIF), independence of errors (Durbin-Watson), normality of residuals (histogram and P-P plots), homoscedasticity, and linearity (scatterplot of standardized predicted values). Additionally, Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated to examine the relationships between variables (see Table 2).

Table 2

Correlations of various DL variables (N = 252)

	Immediacy of feedback	Cues	Personal focus	Language	Interaction effects of immediacy and conveyance of cues	DL for vocational courses	DL is "interesting"	Easiness of evaluating DL coursework	Retaking DL courses
Immediacy of feedback	-								
Cues	.719***	-							
Personal focus	.560***	.631***	-						
Language	.325***	.295***	.299***	-					
Interaction of immediacy and conveyance of cues	-.172**	-.314***	-.199***	-.047	-				
DL for vocational courses	.258***	.205***	.026	-.014	-.082	-			
DL is "interesting"	.638***	.618***	.443***	.321***	-.052	.282***	-		
Easiness of evaluating DL coursework	.223***	.154*	.133*	-.129*	.039	.250***	.256***	-	
Retaking DL courses	.680***	.658***	.455***	.246***	-.196**	.283***	.602***	.194**	-

*** p < .05, ** p < .01, p *** < .001**

Results

Predictors of Suitability of DL for Vocational Courses

The first MLR explored the predictors of perceptions of the suitability of DL for vocational courses, compared with FtFL. The MLR at the second level, which included demographics, MRT factors (immediacy of feedback, capacity to include personal focus, conveyance of multiple cues, and language), and interaction effects of immediacy of feedback and conveyance of multiple cues, was significant: R^2 *change* = .096, $F(5, 240) = 5.184$, $p = 0.001$.

For outliers, the Standardized Residual statistics indicated to a no outlier cases as the minimum and maximum data where within the acceptable range (*Std. Residual Min* = -2.835, *Std. Residual Max* = 2.974). As for Collinearity Statistics, the test showed that the data met the assumption of collinearity indicating that multicollinearity was not a concern (*Tolerance Max. value for variables* = .98, *VIF Min. value for variables* = 1.06). As for

the Independent Errors, Durbin-Watson value were within the acceptable range in the Model Summary statistics and thus the data met the assumption of independent errors (*Durbin-Watson value* = 2.067). Finally, for the Random Normally Distributed Errors, Homoscedasticity, and Linearity, the histogram of standardized residuals indicated that the data contained approximately normally distributed errors, as did the normal P-P plot of standardized residuals, which indicated points that were not completely on the line, but very close. Finally, the scatterplot of standardized predicted values showed that the data met the assumptions of homogeneity of variance and linearity.

At second level, which considered demographics and MRT factors, immediacy of feedback (β = .288, p = 0.002) was a positive predictor of the suitability of DL for vocational courses, while personal focus (β = -.203, p = 0.012) was a negative predictor. The outcomes suggest that students who received immediate feedback on DL believed that DL is suitable for teaching vocational courses, while those who received less individualized and personal focus and attention from their instructors believed that DL was not suitable for vocational courses (Table 3).

Predictors of Students' Sentiments to DL

The second MLR examined the predictors of students' sentiments regarding DL, compared with FtFL. The model that included all predictor variables was significant: R^2 *change* = .424, $F(5, 239) = 42.416$, p = 0.001.

The tests suggested that there were no outliers (*Std. Residual Min* = -3.24, *Std. Residual Max* = 2.87), that the data met the assumption of collinearity, indicating that multicollinearity was not a concern (*Tolerance Max. value for variables* = .97, *VIF Min. value for variables* = 2.70), and that the data met the assumption of independent errors (*Durbin-Watson value* = 1.831). The histogram of standardized residuals indicated that the data contained approximately normally distributed errors, as did the normal P-P plot of standardized residuals, which indicated points that were not completely on the line, but very close. Finally, the scatterplot of standardized predicted values showed that the data met the assumptions of homogeneity of variance and linearity.

At the last level of the MLR, the medium's cues (β = .553, p = 0.001) was the strongest positive predictor, followed by immediacy of feedback (β = .469, p = 0.001). Interaction effects between immediacy of feedback and conveyance of multiple cues (β = .180, p = 0.009) was also a positive predictor while number of completed credit hours (β = -.135, p = 0.004) was a negative predictor. The last result suggests that the more credits hours students had passed, the less likely they were to believe DL courses were interesting. Students who believed they would receive immediate feedback and were exposed to a variety of cues were more likely to believe DL courses to be "interesting" (Table 3).

Predictors of Perceptions of Ease of evaluating DL Coursework

The MLR that explored the predictors of perceptions about ease of evaluating DL courses, was significant at the second level: R^2 *change* = .106, $F(5, 240) = 5.836$, $p = 0.001$. The tests indicated problems with outliers (*Std. Residual Min* = -2.31, *Std. Residual Max* = 2.92), that the data met the assumption of collinearity, referring that multicollinearity was not a problem (*Tolerance Max. value for variables* = .94, *VIF Min. value for variables* = 2.71), and finally that the data met the assumption of independent errors (*Durbin-Watson value* = 2.207). The histogram of standardized residuals showed that the data contained approximately normally distributed errors, as did the normal P-P plot of standardized residuals, which revealed points that were not completely on the line. Finally, the scatterplot of standardized predicted values indicated that the data met the assumptions of homogeneity of variance and linearity.

The tests suggested that while immediacy of feedback (β = .233, p = 0.012) was a positive predictor of the perceptions, language and informality (β = -.258, p = 0.001) was a negative predictor. The results indicated that students who thought that the language and the informal context of DL were more varied were more likely to think that evaluation was not easy, as were those students who received immediate feedback (Table 3).

Predictors of Retaking DL Courses

Finally, the MLR that examined retaking DL courses was significant at the second level: R^2 *change* = .477, $F(5, 239) = 48.990$, $p = 0.001$. The tests did not indicate a concern with outliers (*Std. Residual Min* = -2.95, *Std. Residual Max* = 2.59). The data also met the assumption of collinearity (*Tolerance Max. value for variables* = .94, *VIF Min. value for variables* = 2.71). The data also met the assumption of independent errors (*Durbin-Watson value* = 1.906). The histogram of standardized residuals indicated that the data contained approximately normally distributed errors, as did the normal P-P plot of standardized residuals, which showed points that were very close to being on the line. Finally, the scatterplot of standardized predicted values revealed the data met the assumptions of homogeneity of variance and linearity.

Immediacy of feedback (β = .436, p = 0.001) and the medium's cues (β = .336, p = 0.001) were the only positive predictors of retaking a DL course. The results indicated that when students believed they could receive a great amount of feedback and interaction and when there are multiple cues that can be used to explain the subject, then students believe that DL is suitable for vocational courses (Table 3).

Table 3

Multiple linear regressions of DL outcomes (N = 252)

Predictors	DL suitability for vocational courses			Students' sentiments toward DL			Level of easiness of evaluation of DL coursework			Retaking DL courses		
	B	SE B	B	B	SE B	B	B	SE B	B	B	SE B	β
Demographics												
Age	.128	.103	.078	.099	.086	.053	.070	.104	.042	.016	.090	.008
Gender	.009	.149	.004	-.215	.126	-.081	-.173	.151	-.074	-.155	.132	-.055
Nationality	-.179	.221	-.052	.105	.187	.026	-.060	.224	-.017	-.056	.195	-.013
GPA	-.007	.034	-.013	.045	.029	.074	-.064	.035	-.117	.050	.030	.078
Credits	.015	.077	.012	-.192	.065	-.135**	.058	.078	.046	-.114	.068	-.076
Richness factors												
Immediacy of feedback	.336	.109	.288**	.469	.092	.351***	.278	.110	.233*	.617	.096	.436***
Personal focus	.176	.132	.133	.553	.111	.366***	.078	.133	.058	.536	.116	.336***
Conveyance of multiple cues	-.256	.102	-.203*	.000	.086	.000	.088	.103	.068	-.023	.089	-.015
Language & informality	-.123	.085	-.097	.102	.072	.070	-.333	.086	-.258***	-.015	.075	-.010
Interaction effects of immediacy & conveyance	-.050	.081	-.040	.180	.068	.126**	.099	.082	.078	-.025	.071	-.017
R2	.113			.523			.131			.534		
Adjusted R2	.076			.503			.095			.515		
R2 change	.096			.424			.106			.477		
F change	5.184			42.416			5.836			48.990		

*** p < .05, ** p < .01, p *** < .001**

Based on the previous results, and in relation to the study's hypotheses, *H1* (*MRT's personal focus factor will positively predict students' sentiments toward DL*) was confirmed. Students who were given a personal focus by their instructors felt emotionally attached to DL. *H2* (*MRT's immediacy of feedback factor will positively predict perceptions about using DL for teaching vocational courses*), and *H3* (*MRT's immediacy of feedback factor will positively predict perceptions of the ease of evaluating DL coursework*) were confirmed. Students who felt that DL provided them

with feedback were more likely to believe that DL was suitable for teaching vocational courses and that evaluating DL coursework was easy. By way of contrast, *H4* (*MRT's conveyance of multiple cues factor will positively predict perceptions about using DL for teaching vocational courses*), *H5* (*MRT's conveyance of multiple cues factor will positively predict perceptions of the ease of evaluating DL coursework*), and *H6* (*MRT's variety of language and informality of communication context factor will positively predict retaking DL courses*) were all rejected. Even if instructors used multiple cues in teaching, their students were no more likely to think DL suitable for teaching, or to think that evaluating DL coursework was easy. Also, the informality of the DL context did not convince students to retake DL courses. Finally, *H7* (*The interaction effects between MRT's immediacy of feedback and conveyance of multiple cues factors will positively predict different perceptions about DL coursework*) was partially confirmed. The interaction only positively predicted sentiments toward DL courses.

Discussions and Conclusion

Discussion of Outcomes

Women participants expressed more negative views of DL than men, in particular finding DL courses less interesting. Although this is a statistically significant difference, caution should be used in its interpretation. The present study did not directly address the question of gendered communication preferences. Consequently, the finding cannot be assumed to be a function of women having a preference for face-to-face courses that offer more nonverbal communication.

Especially for vocational courses, putting hands on the objects or equipment the students need to deal with provides them with an emotional attachment to what they do.

Another demographic variable of importance was the completed credit hours. Students who passed more credits hours felt that DL courses were not interesting. Students who are close to graduation are more accustomed to interaction in FtFL class. Also, those students have spent more time with radio and television equipment in physical studios in offline settings. They have a cumulative experience of what it is like to deal with equipment in real-life situations. They are less likely to feel emotionally attached to DL as a substitute to real-life experience.

The first hypothesis (positively relating personal focus to students' sentiments toward DL) was confirmed. This is in-line with previous research that found that individualized attention in making communication via DL can positively influence emotional attitudes toward DL (Nambiar 792), while lack of personal focus caused disinterest in the course (Adnan and Anwar 49).

The second hypothesis (positively relating immediacy of feedback to suitability of teaching vocational course in DL) and third hypotheses (positively relating immediacy of

feedback to perceptions of ease of evaluating DL coursework) were confirmed. Students, who believed online teaching provided the feedback they needed, believed that DL can be good for teaching vocational courses and that coursework was easier to evaluate. This is in line with previous research that found that the capacity of a technology to provide free and open communication decreased ambiguity and increased preferences for a DL course (Wang 8).

Hypotheses 4, 5, and 6 were all rejected. Those positively related conveyance of multiple cues with perceptions about using DL for teaching vocational courses and ease of evaluating DL coursework and variety of language and informality of communication context with retaking DL courses. Comparing those hypotheses that were confirmed with those that were rejected, it seems that immediacy of feedback is the most important factor. When students are provided a context that allows a free exchange of opinions and ideas and where they can ask questions and receive feedback from instructors, those students will eventually have a positive DL experience. The rejection of H4 suggests that the mere provision of diverse cues was insufficient to replicate the tangible, hands-on experience integral to vocational training. Vocational courses often necessitate direct interaction with equipment and studio environments, which online cues cannot fully substitute. Similarly, the rejection of H5 implies that despite the availability of various communication tools, the evaluation process in DL remained challenging. This may be attributed to the practical nature of vocational assignments, which are inherently difficult to assess accurately through online media without in-person demonstrations and immediate feedback. Furthermore, the rejection of H6 indicates that this factor alone was insufficient to significantly increase students' overall preference for DL, particularly for courses that traditionally benefit from FtFL interaction.

Collectively, these rejections highlight that while certain elements of MRT, such as immediate feedback, can significantly enhance the DL experience, factors like multiple cues and informal communication are not sufficient to overcome the inherent challenges of teaching vocational skills online. This suggests that practical, hands-on courses may not benefit as much from the richness afforded by digital communication cues compared to traditional FtFL environments. It is important to note that this DL experience represented a novel undertaking for both students and faculty.

Implications

The results suggest that instructors probably need to use their camera when conducting their classes online, to create a sense of personal focus. The camera provides the ability to have eye contact with students. This may substitute for physical real-life communication. Also, using the microphone, instructors probably need to call students by name to make them feel they are emotionally involved in the educational process. This can provide the individual attention needed for DL courses. In general,

an instructor needs to apply all means of communication to increase an emotional connection that DL may lack.

Another implication is that different institutions using DL need to train their instructors on the factors of MRT. For example, instructors should be informed about the different ways and means to enhance immediacy of feedback, personal focus, language, and conveyance of multiple cues. If those factors, combined, are being implemented by instructors at their DL courses, the learning outcomes can be very much enhanced. If those MRT factors are fully implemented with excellence, students' perceptions and their learning outcomes can be radically improved.

Another implication is that instructors should plan their courses to provide a reliable channel of communication, where students' questions and feedback can be fully responded to. The outcomes of this study indicate that immediacy of feedback predicted all the criterion variables. Instructors therefore need to provide an online ambience where students feel very comfortable when discussing issues, because this can increase their preference for DL and improve their understanding. Instructors should strive to enhance personal focus, provide timely feedback, and utilize diverse communication channels to create a rich and engaging DL experience.

This study's results suggest that teaching DL should be restricted to theoretically-oriented programs. Khalil et al. (8) found that students in the School of Medicine in Saudi Arabia felt that DL was unsuitable for medical courses because such courses require hands-on experience. Where it is found necessary to use DL for vocational or practically-oriented courses, teaching should be approached creatively in order to maximize learning experiences. While the Covid-19 era was exceptional, institutions should find opportunities to evaluate the suitability of DL for such programs and explore alternative or blended learning approaches. However, this may also mean that DL should be integrated into university programs in order to improve the quality of courses and help students deal with a world that is increasingly surrounded by technology (Allen and Seaman 22).

This study provides an insight into vocational DL courses that can be utilized for other DL institutional and cultural settings in terms of gender preferences in DL; females may prefer face-to-face learning due to its richer communication cues as well as hands-on opportunities, and this could potentially generalize to other disciplines and other Arab-Islamic cultural settings. The study's emphasis on the importance of immediate feedback in DL is likely to be a universal principle applicable across various disciplines and learning environments. Creating a responsive and interactive online experience is crucial for fostering positive student perceptions and outcomes in any DL context.

The findings of this study offer valuable insight into the challenges of delivering vocational courses through distance learning (DL), particularly during emergency

remote teaching. One of the most consistent findings is the significance of immediacy of feedback in shaping students' perceptions across all four outcome variables. This supports earlier research (Almuraqab 227; Hasan and Khan 210-11) which emphasized that a lack of real-time feedback in online environments impedes understanding and student satisfaction. Similarly, the positive influence of personal focus on students' emotional sentiments toward DL is aligned with (Nambiar 792) and (Adnan and Anwar 48-49), who found that individual attention enhances student engagement and reduces communication ambiguity. These results reinforce the notion that emotionally responsive communication plays a crucial role in online learning success, especially in practically-oriented courses where real-time instructor support can substitute, albeit partially, for hands-on supervision.

Future research

The findings of this study offer practical and theoretical implications for distance learning, particularly in the context of vocational education. One of the most consistent results was the importance of immediacy of feedback in predicting all four DL outcome variables. This finding is consistent with the underlying premise of Media Richness Theory (MRT), that "media richness" (i.e., immediate feedback and interactivity) reduces equivocality. Therefore, the design of DL instruction should make use of delivery platforms and instructional methods that best allow for real-time, two-way communication between the instructor and the students, such as video conferencing with the capacity for real-time instructor feedback, active instructor engagement in text chat, and other methods of providing regular peer/instructor response cycles.

The study also sheds light on the influence of personal focus on students' emotional experience. Personal focus is a structural element of DL over which instructors may have less control. To the degree possible, instructors can design more individualized interactions online to increase this sense of personal focus. This may include, but is not limited to, using students' names in communications, personalizing feedback, and simply being more consistently present. Instructors should be aware of the effect of personal focus and design communications to reduce the reliance on self-paced content delivery and impersonal instructional design; instead, they should model the type of one-on-one supervision seen in the apprentice/mentor relationship of vocational education.

Interestingly, the variety of language and conveyance of multiple cues did not significantly predict the outcomes. This suggests that simply increasing the number of communication formats (e.g. by including slides, videos, or graphics) may not be sufficient, and that elements like feedback opportunities and individualized attention are also important. These finding challenges simplistic interpretations of MRT that equate "more media" with "more richness," and highlights the need to align communication strategies with task requirements, especially in skill-based learning. From a policy

perspective, these results suggest that institutions should be cautious in delivering vocational or practice-based courses entirely online. Where DL is necessary, blended approaches or simulated environments (e.g. virtual labs or interactive platforms) may offer alternatives to hands-on experiences.

In addition, faculty development programs could incorporate the idea of media richness as a part of the training, enabling teachers to get a better appreciation of which tools and tactics contribute to or detract from the ability to communicate in a certain manner in digital classrooms. Finally, the results from this study might be especially applicable to the Arab cultural context, where the traditional classroom is probably more centered around interpersonal relationships and presence of the instructor. Modifying the DL context to better fit with these characteristics might be a more successful route to take when considering online learning in a similar context.

While this study highlights specific challenges students face when engaging with vocational media courses through DL, particularly in relation to hands-on tasks, studio work, and physical equipment, it does not suggest that all practically-oriented subjects are incompatible with online delivery. In fact, a substantial body of research supports the efficacy of hybrid and virtual approaches in delivering practical content, including writing instruction, digital literacy, applied linguistics, and even clinical or laboratory-based courses through simulation (Allen and Seaman 22; Jaggars and Xu 271; Wang 8).

The distinction between "theoretical" and "practical" instruction is therefore not binary but context-dependent. For instance, practical tasks that rely on physical interaction with tools or environments (e.g., broadcasting equipment, live camera operations) may present more challenges in DL environments than skill-based activities that are cognitive in nature (e.g., academic writing or media analysis). Consequently, the findings of this study are most relevant to performance-based vocational training that traditionally depends on instructor demonstration, real-time feedback, and physical presence.

Limitations of the Study

As with other social science studies, this study has its limitations. This study examined mass communication vocational courses. As a result, this study's outcomes should be generalized only for vocational mass communication courses in a variety of programs. Certain socio-cultural factors may influence the outcomes of this study.

Data Availability Statement

The author agrees to make data and materials supporting the results or analyses presented in their paper available upon reasonable request. It is up to the author to determine whether a request is reasonable.

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حوليات الآداب والعلوم الاجتماعية
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• تصدر عن مجلس النشر العلمي بجامعة الكويت.
• صدر العدد الأول سنة ١٩٨٠م.
• تنشر الموضوعات التي تدخل في مجالات اهتمام الأقسام العلمية لكليتي الآداب والعلوم الاجتماعية.
• تنشر الأبحاث والدراسات باللغتين العربية والإنجليزية شريطة أن لا يقل حجم البحث عن ٥٠ صفحة وأن لا يزيد عن ٢٠٠ صفحة مطبوعة من ثلاث نسخ.
• لا يقتصر النشر في الحوليات على أعضاء هيئة التدريس لكليتي الآداب والعلوم الاجتماعية فحسب، بل يشمل ما يعادل هذه التخصصات في الجامعات والمعاهد الأخرى داخل الكويت وخارجها.
• تمنح المجلة الباحث خمسين نسخة من بحثه المنشور كإهداء.

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