

Students' perception of social presence in the online EFL speaking class

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ABSTRACT

Some students claim to suffer from anxiety, which lowers their self-esteem and causes them to feel anxious and uneasy while studying a foreign language. Establishing a social connection between the lecturer and the students is one of the possible solutions to this issue. The purpose of this study was to examine students' perceptions of social presence in an online speaking class and how social presence affects students' confidence in speaking class. This study employed quantitative research as its method of inquiry. The researchers distributed questionnaires to 159 students to collect data, but only 51 students responded. In addition, the researchers conducted interviews with a subset of participants to gain additional insight into the data required for the study. The research findings on students' perception of social presence in the online speaking class and the effect of social presence on students' confidence in speaking class revealed that students had a favorable perception of social presence in the online speaking class. The first finding's mean score was seventy-two point nine ($\bar{x} = 72.9$). The findings demonstrated that social presence influences students' self-confidence, encourages them to learn more, and assists students in improving their speaking ability in speaking class.

Keywords: *Social presence; Perception; Online EFL speaking class*

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1. Introduction

Several studies have examined the advantages of online learning, including its convenience (Nguyen, 2021) and flexibility (Gilbert & Fisher, 2015). However, there is still a drawback since there are no face-to-face meetings (Moore et al., 2011). The lack of face-to-face meetings in online learning can lead to students having a sense of loneliness as well as a lack of social interactions with the teacher and other peers (Gilbert & Fisher, 2015) which are needed in a second or foreign language. In addition to the aforementioned problems, several students learning foreign language claim to have anxiety (Horwitz et al., 1986) which makes students feel learning challenging, uneasy, and afraid of making mistakes (MacIntyre, 1999). Marzeta (2020) says speaking anxiety reduces students' self-confidence and causes stress and uneasiness which obstructs students learning. In addition, students stated that it was not easy for them to improve their self-confidence in the online speaking class (Alrabai, 2014; Al-Saraj, 2014; Raja, 2017; Şenel, 2016).

In order to solve these issues effectively, the online learning environment must provide sufficient facilities that allow the lecturers and students to build flexible social interaction. Students, as well as lecturers, play a crucial role in determining how social presence in online learning is built. Furthermore, teachers and students should make a supportive environment that can improve the students' self-confidence by creating a social connection for both the lecturers and the students so that the students can nurture their relationship with the lecturers.

Sung and Mayer (2002) described that shaping social presence, such as feeling emotionally connected to people in the learning environment, can help learners overcome insecurity and loneliness and engage in meaningful online learning. This study specifically focuses on investigating how social presence in the online speaking class at one of the private universities in Indonesia helps students overcome their challenges in online classes.

2. Literature review

2.1. Perception

Everyone organizes, recognizes, and interprets information in their own unique way, and it is determined by what they observe, notice, and think. Everyone, in fact, has a distinct point of view about something. Perception is the process by which living beings perceive and organize their senses in order to create a purposeful viewpoint (Pickens, 2005). In line with this, Nolen-Hoeksema et al. (2009) stated that perception is the process of humans monitoring and categorizing patterns of information based upon which we make decisions and take action. It demonstrates how people use perception to make sense of their surroundings.

According to Altman et al. (1985), there are some factors that influence a person's perception which are a selection of stimuli, organization of stimuli, the situation, and self-concept. People only pay attention to a small proportion of the stimuli that are presented

to them, and it's known as selection. Each person's perception is shaped by the stimuli they are exposed to. As a result, people will disregard information that causes them to worry (Gibson et al., 2011). The second factor that shapes people's perspectives is organization. The term "organization" refers to how humans arrange selected stimuli for screening (Altman et al., 1985). It must be organized in such a way that it becomes significant. Someone's past experiences may influence how they view things (Gibson et al., 2011). Perceiving a circumstance is connected to adapting one's behavior appropriately. Self-concept refers to how people perceive themselves and how people see themselves. Their vision of the world around them is influenced by how they see themselves. It is crucial in determining how individuals perceive and act.

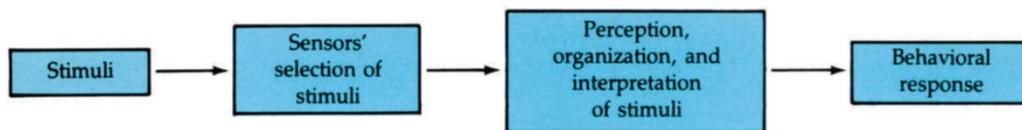


Figure 1. Self-concept (Altman, Valenzi, & Hodgetts, 2013)

2.2. Online learning

In this modern era, many people are attending online classes, especially those who have full-time jobs but still want to pursue their educational degrees. Online learning gains more popularity because of the pandemic of Covid-19. This pandemic stops all face-to-face activities, mainly at schools and offices. Students are required to attend class virtually. Since then, online learning has been getting more popular. Many researchers say online learning offers opportunities for learning experiences through the use of technology. Institutionally, formal education in which the learning group is divided and interactive telecommunications systems are used to empower students, facilities, and lecturers (Simonson et al., 2015). Benson (2002) and Conrad (2002) believe online learning increases opportunities for education for non-traditional and disadvantaged learners.

All teaching and learning procedures that are traditionally carried out in the classroom are delivered virtually through online learning technology such as Learning Management System (LMS), Zoom, WhatsApp, Skype, etc. According to Anderson (2008), there are several technologies used in online learning, which are multimedia on the internet, web conferencing, streaming audio and video, instant messaging, audio chat, voice-over-internet protocol, digital games hand-held and wireless technologies, peer-to-peer file sharing, and blogs (weblogs). This indicates that the lecturer teaches in front of a computer in a different place from the students while the students follow the lesson in another place. The learning materials can be available for free that can be downloaded by the students. In contrast, the interaction between the lecturer and students can be done extensively in the form of assignments or discussions.

Meylani et al. (2015) mention several characteristics of a desirable online learning environment. The ideal online learning environment must include computer tutorials and

online learning activities because students can learn at their own pace and level, which is beneficial for the retention of old knowledge and the acquisition of new knowledge. The media used in the online learning environment should be interactive. Lecturers can use emotions, attitudes, and motivations to develop social relationships in the learning environment. In addition, in order to meet the different demands of every student, good online learning should be adjustable and adaptable.

These characteristics are crucial in order to make the online learning environment fun but still meaningful. Other than that, it can help the lecturers and students nurture social presence in the learning environment. The lecturers are expected to select, modify, and perfect online class activities that maximize the capabilities of the technology. This will result in enhanced learning outcomes for every student (Anderson, 2008).

2.3. Speaking in online learning

In this pandemic era, students can learn and improve their speaking skills by using online media platforms such as WhatsApp, YouTube, Google Classroom, Zoom, Google Meet, etc. The use of online applications in speaking classes will give a different atmosphere for the students. According to Marzeta (2020), students believed that speaking class in the online learning environment was challenging to implement. One of the issues that arose was related to the students' self-confidence. It was difficult to boost students' self-confidence in the online speaking class. One of the ways to help the students to increase their self-confidence in the online speaking class is by building and shaping social presence. Polhemus et al. (2001) stated that one of the indicators of social presence is encouragement. According to Nunan (1989), providing students with encouragement in the learning environment may increase their learning outcomes. Therefore, encouragement is essential in shaping and increasing students' confidence in speaking in class. Moreover, Ariani and Tawali (2021) stated that lecturers could not maximally train the students to speak because of the learning designs which are still difficult to implement in the online speaking class in order to achieve the learning goals. It is challenging to design activities in the online speaking class.

According to Kusumawati (2020), in order to achieve the learning goals, the lecturers can use activities that contain a theory-practice feedback process. Feedback from the lecturers helps the students increase their sense of self-efficacy and self-esteem (Paolini, 2015). Furthermore, lecturers should provide learning materials and clear instructions in the online speaking class in order for the students to have enough guidance during the learning process. Thus, students will have more confidence to speak and express their ideas in the classroom. Moreover, Beebe and Mottet (2009) stated that lecturers could use these six components to enhance their delivery or presence during an online class in the following. First, look directly at the students (i.e., the camera) and verbally call students by their names when giving feedback to achieve immediacy. Second, build a sense of affinity by using facial expressions, a warm tone of voice, and eye contact. Third, build relational power in the online learning environment that can

result in a better outcome. Fourth, enhance credibility by demonstrating the students' depth of knowledge and making fair decisions. Fifth, demonstrate clarity by speaking at a rate order for the students to understand easily. Written instructions should be clear and explicit. Sixth, humor can be used during online classes to lift the class atmosphere.

2.4. Social presence

Short et al. (1976) initially discussed social presence in *The Social Psychology of Telecommunications*. They defined social presence as the “salience of the other” in using communications media.” In general, social presence is the degree to which one perceives the presence of other people while communicating. According to Garrison et al. (2000), The Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework has substantially determined today's social presence research. Since the Community of Inquiry framework was formed, there are two other frameworks have been developed, which are The Social Presence Model (Whiteside, 2015) and The Social Connected Design framework (van Tryon & Bishop, 2009).

2.4.1. Community of inquiry (CoI) framework

The Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework was initially proposed by Garrison and colleagues in 2000. In 2010, Garrison and colleagues explained how the concept arose from the environment of higher education's computer conferencing setting. This framework aims to better understand and identify students' online learning processes. The framework consists of three elements – social, teaching, and cognitive presence.

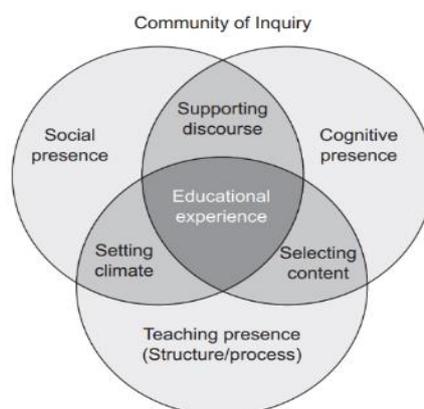


Figure 2. Community of inquiry (CoI) framework (Garrison et al., 2000)

Many researchers have provided suggestions to improve the Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework. Shea and Bidjerano (2010) hypothesized that there are two aspects that influence students' mental states, which are social and teaching presence. To address learner self-efficacy and self-regulation, the study added learning presence. To improve the CoI framework, Cleveland-Innes and Campbell (2012) proposed adding emotional presence to the CoI framework.

2.4.2. The social presence model

This model emphasizes the need for social presence in comprehending and learning in order to maximize learning in online and mixed environments (Whiteside, 2007). In 2007, 2011, and 2015, Social Presence Model and its five features were revealed in Whiteside's study of a blended learning program: affective association, community cohesion, instructor involvement, interaction intensity, and knowledge and experience.

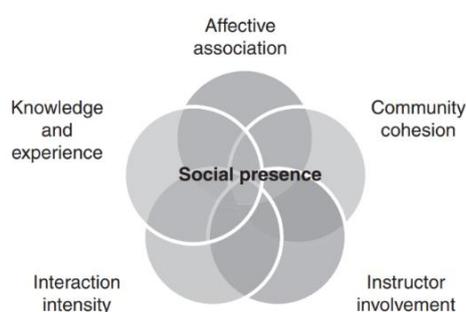


Figure 3. The social presence model (Whiteside et al., 2017)

Whiteside (2011) stated that the Social Presence Model fosters an understanding of the need of developing connections and nurturing relationships in the learning environment which can make students have greater motivation and increase learning outcomes. In addition, according to Whiteside et al. (2017), the social presence model “provides a framework to establish an increased social presence, or connectedness, among lecturers and students for a more enriching educational experience” (p. 22).

2.4.3. The social connection design framework

The social connection design framework proposed by van Tryon and Bishop (2009) suggests three strategies for resolving social connectivity difficulties in online learning environments: more interaction, thorough technological support, and continuous follow-up. This framework aims to “provide more guidance to online instructors about which e-immediacy strategies should be used and when they are needed in order to facilitate the development of group social structure in technology-mediated learning environments” (van Tryon & Bishop, 2012, p.349).

3. Method

The researchers conducted this research in December 2021 to explore the students' perception of social presence in online speaking classes at one of the private universities in Indonesia. The researchers employed quantitative research as the research methodology. This method allows the researchers to gather information from a group in order to describe abilities, thoughts, and perceptions (Ary et al. 2010; Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006).

3.1. Research participants

In this research, the participants were students from a study program at one of the private universities in Indonesia. They were batch 2019 students who had experienced online speaking classes for 2 years. There were four classes consisting of 159 students. In this research, there were 51 participants who took part in answering the questionnaire. Based on the questionnaire results, the researchers chose two participants randomly from each quartile to be interviewed related to their perceptions of social presence in online speaking class and the influence of social presence on students' confidence in speaking class.

3.2. Research instruments and data gathering technique

In order to collect the data needed for this research, the researchers employed both open-ended and close-ended questionnaires. The researchers adapted the questionnaire from Richardson and Swan (2003), Tu (2002), Aragon (2003), and Rourke et al. (2001). There are two parts to the questionnaire; part I consists of closed-ended statements and part II consists of open-ended questions. The researchers provided an explanation at the beginning of the questionnaire to ensure that the participants understand the topic. The first section contained twenty closed-ended statements that provided all of the information required to answer the first research questions. Since there were twenty statements in the form of close-ended statements, the Likert Scale was used in this research. The students had to answer the questions in the closed-ended section based on the options given, which were (5) strongly agree, (4) agree, (3) neutral, (2) disagree, and (1) strongly disagree. It allowed students to answer questions by putting a checkmark next to the options provided.

The second section consisted of four open-ended questions. Participants were free to respond in any way they saw fit to the open-ended questions. In this case, the researchers discovered how people think by asking open-ended questions. Furthermore, it also provided a great deal of data to answer the second research question.

The researchers also interviewed the participants to gather more information about the data. There were four questions for the interview. The last, the researchers did a validity and reliability test to check whether the items of the questionnaire used for the research were valid and reliable. Here are the results of the validity and reliability tests.

Table 1

The result of validity test.

Items	<i>rcount</i>	<i>rtable</i>	Description
Q1	0.634	0.275	Valid
Q2	0.629	0.275	Valid
Q3	0.678	0.275	Valid
Q4	0.701	0.275	Valid
Q5	0.691	0.275	Valid
Q6	0.539	0.275	Valid

Q7	0.716	0.275	Valid
Q8	0.453	0.275	Valid
Q9	0.424	0.275	Valid
Q10	0.368	0.275	Valid
Q11	0.624	0.275	Valid
Q12	0.635	0.275	Valid
Q13	0.680	0.275	Valid
Q14	0.507	0.275	Valid
Q15	0.415	0.275	Valid
Q16	0.600	0.275	Valid
Q17	0.689	0.275	Valid
Q18	0.638	0.275	Valid
Q19	0.544	0.275	Valid
Q20	0.625	0.275	Valid

The researchers used Pearson Product Moment to check the validity of the instrument. Based on table 1, the result shows that all *r_{count}* of each item is higher than *r_{table}*. Therefore, the researchers concluded that all items used in the questionnaire were valid (*df*:49, *r_{count}* > *r_{table}*).

Table 2

Case processing summary.

		N	%
Cases	Valid	51	100.0
	Excluded ^a	0	.0
	Total	51	100.0

Table 3

Reliability statistics.

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.903	20

Pallant (2016) states that the ideal coefficient of Cronbach's alpha is > 0.7. Based on table 2, the result shows that Cronbach's alpha is .903. Therefore, it can be concluded that the items used in the questionnaire are reliable and can be trusted.

3.3. Data collection

In this study, the researchers gathered the data from the questionnaires, which were distributed in four classes of ELESPP batch 2019. After distributing the questionnaires, the researchers asked eight students to interview for the researchers to gain deeper information about the data needed for the research. Before distributing the questionnaires, the researchers ensured that all participants had taken the online speaking class.

3.4. Data analysis

In order to provide evidence to answer the research questions, the researchers analyzed the data gathered from the questionnaire. Furthermore, the researchers also did an interview to gain more information about the data. To measure students' perceptions, the researchers used a mean score formula. The students were required to respond to twenty close-ended statements and four open-ended questions that the students had to answer.

There were twenty statements in part I to measure the students' perception of social presence in the online speaking class. The participants had to put a check on each statement to show their responses. Each response had different points: "strongly agree" had five points, "agree" had four points, "neutral" had three points, "disagree" had two points, and "strongly disagree" had one point. As a result, the lowest point in part I was twenty, while the highest point was one hundred. The mean score between twenty and one hundred was sixty. Hence, if the mean score was higher than sixty ($\underline{x} = 60$), the perception will be positive. Otherwise, if the mean score equals to or is less than sixty ($\underline{x} = 60$), it causes a negative perception.

The researchers determined the mean score, which was then used as the criteria for the positive and negative perceptions. Then, the researchers concluded the result based on the students' scores in order to determine if the category had a positive or negative perception. The researchers applied the criteria to determine whether the ELESPP students of batch 2019 had positive or negative perceptions of social presence in online speaking classes. The criteria are presented in the following table.

Table 4

Positive and negative criteria.

Mean score	Class
$\underline{x} \leq 60$	Negative
$\underline{x} > 60$	Positive

Table 4 shows the criteria for positive and negative perception. This allowed the researchers to evaluate whether the students had a positive or negative perception of social presence in online speaking classes. The students had a positive perception of social presence in online speaking classes when the mean score was higher than sixty ($\underline{x} = 60$). Otherwise, when the mean score was equal to or was less than sixty ($\underline{x} = 60$), they had a negative perception of social presence in online speaking class when the mean score equals to or is less than sixty ($\underline{x} = 60$).

The researchers concluded the analysis of the data by calculating the total mean score. Additionally, the researchers used SPSS to examine the One Sample t-Test and the normality test for the null hypothesis. A normality test was employed to determine

whether the data is drawn from a normally distributed population. One sample t-test was used to determine whether there is a difference between an unknown population mean from a specific value. The researchers used the students' probability value of 0.05. Aside from that, two operational hypotheses were used as the guideline for the investigation.

H_0 : The students' perception of social presence in the online speaking class is not positive.

H_A : The students' perception of social presence in the online speaking class is positive.

$$H_0 : \underline{x} \leq 60$$

$$H_A : \underline{x} > 60$$

In order to answer the second research question, the researchers provided the result of the open-ended questionnaire analysis. It was described by drawing the conclusion from the answers given by the respondents. The result of the open-ended questionnaire analysis will be presented in the form of a description. Other than that, the researchers also did an interview to gain rich information for the data needed for the research.

4. Findings and discussion

4.1. Students' perception of social presence in the online speaking class

In this section, the researchers present the frequency distribution of the data and the histogram. The frequency distribution shows the frequency of all participants' score that was obtained from the statements in the questionnaire. Moreover, the researchers also present the discussions of the close-ended statements in the questionnaire.

Table 5

Online speaking class students' social presence perception frequency distribution.

No.	Scores	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
1	39-47	1	1.96%	1.96%
2	47-55	1	1.96%	3.92%
3	55-63	4	7.84%	11.76%
4	63-71	18	35.29%	47.06%
5	71-79	15	29.41%	76.47%
6	79-87	9	17.65%	94.12%
7	87-95	3	5.88%	100.00%
Total		51	100	
		\underline{x} : 72,9	n : 51	SD : 10.1

According to Table 5, the highest frequency was found at number 4, which had a range score between 63 and 71 and received responses from as many as 18 participants. Besides, the lowest frequency was in numbers 1 and 2, with the total number of

respondents as much as one person. It shows that there was one person who had a range score between 39 and 47, and there was one person who had a range score between 47 and 55. Moreover, the mean score derived from the data was seventy-two point nine ($\bar{x} = 72.9$). It indicates that the students have a positive perception of social presence in online speaking classes. As described in chapter III, the students had a positive perception of social presence in online speaking classes when the mean score was higher than sixty ($\bar{x} = 60$). Otherwise, when the mean score was equal to or was less than sixty ($\bar{x} = 60$), they had a negative perception of social presence in online speaking class when the mean score equals to or is less than sixty ($\bar{x} = 60$).

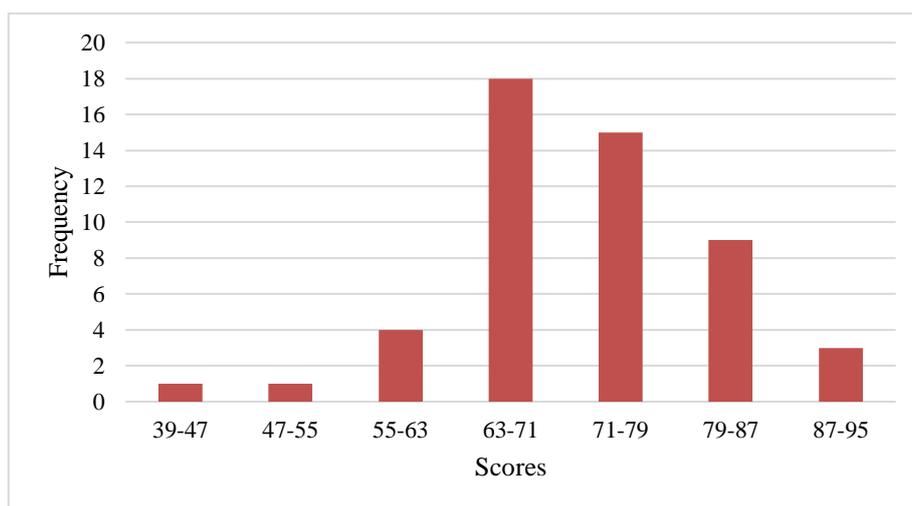


Figure 4. Online speaking students' social presence perception

Figure 4 indicates normal distribution (Pallant, 2020). Therefore, it is reasonable for the researchers to use a mean score of seventy-two point nine ($\bar{x} = 72.9$) as the central tendency for further analysis. In order to answer the first research question, the researchers used the data gathered from the questionnaire. There were twenty closed-ended statements to discover students' perceptions of social presence in the online speaking class. Table 4 shows the mean score of the data was seventy-two point nine ($\bar{x} = 72.9$). Therefore, the researchers concluded that the students' perception of social presence in the online speaking class is positive.

Based on the findings, the researchers found that social presence in the online speaking class remains an influential key component of the quality of the online speaking class. The students agreed that the social relationship between lecturers and students is essential. However, based on table 4 there are still some students who scored below or equal to sixty ($\bar{x} = 60$). It shows that although the total mean score was seventy-two point nine ($\bar{x} = 72.9$), some students experienced problems regarding social presence. According to Whiteside (2011), developing social connections and relationships between lecturers and students is necessary to make a lively and comfortable learning environment. Hence, the lecturer should build a more social presence in the class in order to develop students' greater learning outcomes. However, Anderson and Garrison (2003)

warned that while insufficient social presence can be disadvantageous to the learning environment, too much social presence may encourage argument and social banter.

4.1.1. Testing and requirements for data analysis

In order to determine the data analysis and to evaluate the hypothesis, it was necessary to conduct testing and requirements analysis. The researchers presented two test requirements which were a normality test and a one-sample t-Test that were used to measure the significance of the findings.

4.1.1.1. Normality test

A normality test was employed to determine whether the data is drawn from a normally distributed population. In this research, the normality test used was Kolmogorov-Smirnov. According to the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, if $p > 0.05$, then the data is normally distributed.

Table 6

Normality distribution.

	Tests of Normality					
	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
score	.099	51	.200*	.969	51	.192

Based on the result of the normality test, table 6 shows that the significance value is 0.200. In addition, it shows the normal distribution of students' perception of social presence in the online speaking class. Therefore, the researchers concluded that the data is normally distributed.

4.1.1.2. One sample t-test

One sample t-Test was used to determine whether there is a difference between an unknown population mean from a specific value. According to Ross and Victor L. (2017), the One Sample t-Test compares the mean of a sample to an a priori score (or population mean).

Table 7

Significance test (One sample t-test).

One-Sample Statistics				
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
score	51	72.92	10.123	1.417

One-Sample Test						
	Test Value = 60					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
score	9.116	50	.000	12.922	10.07	15.77

Based on table 7, it can be concluded that the researchers have enough evidence to reject the null hypothesis. The researchers conclude that students' perception of social presence in the online speaking class is significantly higher than 60 (\bar{x} : 72,9, n : 51, df : 50, SD : 10.1, $p < 0.05$). As a result, the conclusion drawn from the alternative hypothesis is acceptable.

4.2. The influence of social presence on students' confidence in speaking class

In this research, the participants were not only required to give their perception of social presence in the online speaking class but also their opinion on the influence of social presence on students' confidence in speaking class. The result of part II, which was obtained from the questionnaire and analyzed, showed that social presence positively influenced students' confidence in speaking in class. In this part, the researchers described the influence of social presence on students' confidence in speaking in class into four parts. To obtain a deeper analysis, the researchers also provided the result of the interview.

4.2.1. Sense of bonding in speaking class

According to Sung and Mayer (2012), social relationships between lecturers and students can improve social presence over time. Furthermore, the students will feel more comfortable around the lecturer. Therefore, it is crucial to build and nurture the relationship between the lecturer and the students to increase social presence in the learning environment. Therefore, the researchers decided to gain more information about the importance of the sense of bonding in the classroom environment by interviewing some of the participants.

This issue mostly focused on how students trust their lecturers and vice versa. S3 said, "By having a strong bond with our lecturers and friends, we will have a secure feeling to talk to them." S44 shared a similar feeling and it helped her to communicate with her lecturers. Social presence was even considered one of the vital factors determining the success of the learning process by the participants. S36 highlighted it by saying, "If we aren't comfortable with our lecturers and do not have a good relationship with them, I believe it will affect our learning as well."

S15 and S17 also uttered similar opinions regarding this issue and they felt a more social presence when they could trust their lecturers. They believed the relationship between the lecturer and students also showed how much the lecturer cared about their

students. It helped students to be more confident in expressing their ideas and feelings. However, S11 had a different opinion. She felt the closer her relationship with her lecturers, the more she felt the burden of her and her lecturers' expectations. This was a notable remark since students nowadays were more aware of others' expectations.

Based on students' reflections, the researchers concluded most participants positively agreed that a sense of bonding between the students and the lecturer is one of the key factors to increase social presence in the learning environment. According to So and Brush (2008), in order to increase the level of social presence in the learning environment, a sense of bonding plays an important role. Building a sense of bonding creates a lively learning environment and affects the students' learning outcomes as well. Other than that, a sense of bonding also helps the lecturer to focus more on developing a deeper understanding of students' needs.

4.2.2. Students' attitude to social presence

Building social presence in the learning environment has a big impact on the students' learning process and outcomes. According to Garrison et al. (2000), students' perception of social presence is directly related to students' perceived learning in them. In other words, students' perception is a predictor of their perceived learning. The results of the questionnaire and interview show that the students agreed that social presence is important in the learning environment.

The participants of this study highlighted the importance of student-student and teacher-student active communication. S17 expressed how crucial her interaction with her friends. "If our friends do not feel our presence and vice versa, I feel like I am not appreciated, and my opinions are not heard."

S4 highlighted "In learning, we must communicate. Communication is a reciprocal relationship." The utterances show that most of the participants understood and perceived a sense of social presence in the learning environment. The participants believed that it is crucial to have a social relationship between the lecturer and the students in the learning environment because it is one of their support systems to motivate them in learning. As S33 said, he had a social relationship with his friends. Therefore, by understanding and familiarizing himself with the personality and characteristics of his friends, he felt a sense of social presence in the class.

Nonetheless, some of the participants described their speaking class as lacking social presence. S32 believed that her speaking class lacked social presence because some students came late and did not pay attention to the lecture. To solve this problem, it is important to build a social connection between the lecturers and the students because students who feel connected to the lecturers and other peers do better than students who do not (Libbey, 2004).

4.2.3. Social presence employed to increase self-confidence

According to Aydin and Gumus (2016), high interaction between the lecturers and

the students and social presence can increase learning success and motivation in learning. Confidence is considered one of the basic skills needed in speaking class. Therefore, to increase students' self-confidence in speaking class, a social presence is needed.

Most of the participants believed that social presence positively influenced students' self-confidence in the speaking class. S17 uttered, "I am more motivated and more confident whenever I feel the presence of the lecturer because the lecturer always gives me feedback to improve my thinking and understanding." Additionally, when the students felt the presence of the lecturers and other peers in the learning environment, it made them feel supported and appreciated. Furthermore, the lecturer's and peers' responses made S36 feel that they acknowledged her presence and paid attention to her.

However, some of the students felt more anxious whenever they felt others' presence. S11 said, "I feel more anxious whenever I have to speak in front of the class in the offline class than in online class because I can see other people directly and feel their presence." S15 also had the same idea as S11. She stated that it made him a little more confident when he did not feel the lecturer's presence in the classroom. She said that she always felt more anxious and nervous in the offline speaking class because she could see and feel the presence of other people in the class directly.

4.2.4. *The role of encouragement to improve self-confidence*

One of the indicators of social presence is encouragement (Polhemus et al., 2001). According to Nunan (1989), providing encouragement to students may help them to improve learning outcomes. Therefore, encouragement is crucial in shaping and increasing students' confidence in speaking in class. The result of this part highlighted encouragement as a key role to improve self-confidence.

Based on the findings, the participants believed that encouragement helps them to improve their self-confidence. According to Díaz-Ducca (2014), a lecturer's positive encouragement influences students' motivation in learning and self-confidence. The students felt safe because they thought that the lecturers and the students believed in them and supported them. S11 said, "Every time the lecturers put a big smile on their faces and spread positive vibes, it makes me confident."

S36 also shared the same opinions. She believed that positive words and encouragement from the lectures and other peers made her motivated to learn more. However, S38 and S17 highlighted different ideas. S38 uttered, "Usually, the lecturer encourages me before I perform my speech. I never received any encouragement from my friends. There's no significant support to boost my confidence." S17 also stated that though he received encouragement from the lecturers and peers, he did not feel his confidence was increasing at all. The students felt the encouragement they received was not meaningful to them.

Based on the data which were gathered through the questionnaire and interview, the majority of the participants stated that social presence positively influenced their self-

confidence in speaking class. In addition, to support the data above, the researchers also linked the data to Whiteside's (2011) theory, which states that in order to make students have greater motivation and increased learning outcomes, it is necessary to develop connections and nurture relationships in the learning environment.

The questionnaire and interview analysis findings showed that social presence influences students' self-confidence in speaking class. Before the students performed their speech in front of the class, they felt nervous and anxious. In addition, they did not feel confident and were afraid of making mistakes. However, after they felt that the other students were paying attention to them and gave some encouragement and support, it made them feel more confident and less nervous. The findings of the questionnaire and interview showed that social presence positively influences students' self-confidence, encourages the students to learn more, and helps students to boost their speaking skills in speaking class.

5. Conclusion

Based on the discussion above, it can be concluded that the students had a positive perception of social presence in the online speaking class. Social presence influences students' self-confidence, encourages students to learn more, and helps students boost their speaking skills in speaking class. Most of the students experienced the influence of social presence to improve their self-confidence in speaking class.

The results of this study highlight several implications regarding social presence in online learning environments. First, the affective association is expected by the students in their learning process therefore, teachers and lecturers should embed this in their teaching and interaction with students. In addition, how the teachers/lecturers were involved in the activities and how intense the interaction was were also considered crucial by the participants (see Whiteside et al, 2017). Thus, to help students feel a social presence, teachers and lecturers should reflect and revisit how they interact with students. Second, both teachers/lecturers and schools/universities should establish a community where the school/university bodies are able to interact comfortably both in terms of personal and/or academic contexts.

The researchers admit that the participants of this study were limited to students of batch 2019 from an English Department. Most of the participants were from similar areas (mostly from Java Island) and had similar ages and backgrounds. Therefore, the findings might not give a bigger picture of how social presence influences larger communities in the Indonesian context. Further researchers could involve participants with more varied backgrounds who could represent their group to get vast knowledge on how social presence influences students' learning.

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