Exploring Students’ Presences in Online English Classroom: A Discourse Analysis

Genta¹, Nida Husna², Didin Nuruddin Hidayat³, Alek⁴
Universitas Islam Negeri (UIN) Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, Indonesia¹,²,³,⁴

E-mail: genta21@mhs.uinjkt.ac.id¹, nida.husna@uinjkt.ac.id², didin.nuruddin@uinjkt.ac.id³, alek@uinjkt.ac.id⁴

Abstract

This study aims to determine how student presences (teaching, social, and cognitive) manifest in online discussions. This study takes place in a pragmatic class in an English Education postgraduate program. The case study design was applied to this qualitative study, where the sample was taken purposively, consisting of 18 students and two lecturers. The data findings were analyzed using the Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) act taxonomy by Herring et al. (2005). The results revealed that from three presences in Community of Inquiry (CoI), not all students were involved in the discussion. Not all problems or questions raised reached the resolution stage as the goal of cognitive presence. Also, the present study found no activity in the form of rejecting, which is a speech act that says that they do not agree with other people’s opinions, so they look like they agree and follow the direction of the discussion as has been presented by the facilitator.

Keywords: Community of Inquiry, English, Online Classroom, Presences.

Abstrak


Kata Kunci: Kehadiran, Kelas Online, Bahasa Inggris, Community of Inquiry.
INTRODUCTION

Online learning has been growing so fast recently. This is mostly caused by a pandemic that makes it necessary to learn without interacting with other people face-to-face (Johnson et al., 2020). Online learning offers the potential for customization and flexibility to overcome learning needs. Some researchers also say online learning is rapidly increasing today (Holbeck & Hartman, 2018). Because of this rapid growth, creating and facilitating students with efficient and effective learning is needed. Song et al. (2019) found that improving ways to help students feel genuinely connected and participate in online learning optimally so they can enjoy the learning experience and feel the learning benefits are significant. According to Harman and Koohang (2005), online learning is also a reliable medium for cooperative learning and critical thinking, which may be accomplished through discussion forums, question-and-answer sessions, and group work. According to Onyema et al. (2019), the benefits of participating in online forum discussions are providing academic and intellectual support when sharing ideas like questions and answers and being free to express themselves in class. Teachers can motivate to provide stimulation for students to participate in discussions.

In online education, engagement between the students and lecturer is mainly facilitated by computer-mediated communication technologies (CMC). According to Dahlstrom-Hakki et al. (2020), there are two types of online learning modes: synchronous and asynchronous. We know that communication and collaboration tools enhance essential components of online learning. In an educational setting, synchronous CMC mode requires the facilitator and participant to be present simultaneously during the dialogue (Romiszowski & Mason, 2004). While communication and collaboration on asynchronous do not exist or happen simultaneously (Darabi et al., 2011).

In online discussions, teaching and learning can occur due to the absence of physical and psychological indicators that are not included, such as physical appearance, intonation, eye contact, and group identity (Blaine, 2019). In this study, the courses were conducted as distance education courses online, even though there was an offline meeting at the initial appointment to introduce the subject. Still, from the second meeting to the 12th meeting, learning was conducted online. To optimize student learning in online courses, the Community of Inquiry model (CoI) has identified three crucial components: social presence, cognitive presence, and learning attendance (Garrison et al., 2001). This collaborative community of inquiry (CoI) framework has shown in several studies that it can predict student learning satisfaction and can assess interactions in online learning (Caskurlu et al., 2020). CoI is also a bridge that connects the distance between teachers and students that they feel during online learning. It also assists teachers in conveying meaning so that students can understand the learning concept the teacher wants to share.

In this study, the researchers attempt to analyze the students’ discourse in online discussion forums that use synchronous mode. The researchers observed students' participation and behavior in virtual discussions by using CoI. The researchers used computer-mediated discourse analysis (CMDA) and an adaptation of Herring's (Herring, 2004) language-focused method. For example, Yoo and Kim (2014), there is a relationship between language characters in discussion and students' performance.

Community of Inquiry (CoI)

Garrison et al. (2001) developed a CoI framework based on research during computer discussion. Garrison also used the investigation to generate subcategories and related indicators for each attendance, and it can be used as an analytical tool. CoI conceptual framework was created for computers but has been widely used to explain the complex dynamics of online learning and blended learning (Al-Saggaf & Rosli, 2021).

From a collaborative and constructivist point of view, CoI identifies three essential parts that make it work. The three parts, which are called “presence” (cognitive presence, social experience, and teaching experience), were necessary for a deep and meaningful learning experience (Garrison et al., 2000).
Garrison et al. (2000) explained that from a cognitive presence, we could determine how students can interpret the meaning and produce reflections based on their cognitive learning experiences. Cognitive presence has four phases by Garrison et al. (2000) (definition of the problem, exploring the idea, constructing the solution meaning, and selecting the best solution).

In social presence, the students might feel a connection to each other socially and emotionally; this connection is considered an essential thing throughout the process. An instructional role is a form of teaching presence that involves media, facilities, direction, and instruction.

From these three elements, cognitive presence is the most crucial element because there are also three learning processes: critical thinking, collaborative problem solving, and building meaning. These three things should be present in online learning because they will lead to effective learning (Al-Saggaf & Rosli, 2021).

Moreover, the presence’s primary purpose of teaching presence is to foster and sustain a cognitive and social presence. It connects existing components to facilitate learning achievement and improve learning outcomes. Constructivism, the foundation of CoI, is a theory that argues pupils learn best when they engage in conversation or interaction with others (Fiocck, 2020). This idea is used to enhance comprehensive learning, and it was developed specifically for online education.

**Computer-Mediated Discourse (CMD)**

Herring claims that CMD refers to language use in computer-mediated communication (CMC). For CMD, he suggested a multifaceted classification system (Herring, 2007). In online or blended classes, we often interact by discussing as a form of CMD. With the lack of face-to-face interaction, we exchange ideas virtually. Herring (2007) developed the language-focused CMDA method into four stages, namely structure, meaning, interaction, and social behavior, for analyzing CMC. CMDA can also be analyzed quantitatively or qualitatively because it focuses on verbal interactions. The emphasis on typography, spelling, word construction, and sentence structure is structural (Sánchez, n.d.). Words and utterances are levels of meaning. The interaction level includes turn-taking and subject creation. Then there is the level of behavior that involves the conflict and emotion domains.

Several studies have used CMDA to analyze online forum discussions (Joksimovic et al., 2014) and examine CMDA related to online learning outcomes (Yoo & Kim, 2014). Cui and Wise (2015) also studied the instructor’s awareness of the student’s contribution through simple words. All research is reviewed through online classes or online discussion forums. We can see what is happening in the classroom by using interaction analysis to get a better understanding. However, from the several studies above, there has yet to be anyone to examine the three presences of CoI through discourse analysis. To overcome the gap, this study will examine three presences through the participation of each student and lecturer in the Pragmatic class. Preliminary observations were carried out in the early weeks before the mid-term test through online lectures and discussions. The research question is formulated as follows:

1. To what extent do the instructor and students participate in the online discussion?
2. How is teaching presence manifested in the discussion?
3. How is students’ social presence manifested in the online discussion?
4. How is students’ cognitive presence manifested in the online discussion?

**METHOD**

**Method and Design of the Research**

The research design used in this study is a case study. This is expected and predicted to be able to analyze empirical things in real situations (Thomas, 2011). This design can also help us collect or get in-depth information in detail and genuine regarding the conditions that happened in the class.
Place and Time of the Research

The participants of this study were postgraduate students in English Education program at a public university in Jakarta, who were taking the pragmatic course. Purposive sampling was used to obtain accurate information. Two (2) lecturers attended this class. The class consisted of 18 students with an English background as undergraduates with each job and role in real life. Most of them are teachers, but there are other occupations like an entrepreneur, an employee in a factory, and administrators, or even some of them are just attending class. The duration of the research was 6 weeks.

Research instrument

The research instrument used by the researchers in this study is observation. The researchers observed the pragmatic class by recording the discussion and interaction in a regular meeting. The researchers recorded only some sessions, consisting of fourteen meetings, including the initial meeting and the midterm and final term schedule. In the preliminary data, the researchers found that not all students participated in the discussion.

Technique of Data Analysis

CMDA was used to analyze the data (Herring, 2004). Two data analyses have been used: participant analysis and speech act analysis. Analytical participants examine how many and how long the messages or suggestions are given in class. It is related to their utterances at each meeting which will be added later.

Participant analysis was also included at the CMDA level, with the number and length of comments and suggestions given in class. Before adding up the average comments and suggestions given each week, the study also analyzed utterances with speech act analysis (Levinson, 1983). Herring (2004) developed the CMC act taxonomy by combining schemas and classical classifications used in expressing messages in online discussions by students.

CMC speech acts include ask, direct, invite, inform, claim, demand, elaborate, accept, reject, react, repair, apologize, thank, greet, and manage. Accept, reply, thank, and welcome demonstrate social presence. Ask, inform, claim, elaborate, and manage our cognitive acts. All 16 acts can show instructional presence because they can be employed in online conversation facilitation. When a message fits more than one act (e.g., claim and reject), the most specific label was assigned (in this case, reject). One student's opinion, "I don't think 'facilitate' indicates constructivism," was rejected. The first author manually coded all discussion threads using (Herring et al., 2005) CMC act taxonomy (Table 1). The second author coded 40 sample utterances with 90% agreement. There are 16 taxonomies of CMC acts which we can see from the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acts</th>
<th>Definitions and examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inquire (Seek information)</td>
<td>Inquiry, neutral/marked proposal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Request (Seek action politely)</td>
<td>Direct or indirect request.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct (Attempt to cause action)</td>
<td>Require, prohibit, permit, strongly advise.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invite (Seek participation/acceptance by the addressee)</td>
<td>Solicit input, include, suggest, offer (provide goods or opportunity).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inform (Provide “factual” information; verifiable in On page 42 it states, “The reuse ratio typically...”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

An initial week class introduces the course for 14 weeks in 1 semester. The initial week was attended by the two lecturers who explained the course, starting from the course rules to the assessment rules. In the second week, students were given time to choose groups of 3 people to get their respective topics that have been shared and will be explained and presented at each schedule according to the distribution. When the time comes, the presenters will present their topic for about 30-45 minutes through online platforms such as Zoom or G-meet. After the presentation, other students can ask questions or provide suggestions regarding the topics discussed. About 3-6 students will ask questions. Then it will be answered by the presenters. And other students were also allowed to provide additional questions related to other students when the presenter finished answering. After that, the class will be handled by the lecturer to clear things up and to clarify the topic that maybe not have been answered yet or even to provide information about the students’ confusion about the topic.

Students’ Participation in the CMC act

The study found that the students’ participation has been observed using taxonomies of CMC acts consisting of 68 acts, including the lecturer’s responses. They are: ask, direct, invite, inform, claim, elaborate, accept, react, thank, and greet. The researchers did not find an act that shows the students rejecting from all the students’ participation, as we can see in the lecturer act, who said that ten students participated in the class. The course consists of 18 students, and one student did not participate, which means seven students did not participate.
take the chance to participate in the class. From the data, we can see that there are more than 50% of the students participate in the class. However, this is a postgraduate class, so we cannot be satisfied with the number.

Word counts
The data shows that the overall words posted by the students and the lecturers are 3,015 words. The students who asked the questions were female. The only male student who posts the words is one of the presenters, while the others two presenters are female. Five students who post the comments and suggestions are female. The lecturer posted three hundred seventy-eight words, the female students posted 468 words, and the rest posted by the female students, who posted 2,169 words.

Discussion
To what extent do the instructor and students participate in the online discussion?
Using technology or computers in online discussions has helped students create new thoughts because this is one of the social constructs in the student learning environment. Besides creating new ideas, they can also provide solutions and opinions on a problem without relying on what others or teachers have presented or given (Poquet et al., 2018). While as we can see that not all of the students participated actively in the discussion. Some students just listened to the presenter explaining the material and kept silent. In pragmatic class, students are allowed to ask around six people. However, they are given unlimited opportunities to provide suggestions and comments. But because this is a postgraduate class, the number is still small, and students are expected to be able to think critically and provide their responses to the material being discussed. Even though their participation greatly influenced the lecturer's assessment of the criticality of each student. One of the lecturers also gave the impression that he was taking a note about anyone who contributed; this should have triggered them to try to participate. The presenter can explain the material as clearly as possible; because of this, the lecturer does not need to repeat presenting the material; the lecturer only needs to elaborate or straighten it out. In terms of student attendance, the act taxonomy used is very good for measuring it.

How is teaching presence manifested in the discussion?
The role of teaching presence is closely related to the primary function of teaching and learning, which serves as an instructional role (Anderson et al., 2001). Teaching presence is not only something that comes from the teacher, but it is also closely associated with students in CoI. Garrison et al. (2000) mentioned that the teachers have a significant role in teaching activity; nevertheless, in this situation, the students serve as facilitators weekly to give the material in class in online discussion classes. It may be stated that teaching presence includes all aspects, particularly in postgraduate education, where students play a significant role in manifesting behavior in teaching presence in online learning (Guo et al., 2021). Furthermore, based on the research findings, the presenter or facilitator, rather than the lecturer, is the most involved in the discussion.

Studies have looked at cooperative learning from different points of view. Raslie et al. (2015) and Martin et al. (2022), for example, said that collaborative learning made a big difference in how well students understood what they read and how confident they felt in their abilities compared to the teacher’s instruction directly. Many other research studies, like Le Fevre et al., (2003), have also looked into how well reciprocal teaching works in traditional education. Several research studies found the advantages of this method, like making a safe and supportive learning environment (Irvine et al., 2018). Shadiev et al. (2014) believed that to get students to talk to each other and make the learning process more accessible, we can use peer teaching strategies. Most studies of peer learning have been used to help students improve their metacognitive skills.
However, Raslie et al. (2015) and several current studies show how it can be used in an online learning environment. It might take more research to determine how reciprocal teaching works in online courses.

**How is students’ social presence manifested in the online discussion?**

The results demonstrate that the facilitator exhibits solid social presence by frequently using words and gestures like "thank you," "hello," "inform," and "explain." These acts are examples of the presenters' positive reactions; they do not even employ rejection or repair actions. Additionally, they invite the participants in a polite manner. as well as the social presence demonstrated by individuals who perform several activities like asking and thanking. How people choose their words and how they use them to act helps create a welcoming and secure learning environment. Rolim et al. (2019) conducted research examining how high school students could learn online and offline learning and their perceptions of their education, and comparisons between the two learning methods. The study was conducted with a causal-comparative design in schools in the United States. The data was taken from existing data from the last two years in 2016, which consisted of 172 students. The results explain the differences between students who study online and those who study online regarding learning outcomes. Of the three elements, the most apparent difference is social presents.

Instructors and facilitators employ, manage, require, and encourage action to encourage students to ponder and engage in additional study to promote cognitive presence. They frequently begin their remarks by directing students to articles or other resources pertinent to the topic. Additionally, they promote awareness by providing discussion starters to elicit insightful and critical responses; even in asking questions, students sometimes provide analogies and their experiences as examples in elaborating the topics and material discussed. Kim et al. (2011) discovered that media integration and the instructor's quality of teaching were significant predictors of both social presence and learner satisfaction when they investigated techniques to promote social presence. Because social presence is an essential factor in the quality of the online learning experience (Cobb, 2009), creating a learning community that encourages students to engage in open debate and dialogue may be helpful.

According to the analysis of speech acts, students accepted and appreciated acts in their conversation to support each other's viewpoints and establish a comfortable discussion environment.

**How is students’ cognitive presence manifested in the online discussion?**

Participants utilize more analytical terms than the presenter while making comments, questions, and ideas. Furthermore, students employ more cognitive terms than presenters and professors. Even when expressing their analytical opinion, they include pleasant emotive terms to balance the learning environment. We may conclude this since the participants are mature young adult students who can already control their emotions. Galikyan and Admiraal (2019) conducted studies on the cognitive relationship between teachers and students in online learning or discussions in which students are asked to provide reflections on the subject related to the understanding and experiences of each student. Still, students' cognitive level does not have such a significant contribution. Darabi et al. (2011) also found that the strategy that had been structured still needed to produce a discussion that led to a resolution even though it was related to the problem. Hence, they concluded that it would be easier to get students' critical thinking with cognitive presence.

Sadaf and Olesova (2017) studied college students’ perceptions of these three aspects of attendance, their correlation to satisfaction, and how well their expectations matched the courses they took.

Garrison et al. (2001) divided cognitive presence into four phases: problem characterization, idea exploration, solution development, and solution selection. The lecturer and facilitator started the first phase by asking discussion questions. The investigation involved forming. Third-phase meaning construction requires elaboration.
The fourth phase, best solution selection, involved claims, and students used assert most compared to inform and elaborate, which suggests they were trying to identify solutions or offer conclusions. The exploration stage was more common in prior investigations (Kanuka et al., 2007). Study results may show that students presented more opinions, personal ideas, and solutions than inquiry and integration of concepts. According to research by Akyol and Garrison (2011), cognitive presence affects perceived and actual learning results. Using authentic learning experiences to inspire dialogue increases cognitive presence (Darabi et al., 2011). Reflective inquiry, self-direction, and metacognition are crucial for online learners' high cognitive presence and meaningful learning. Therefore, instructors may use facilitation tactics to enable students to investigate several perspectives and elaborate before reaching conclusions.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to discover how student presences (teaching, social, and cognitive) emerge in online forums. This study was place in an English Education postgraduate class. The case study design was used in this qualitative study, with a sample of 18 students and two lecturers chosen on purpose. Herring et al.'s Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) act taxonomy was used to examine the data findings (2005). The findings demonstrated that, in three Community of Inquiry (CoI) presences, not all students participated in the discussion, and not all problems or questions presented reached the resolution stage, which is the purpose of cognitive presence. Based on the findings from a study on analyzing student presence in a pragmatic class, which is a discourse analysis analyzed by Herring's taxonomy, we can conclude that the three presence areas significantly influence student presence. The three presences are manifested and have different effects when viewed from the data. However, there is no activity in the form of rejecting, which is a speech act that says that they do not agree with other people's opinions. Hence, they look like they agree and follow the direction of the discussion as has been presented by the facilitator.

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