Research Article:

Humanising Online Learning through Social Presence in Higher Education

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the role of social presence in creating a humanised online learning environment in higher education. Using a qualitative case study, data were collected through semi-structured interview, observation of online interaction, and document analysis involving students and lecturer in a Technology Enhanced Language Learning online course. The lecturer of the course utilised canvas as learning management system and the researchers documented how the lecturer implemented humanising principles in online learning. Findings revealed that promoting social presence enhanced students' emotional engagement, collaborative learning and sense of belonging. Key strategies identified include personalised communication, active lecturer involvement, and group-based learning activities. These insights offer practical guidelines for educators seeking to humanise online learning environments and foster deeper student engagement.

Keywords: Humanising, online learning, social presence, higher education, community of inquiry

INTRODUCTION

The global spread of COVID-19 pandemic significantly accelerated the transition to online learning worldwide, revealing both opportunities and systemic challenges in digital education (Cahaya et al., 2022; Regnier et al., 2024; Yee, 2024). In higher education, the pivot to remote learning environments has prompted educators to reassess the effectiveness, engagement, and human dimensions of online instruction. While digital platforms like Zoom and Canvas have enabled continuity of instruction, concerns remain over student motivation, emotional disconnection, and dropout rates (Aldowah et al., 2019; Haron et al., 2022; Mtshweni, 2024). One prominent issue within online education is the lack of social presence, the degree to which students feel personally connected and emotionally engaged in digital spaces. The absence of immediate interpersonal cues often limits opportunities for empathy, collaboration, and student-centred interaction, especially in large scale asynchronous courses (Richardson et al., 2017; Shen et al., 2024). Studies increasingly advocate for humanising online learning to counteract these effects. Humanisation involves cultivating student-lecturer relationships, empathy, and emotional support to create inclusive, engaging virtual environments (Czerkawski & Schmidt, 2017; Lowenthal & Snelson, 2023).

Social presence, a essential component of the Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework (Garrison et al., 1999), shows a vital role in this process. It refers to the ability of students to project themselves as real people in online spaces, facilitating meaningful interactions and deeper cognitive engagement. Research suggests that intentional strategies, such as personalised feedback, synchronous interaction, and collaborative activities can strengthen social presence and support learning outcomes (Andel et al., 2020; Arbaugh et al., 2008; Pham et al., 2023). Despite its recognised importance, empirical research examining how social presence concretely supports humanised learning in higher education remains limited, particularly in Asian or non-western contexts. Moreover, few studies investigate how students themselves perceive these dynamics in real-time online learning environments.

This study addresses this gap by examining how social presence promotes humanisation in an Indonesian university's Technology Enhanced Language Learning online course. Using a qualitative case study design, we explore student's perceptions of the lecturer's pedagogical strategies and learning management system design. Our guiding research questions are:

1. How do students perceive social presence as contributing to a humanised online learning experience?

2. What specific instructional strategies support the development of social presence in higher education contexts?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social Presence

Social Presence (SP) is a central construct within the CoI framework, defined as the extent to which learners feel socially and emotionally connected in an online environment (Garrison et al., 1999). It enables students to perceive others as 'real' and fosters the interpersonal relationships necessary for sustained engagement and academic success (Akyol & Garrison, 2011; Richardson et al., 2017). In online settings, where face to face cues is limited, social presence mitigates feelings of isolation and promotes a collaborative learning culture.

Several studies affirm the strong correlation between social presence and positive learning outcomes. Shea et al. (2010) emphasise that SP fosters emotional engagement and group cohesion, which are crucial for collaborative learning. Similarly, Chiu and Hew (2018) find that online students with a heightened sense of social presence show higher motivation and willingness to participate in peer interactions. These findings suggest that SP serves not merely as a supplement to online learning but as a foundational condition for its success.

Contemporary approaches to enhancing SP involve synchronous sessions, personalised instructor feedback, collaborative projects, and discussion forums. Arbaugh et al. (2008) demonstrate that active instructor involvement in asynchronous forums increases student satisfaction and perceived learning gains. Martin (2023) further stress the role of collaborative learning design in enhancing students' sense of community. These insights align with Lowenthal and Dunlap's (2014) assertion that social presence must be actively designed into the course architecture, not left to emerge organically.

Humanising Online Learning

Humanising online learning extends beyond content delivery to focus on empathy, connection, and interaction to create environments where students feel valued and engaged. According to Pacansky-Brock et al. (2023), humanised instruction involves building relation trust, designing culturally responsive content, and creating inclusive digital spaces. The goal is to create an environment where learners feel seen, heard, and valued as a whole individual. Lowenthal and Snelson (2023) identify personalised feedback and instructor immediacy plays a vital role in humanising digital classrooms. These relational strategies allow instructors to bridge the effective gap created by asynchronous learning. Similarly, Huang et al. (2023) emphasise the value of culturally relevant pedagogy, which acknowledges students' diverse identities and experiences within course design.

Social presence is often the operational mechanism through which humanisation occurs. Murtafi'ah and Pradita (2024) highlight three pedagogical strategies for fostering SP in synchronous classroom, modelling respectful discourse, adapting language to student's proficiency levels, and creating emotional bonds. These strategies support student well-being and promote inclusivity. Xu et al. (2025) propose a set of eight instructional design elements to humanise online courses, such as "liquid syllabi," humanised homepages, and self-affirming activities. Each is designed to reduce uncertainty and help humanised content delivery by conveying tone, empathy, and instructor presence. Moreover, humanistic psychology provides a theoretical foundation for humanised learning. Drawing from Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow, this framework posits that learning flourishes when students experience autonomy, trust, and emotional safety (Ratni, 2024). Within this view, social presence becomes not just a pedagogical tool but an ethical imperative.

Connecting Social Presence and Humanisation in the CoI Framework

Although the CoI framework emphasises three presences, social, cognitive and teaching, recent scholars highlight SP as pivotal to humanising digital education. Caroline et al. (2023) noted that without emotional connection, cognitive and teaching presence often fail to translate into student engagement. In contexts where students feel disconnected or unsupported, slow destruction increases (Mtshweni, 2024). Thus, designing for social presence is not an optional enhancement but a necessary intervention. As Shen et al. (2024) demonstrate, SP reduces psychological distance, thereby improving students' affective engagement and motivation. This connection is especially critical in diverse cultural settings, such as Indonesia, where collectivist values may heighten the need for social connection in learning environments (Han et al., 2021).

Despite this growing recognition, empirical studies that investigate how SP strategies manifest in real-world higher education settings, particularly from the student perspective remain limited. There is also a need to examine how digital tools like Canvas can be leveraged to support intentional humanisation through SP. This study contributes to this gap by exploring the lived experiences of Indonesian undergraduate students in a technology enhanced language learning online course that intentionally integrates humanising strategies.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

A single case study implemented in this investigation. A case study is an empirical method for conducting a comprehensive examination of a particular phenomenon (the

"case") within its real-world context, particularly when the distinction between the phenomenon and context are ambiguous, as Yin (2018) has stated. We conducted a single case study in this research as the primary objective to investigate the issue of the CoI framework focusing on social presence in humanising the online English classroom based on the students' point of view. Why we choose single case study because we deeply explored the phenomenon in real-life context in the online learning setting and this approach provided holistic and nuanced understanding of the subject. By focusing on one case, researchers uncover intricate details, contextual factors on studying unique phenomenon that cannot be generalised to understand specific dynamics of humanising the online learning through social presence. Additionally, Yin (2003) posits that a single case study is the optimal choice for researchers who wish to examine a single entity (e.g., a single individual from a specific group) or a single group (e.g., a group of individuals).

In this research context, the researchers examined the issue of the teaching learning process in using the CoI model humanising technology enhanced language learning online course based on the students' point of view. This investigation involved the lecturer's activities, artifacts such as syllabus document on technology enhanced language learning online course which is integrated into canvas as learning management system. Additionally, this investigation delineated the process of humanising the online classroom and evaluate its advantages on the perfective of five level of ecological systems on interviewing the lecturer to understand the root of humanising concept lied on how he designed and modified the syllabus and learning management system. We employed case study as qualitative research in the methodology, as this study aims to delve into and investigate phenomena in depth, and it employs a variety of data collection techniques to identify and comprehend a variety of features that contribute to the humanisation of online learning.

Setting and Participants

Based on the preliminary study, the researchers found the phenomenon that the lecturer of technology enhanced language learning, here after (TELL) used the CoI framework in humanising the English online classroom. TELL is one of the subjects in English Education Department at one of the universities in Tasikmalaya, West Java, Indonesia and it has three credits.

The study took place in TELL online classroom. This course is specifically designed for undergraduate students in the fifth semester and is considered a core subject in the English Education Department. It carries of three credits. Throughout the duration of the teaching and learning process, students utilised the learning management system (LMS) known as canvas. The lecturer used Canvas as a learning management system and based on the students' testimony, they felt exciting in joining this online class

because they felt welcomed when utilising the features of Canvas different from other LMS. The phenomenon of humanising online learning implemented in TELL online course, the lecturer designed, introduced, and implemented classroom activities which used humanism concept. The concept of humanising the online classroom can be seen in the activities which were implemented in the online classroom spaces, not only in synchronous but also in asynchronous activities.

The participants consisted of six students used purposive sampling. We recruited students that actively participate in the online learning process, seen from their participation statistic in Canvas. The researchers observed how the lecturer in this course teach in online teaching learning process. The lecturer is male. We call him *seiji* as his pseudonym. He is 33 years old and has over 10 years of expertise in facilitating educational instruction. He completed his studies at one of the top universities in the UK and received accolades for his exceptional academic performance. His teaching process is unique because he incorporated the concept of humanism into his approach in teaching learning. Based on the researchers' preliminary study, his unique concept in his teaching style related to his international educational background and his extensive experience studying overseas for his bachelor degree, master's and now PhD candidate, warrants investigation into how he can further the concept of humanising online learning. Thus, the researchers interviewed the students to know their perception on the teaching learning process through social presence in humanising the online learning.

Table 1. Participants' demographic data

Participants' name (Students)	Gender	Age	University level of study
Yani (P1)	Female	20	Fifth semester
Dina (P2)	Female	20	Fifth semester
Asep (P3)	Male	20	Fifth semester
Ujang (P4)	Male	21	Fifth semester
Siti (P5)	Female	19	Fifth semester
Rina (P6)	Female	20	Fifth semester

Note: *Name of the participants are pseudonyms

Data Collection

In this study, we used two ways in collecting data semi-structured interview and observation. Determining the study's boundaries, gathering information through unstructured or semi-structured observation and interviews, documents, and visual materials, and defining the data collection protocol are all steps in the data collection process in qualitative study (Creswell, 2013).

Interview

This study conducted the interview to the participants who is the students of technology enhanced language learning online course. The interview directed online using Zoom and followed by WhatsApp regarding the availability of the medium that the participants can access. Semi-structured interview used in this study. The interview lasted one to two hours and conducted online. We interview the students to understand the experience with the CoI model in humanising the online learning through social presence. A list of questions was provided to the participants. In interview, participants were comprehend based on their individual perspectives and the way they construct significance in their own lives, experience, and cognitive processes. This objective in consistent with one of the primary objectives of qualitative research, which is to elucidate a complex social reality from the perspective of the participants. The following indicators as the interview guideline:

Table 2. Students' interview indicators

The element of social presence		
Indicators		Questions
1. Affective expression	1.	How did the lecturer provide you with getting to know each other in the course and did you feel a sense of belonging in the online class? How?
	2.	Were you able to form distinct impressions of some course participants? How?
	3.	Did you think that online and web-based communication is an excellent medium for social interaction in the online learning context in this course? How?
2. Open communication	1.	Did you feel comfortable conversing through the online medium? Why?
	2.	Did you feel comfortable participating in the course discussion? Why?
	3.	Did you feel comfortable interacting with other course participants? Why?
3. Group cohesion	1.	Did you feel comfortable disagreeing with other course participants while still maintaining a sense of trust? Why and how?
	2.	Did you feel that your point of view was acknowledged by other course participants?
	3.	Did you think that online discussion helps you in developing a sense of collaboration? How?

Observation

The researchers observed the online learning environment through Zoom and record the lecturer's facilitation of the online teaching and learning process. The observation sheet provided to facilitate the acquisition of the necessary data. A qualitative observation of the lecturer engaging with the students were used to examine the integration of community of inquiry focusing on social presence in learning management system canvas in online teaching context. The observation sheet adapted from online course observation form by Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT), Iowa State University. Table 3 shows the indicators of the observation items.

Table 3. Observation indicators

Indicators items for observation	Questions
Section 1. General course overview and introduction (Setting the stage for learning and preparing students for successful participation in the course activities)	1. Does the lecturer provide a through description of the course and introduce students to the course and the online format?
	2. Are the students' requirements such as basic technology needs and participation expectations described?
	3. Are practice use of tools and community-building activities included to prime the students for learning? (e.g., the lecturer created a video introducing students to the Canvas course)
Section 2. Assessment of students learning (Alignment of activities and assessment with learning outcomes is evident in the course design)	1. Are learning outcomes communicated?
	2. Is there a variety of activities and assessment?
	3. Is there alignment of learning activities and assessment with learning outcomes?
	4. Are formative and summative assessment opportunities part of the design?
	5. Are assignments clearly described, including grading schemes or rubrics?
	6. Is student workload appropriate to course level and duration?
Section 3. Student engagement (A clear path to students' learning opportunities is provided, including interaction with the content, peers, and lecturer)	1. Are there opportunities to interact or seek guidance from the lecturer?
	2. Are there opportunities to participate in community activities or peer-to-peer sharing?
	3. Is learning scaffolded, guiding students toward increasingly independent learning and application of relevant skills?
	4. Are there opportunities for student reflection on learning and feedback to the lecturer?

Table 3. (Continued)

Indicators items for observation	Questions
Section 4. Online organisation and design (the lecturer's design and choice of the technology effectively deliver course content and supports learning processes)	1. Overall, is the investigation and structure, of course, easy for students to follow? 2. Do the tools and media formats selected to support the course learning outcomes? 3. Are guides and protocols for the use of the course tools provided?
Section 5. Inclusive classroom	1. Does the lecturer's syllabus, textbooks, resources, and content recognise and represent a diversity of backgrounds, identities, experiences, beliefs, and values? 2. Does the lecturer maintain a classroom environment that is inclusive and conducive to learning?
Section 6. Overall course (Considering the course as a whole, provide feedback)	1. What aspect of the course do you see as strengths contributing to effective student engagement and learning? 2. Are there any strategies or resources that you would recommend for enhancing the design of this course 3. Final comments or observations?

Document Analysis

For the purpose of my investigation, the researchers used the learning management system known as Canvas, which is utilised by the lecturer during the online learning process, as well as the syllabus and any other qualitative audiovisual or digital assets that contribute to the discovery of rich data. It is conducted to explore how the digital assets are embedded within the educational structure at the ecological systems, highlighting the canvas as a digital document support in humanising online teaching environment. Table 4 shows the indicators which used by the researchers: The document analysis protocol adapted from Bowen (2009).

Table 4. Document analysis items

No.	Document selected		Social presence
1	Syllabus of technology enhanced language course	1.	Affective expression
		2.	Open communication
		3.	Group cohesion
2	Canvas (Learning Management System)	1.	Affective expression
		2.	Open communication
		3.	Group cohesion
3	Lecturer's private document (Evidence for humanising concept such as Certificate)	1.	Affective expression
		2.	Open communication
		3.	Group cohesion

Data Analysis

In analysing the data from the participant's view point, we used thematic analysis. The six-phase process ensures rigor in data analysis by guiding researchers through iterative cycles of coding, theme development, and refinement. This systematic approach minimises confirmation bias and support transparency in how findings are derived. The stages from Clarke and Braun (2017) were: (1) transcribing, reviewing, and scribbling preliminary data helped to understand the data, (2) generating coding categories was methodically classifying major data aspect across the data set and collecting code-related data, (3) generating topics by arranging codes into themes and collecting all pertinent data, (4) examining themes by checking if the themes match the coded extracts and the whole data set to produce a thematic 'map" of the analysis, (5) theming creation and naming by continuous investigation of each issue and the study's narrative yields distinct topic definitions and names, (6) reporting writing as the last stage to evaluate. Final session was the finding of example analysis, research subject, literature comparison, and academic report.

In analysing the data from the participants' view point, we used thematic analysis (Clarke & Braun, 2017). The stages were:

Stage 1: Familiarisation with data

The first phase of thematic analysis activity is familiarisation with data such as transcribing, reviewing, and scribbling preliminary data helped to understand the data. We try to immerse the data to gain profound understanding. Figure 1 shows the example of of data familiarisation on observation.

Figure 1. Example of data familiarisation on observation

Stage 2: Generating initial code

Generating initial code is the second phase of the thematic analysis. Generating coding categories was methodically classifying major data aspects across the data set and collecting code-related data (see Table 5 for the examples).Table 5. Example of generating initial code

Time	Final translated observation	Initial Code
29 January 2024	The lecturer began the lesson by introducing to the students how to use the learning management system (Canvas), common issues and troubleshoots and course preparation.	Design and organisation
	The lecturer delivered an "introduction" to the course in the welcoming session.	Open communication
	The lecturer gave insight to the students in attracting their critical thinking, questioning the context and asking the students to figure it out.	HOT
5 February 2024	The lecturer provided description and implemented humanising concept it can be seen from the Canvas design and the Zoom session. Before the Zoom session, the students should access Canvas and finish the activities on Canvas.	Synchronous and asynchronous design

(Continued on next page)

Table 5. (Continued)

Time	Final translated observation	Initial code
	The lecturer gave a "break time" session in 3 minutes, every subtopic end in delivering the topic on Zoom session, allowing the students to take their drinks, go to the toilet and relaxing the body.	Humanising concept
	The activities in this second meeting focused on how the students comprehend what the lesson plain is, why we need a lesson plan, elements of the lesson plan, and resources.	Connecting ideas
12 February 2024	The lecturer showed in the ppt slide about the agenda for today's class that there are two points explained the first is Key questions about the topic will be discuss and the second point is Try out.	Inclusive approach
	The lecturer acknowledged of socialisation need by reminding the students that active involvement will be seen by responding on the chat box, direct speaking, and active collaboration on #creativespace.	Lecturer's relationship building
	On the menu section, part A, the students provided by various activities such as reading, watching and note taking, finding tech tools, and evaluating tech tools.	Triggering event
19 February 2024	The lecturer mentions the agenda of the course in the Zoom session in the 3rd slide there are module 3 review about TPACK, PICRAT, SMAR model, and #creativespace3.	Facilitating discourse
	When the students answer the question and give their point of view, the lecturer respond by giving the statement to the students' answer and give love emoticon.	Expressing emotion
	The lecturer said to the students" imagine you are going to use apps/tools in your classroom, what is something you first need to think about? share your response briefly on the chat box.	Exploration

Stage 3: Searching for themes

Searching for themes is the third phase. Generating topics by arranging codes into themes and collecting all pertinent data. Table 6 shows the example of searching for the theme.

Table 6. Example of searching for the theme

Code	Emerging themes
Open communication	Lecturer's presence as a catalyst
Lecturer's relationship building	
Humanising concept	Emotional engagement through interactive communication
Expressing emotion	

Stage 4: Reviewing themes

Reviewing themes was the fourth phase. Examining themes by checking if the themes match the coded extracts and the whole data set to produce a thematic 'map' of the analysis (see Table 7 for the examples).

Table 7. Example of searching for reviewing theme

Themes	Refinement
Lecturer's presence as a catalyst	The intentional and dynamic role of the lecturer in stimulating intellectual curiosity, emotional engagement, and active participation, thereby accelerating students' learning processes and creating an environment where transformation, collaboration, and deeper meaning-making can occur.
Emotional engagement through interactive communication	The process by which students develop positive affective connections, motivation, and a sense of belonging through reciprocal, empathetic, and authentic exchanges with lecturer and peers that enhance both social presence and learning outcomes.

Stage 5: Defining and naming themes

Defining and naming themes was the fifth phase. Theming creation and naming by continuous investigation of each issue and the study's narrative yields distinct topic definitions and names (see Table 8).

Table 8. Example of defining and naming themes

Themes	Definition
Lecturer's presence as a catalyst	The role of the lecturer as an active trainer and enabler of learning processes, in which their presence stimulates student engagement, motivates participation, and fosters meaningful interactions in the asynchronous and synchronous activities. The lecturer is not only a source of knowledge, but also a facilitator who sparks curiosity, creates momentum, and nurtures collaborative learning environments.
Emotional engagement through interactive communication	Interactive communication refers to the degree to which students experience, express, and sustain positive emotions (such as interest, enjoyment, empathy, and connectedness) within learning environments as a result of two-way, meaningful exchanges with peers and lecturers. This engagement emerges not only from the content but also from the quality of interaction, listening, responding, questioning, and showing empathy that fosters belonging, motivation, and affective investment in learning.

Stage 6: Reporting writing

Reporting writing as the last stage to evaluate. Final session was the finding of example analysis, research subject, literature comparison and academic report.

Table 9. Example of reporting themes

Themes	Example of data		
	Observation	Interview	Document
Emotional engagement through interactive communication	Based on the observation session the lecturer communicated the learning objective and learning outcome in the first meeting of course. (Online Course Observation Form #1, 29 January, 2024).	When the lecturer responded to my posts with thoughtful comments, it felt like I was truly being heard (Asep [P3], 2 December 2024)	Figure 2 showed student responses to a self-introduction prompt in an online discussion forum. This artifact serves as rich qualitative data illustrating early indicators of social presence, learner identity formation, and the humanising potential of collaborative digital pedagogy.

Trustworthiness

In this study, the researchers used trustworthiness key pillars from Guba's constructs which defined by Shenton (2004) such as: (1) credibility, in this context, it refers to believability and truth from my participants' experience or perspectives through practices like prolonged engagement, detail descriptions process and multiple data sources; (2) transferability, it provides rich and comprehensive descriptions on research context, participants and data collection based on the real situation; (3) dependability, it establish dependability through rigorous documentation of my research process including detailed records of data collection, analysis and data interpretation and verify its outcome; and (4) confirmability, in this context, ensure confirmability through validating the findings and reflexivity, which involve reflecting on the research process. It is essential to ensure the accuracy, reliability, and legitimacy of qualitative findings, making the data valuable contribution to the research community.

RESULTS

After collecting the data and transcribing it, the researchers analysed it thematically, from the six stages which have been done. The researchers found that the lecturer conducted various activities in doing the online teaching learning process. In this study, the researchers focused on the students' perspective on how the lecturer implemented humanising the online learning through social presence and he designed the lesson activities on the foundation of humanising the online classroom. Most of the data showed how impactful the lecturer's interaction in the online teaching learning and the learning management system (Canvas) were in integrating humanising the online learning through social presence. Three findings occurred, first emotional engagement through interactive communication which has been done by the lecturer synchronously on the Zoom online meeting and asynchronously through Canvas; second, collaborative learning as a driver connection on peer engagement, and third, the lecturer' presence as a catalyst on how students feel welcomed and valued as whole person in the online learning environment. In line with the study from Cooper et al. (2023) defined that sharing knowledge, exhibiting empathy, being visible online, using personalised videos, wishing people a kind welcome and farewell, offering one-on-one support, and utilising synchronous components are all part of humanising online learning. The characteristics of humanising online learning can be found in the teaching learning process of this study, as the result is defined comprehensively. The themes are chronologically explained from the finding as follows:

Emotional Engagement through Interactive Communication

Interactive communication is a powerful tool for fostering emotional engagement. In the data, we found that the lecturer did various activities on creating opportunities

for two-way dialogue between lecturer and students, personalisation, feedback, and a sense of control as a prove that interactive communication built stronger relationships, elicit emotional responses, and create meaningful connections. By understanding the psychological underpinnings of emotional engagement and implementing effective strategies, lecturer and students leveraged interactive communication to create more engaging and impactful experiences in TELL online course. As we found the potential for interactive communication to foster emotional engagement continue to grow among lecturer and students in this online teaching settings and it also highlights how personalised feedback was. The use of students' names, and active participation in discussion both of the asynchronous while using canvas and synchronous in Zoom session contributed to a stronger sense of connection between students and lecturer. We found from the interview session, one of the participants reported that:

> **Excerpt 1**: When the lecturer responded to my posts with thoughtful comments, it felt like I was truly being heard. (Asep [P3], 2 December 2024)

In this context, we can see that the student felt and showed the emotional engagement through interaction of the lecturer respond to his posts with thoughtful comments and was truly being heard by his lecturer. As we also found on the observation of the online teaching learning process, there are various activities done by the lecturer that trigger students to be active by implementing interactive communication. For example, the lecturer gave clear instructions while communicating it with the students. It can be seen on the module 1 on the canvas the words "let's get started"– "click next to continue" as a partner of how he interacts verbally in the asynchronous session with his students. Interactive communication significantly enhanced students' emotional engagement in online educational settings. Techniques such as personalised feedback, addressing students by name, and encouraging active participation foster a stronger connection between students and lecturer. Another data proved this finding on the observation:

Observation 1

> Based on the observation session, the lecturer communicated the learning objective and learning outcome in the first meeting of course (Online Course Observation Form #1, 29 January 2024).

The findings found that the lecturer took the time to engage with students on a personal level. It fostered a more inclusive and supportive learning environment. This emotional engagement not only enhanced the educational experience but also encouraged students to participate more actively in their learning journey. It aligned with social presence theory, which posits that the sense of being "present" in a communication medium affects interpersonal interactions and learning outcomes. Higher level of social presence,

achieved through interactive communication, led to improved emotional engagement and academic performance. In summary, based on the research supported the notion that interactive communication strategies, including personalised feedback and clear instruction cues, significantly enhanced students' emotional engagement in online settings. Implementing these strategies led to more connected and motivated students, ultimately contributing to improved learning outcomes. In conclusion, the integration of interactive communication strategies in online educational practices led to improved emotional engagement. Ultimately benefiting both students and lecturer. From the document analysis, Figure 2 showed how the presence existed in the asynchronous session designed by the lecturer.
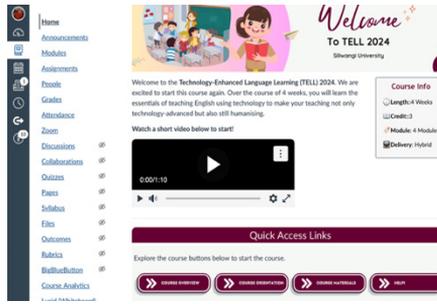
Document Analysis 1

Figure 2. Canvas learning management system home module (Data from Document Analysis 1, 29 January 2024).

The finding highlighted the integral relationship between social presence, emotional engagement, and interactive communication in online language course. This relationship was necessary for promoting meaningful learning experiences and fostering a supportive learning community. First, social presence, as conceptualised in the CoI framework, referred to the degree to which students feel emotionally connected to others in an online learning environment. According to Garrison et al. (1999), social presence is key to creating a sense of community and trust, which directly impacts students' emotional engagement. In the context of TELL online course, emotional engagement involved students' affective responses, including feelings of motivation, confidence, and emotional connection, which are critical for sustaining their participation and improving learning outcomes. The findings of this study validated previous research that emphasised the significance of social presence in online learning, particularly in language acquisition contexts. For example, Richardson and Swan (2003) emphasised that social presence contributes to learners' emotional engagement, as it fostered a supportive and responsive environment, which is crucial for language students who may feel vulnerable when interacting in a non-native language.

Moreover, emotional engagement was found in TELL online course where interactive communication, such as discussion forums, peer feedback, and synchronous chats, was present. Students reported higher levels of motivation and commitment when they felt emotionally connected to both lecturer and peers, which aligns with findings from Meskill and Anthony (2018), who suggested that the emotional connection between students and their peers is especially important in language learning, where the emotional investment overcoming language barriers. Interactive communication, which includes the exchange of ideas, feedback, and social interactions in Zoom real-time session or Canvas asynchronously, was identified as a critical factor in enhancing emotional engagement in the study. Furthermore, the study found that students who actively participated in interactive communication channels such as Canvas forums, Zoom session and breakout room, and collaborative projects on creative space activity were more emotionally engaged compared to those who primarily engaged with static content. This finding aligns with recent studies such as Zhou (2021), which demonstrated that interactive communication, especially in synchronous formats, helped establish a sense of belonging, which in turn fostered emotional engagement. According to Lai and Hwang (2023), interactive communication not only enhances students' emotional engagement but also supports cognitive engagement, creating a dynamic environment where students feel supported and understood, and where their emotional needs are recognised. The study also revealed that interactive feedback, both from peers and lecturer, was critical in fostering a sense of emotional support. positive reinforcement and constructive feedback created a safe space for students to express themselves without fear of judgement. This finding mirrors the work of Brusilovsky and Millán (2007), who emphasised that interactive feedback enhances students' motivation and self-esteem, which are crucial components of emotional engagement.

Observation 2

> In the Canvas and Zoom session, the lecturer gave the opportunity to the students to share their opinion, as I observed the ppt/slide, the lecturer showed interactive questions in every part of the topic so the students can response directly or chat box (Online Course Observation Form #1, 29 January 2024).

The data from Observation 2 explained the finding that emotional engagement through interactive communication helped to promote greater students' participation in the online learning process. The students in this study who reported higher levels of social presence and emotional engagement through interactive communication also reported increased participation in language learning activities, such as group discussions, peer reviews, and synchronous learning sessions. This finding supported by Baya'a and Duwairi (2020), who found that emotional engagement is positively correlated with increased participation, which in turn enhances the effectiveness of learning outcomes. Furthermore, it extends the notion that the emotional dimension of

students' participation is not merely a peripheral feature of the learning experience but a central component that directly influences both the cognitive and behavioral aspects of online learning. In TELL online course, language students did not face feelings of isolation, particularly in asynchronous settings where immediate feedback respond by the lecturer and as stated in the finding that the students felt heard. As study claimed that interactive communication platforms facilitate emotional exchanges such as empathy, encouragement, and shared learning experiences, students are more likely to engage with the content and participate more actively in the course (Zhou & Lee, 2021). This dynamic is especially evident in peer interactions, where students support each other emotionally, which not only alleviates stress but also boosts motivation.

The findings of this study offer several implications for the design and implementation of the online learning space such as in TELL online course. First, instructional designers or lecturer prioritised the creation of learning environments that facilitate interactive communication. These environments offered opportunities for real-time collaboration, peer-to-peer feedback, and regular social interactions, all of which contribute to emotional engagement. Secondly, it is crucial to recognise the role of lecturer in promoting emotional engagement. Lecturer provided timely, supportive feedback and engage in activities that encourage emotional expression and collaboration. According to Swan et al. (2008), lecturer presence is an essential element of social presence, as it directly influences students' perceptions of the learning environment and their emotional commitment. Lastly, the findings suggested that student's autonomy in interaction fostered, with students being given the agency to initiate discussions, share insights, and collaborate freely. The emotional investment of students in online course increases when they are given ownership of their learning experiences and have the flexibility to interact and communicate in ways that suit their personal learning preferences as study stated by Hrastinski (2009). In conclusion, the findings suggest that CoI1 (Social Presence) plays a pivotal role in enhancing emotional engagement through interactive communication in TELL online course. Social presence fosters a supportive and engaging environment, where students are emotionally connected to both their lecturer and peers. This emotional engagement, in turn, encourages higher levels of participation, motivation, and retention in online language course.

Collaborative Learning as a Pedagogical Strategy

Collaborative learning refers to instructional approaches where students work together in groups to solve problems, complete tasks and create products. It is grounded in the notion that learning is a socially constructed process. I did the observation in the teaching learning process in TELL online classroom. There are several activities done by the lecturer, one of them such as doing breakout room discussion using creative space activity which can be done in real time by all the students and that principle that integrated into the online classroom created by the lecturer was collaborative learning.

Observation 3

> In Module 1 on Canvas, we can find warm-up and coffee break activities as community building and in the Zoom session, the students did group discussion in a creative space where they can collaborate with their peers (Online Course Observation Form #2, 5 February 2024).

Regarding the role of social presence in driving collaborative learning in TELL online course. It focused on how social presence influences students' sense of connection and promoted collaboration within online language course. Collaborative learning, as a pedagogical approach, is central to fostering a sense of community and mutual support, especially in online environment where physical interaction was absent.

Based on the data from the course design, encompasses several aspects that enhance social presence in collaborative learning there are:

"Warm-up" exercises in each module involved students' interaction or sharing.

The document explored the significance of "Warm-up" exercises in technology enhanced language learning modules, emphasising on the role in promoting student interaction and expression. It is strengthened by the statement from the student's statement from the interview. Furthermore, she stated that the 'Warm-up' section provides students with a chance to express her ideas and opinions.

> **Excerpt 2***: "Warm up" section gave me chances to express my ideas and opinion by answering the questions given and discussion related to the course and it has no limit to express. I can answer it as much as possible and I can comment on my friends' opinions too. (Yani [P1], 30 November 2024)

The "Warm-up" exercises incorporated in each module are designed to enhance students' interaction and engagement. These activities serve as a platform for students to connect with one another and share their thoughts, ultimately enriching the learning experience. A statement from a student during an interview reinforces this notion, indicating that the "Warm-up" section provides students with a valuable opportunity to express their ideas and opinions. This interaction not only promotes a sense of community within the classroom but also encourages students to articulate their thoughts more confidently. In conclusion, "Warm-up" exercises play a crucial role in facilitating student interaction and expression. By allowing students to share their ideas, these activities contribute to a more dynamic and inclusive learning environment. Another statement said by the participant regarding the social presence designed in Canvas, students felt comfortable interacting with the lecturers and other course

participants. Aligned with other students P2 argued that Canvas online discussions and group work help the student develop a sense of connectedness. It can be claimed that the features on canvas which designed by the lecturer enhanced social presence based on student perspective as follows:

> **Excerpt 3***: The lecturer's response and guide, also the activity provided in canvas like warm up, chat to the lecturer, discussion and sharing, intermezzo section and all the features made me not hesitate to interact with lecturers and other participants by commenting their opinions and ideas. (Dina [P2], 30 November 2024)

The statement from the participant in line with the observation from the teaching learning process and the document explores the impact of social presence within the canvas learning environment, highlighting student experience and perceptions. It emphasises the importance of interaction among students and lecturer, as well as the role of online discussions and group work in fostering a sense of community and connectedness.

The participant expressed positive sentiment regarding the social presence designed in Canvas. One participant previously noted that he felt comfortable interacting with both lecturer and fellow course participant. This comfort level is crucial for effective learning, as it encourages open communication and collaboration. Align with the perspective, he argued that the online discussion and group work facilitated by Canvas significantly contributed to the development of a sense of connectedness among students. This sense of community is essential for enhancing the overall learning experience, as it allows students to engage more deeply with the course topic and with each other. Social presence is defined as the degree to which participants in computer mediated communication feel effectively connected to one another, which significantly impacts student satisfaction and success in online courses. Figure 3 warm-up instruction explained data analysis from canvas the online learning platform reveals a structured warm-up activity titled "Introduce Yourself" in Module 1: Lesson Plan and Learning Objectives. The prompt invites students to share their name, learning goal, and three fun facts about themselves, followed by a note encouraging them to reply in a discussion thread. The tone is casual, friendly, and inclusive, indicated by the emoji and the accompanying animated image stating, "I AM ME." This activity exemplifies the intentional design of collaborative learning experiences that center on building connections and humanising online interactions from the outset. It invited students to share personal dimensions of themselves in a semi-structured way, which fosters trust, relatability, and emotional engagement all fundamental to sustaining collaborative efforts throughout the course.
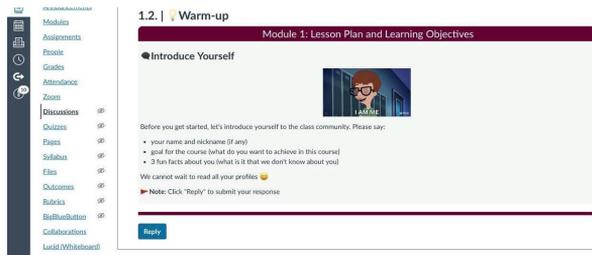
Document Analysis 2

Figure 3. Warm-up instruction (Data from Document Analysis 1, 29 January 2024)

Figure 4 showed the instructions given by the lecturer for students to response to a self-introduction prompt in an online discussion forum, Canvas. This artifact serves as rich qualitative data illustrating as indicators of social presence, students' identity formation, and the humanising potential of collaborative digital pedagogy. The responses from two students on the figure demonstrated how introductory tasks in a digital learning environment foster relational visibility and early community formation. Both students follow the lecturer's prompt, offering their preferred names/nicknames, goals for the course and personal fun facts, which include habits, preferences, and reflections. It goes beyond compliance with a task as they construct identity, build trust, and model vulnerability, all of which are key features of effective collaborative learning environments. The data in Figure 3 clearly shows that students engaged not only cognitively but also emotionally and socially through self-expression. These early interactions are not peripheral; they lay the groundwork for a collaborative learning space in which trust, curiosity, and mutual respect can flourish.
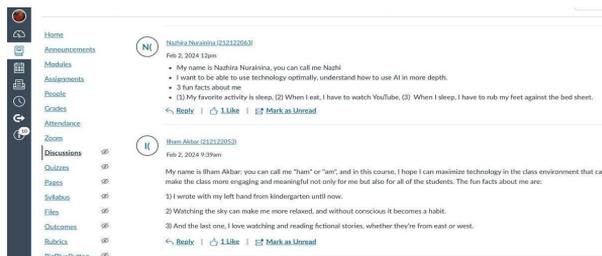
Document Analysis 3

Figure 4. Students' work on Canvas (Data from Document Analysis 1, 29 January 2024)

Warm-up activities which mentioned in the finding in line with the studies claimed that warm up activities effectively introduce positive adjustment and help lecturer and students maximise their shared potential. Warm up activities in language classes are useful for generating interest, creating a welcoming environment, encouraging participation, and attracting attention (Boivan & Striuk, 2023; Akther, 2014). The study from Swan and Shih (2019) defined that the concept of social presence in online learning environment. Canvas, as a platform for online discussion and group work, has been shown to help students develop a sense of connectedness. This is aligned with the finding that social presence enhanced students' ability to engage socially with an online learning community, which can positively affect their academic performance (Joksimović et al., 2015). In conclusion, the finding suggested that the design of social presence in Canvas plays a vital role in promoting interaction and connectedness among students, ultimately enriching their educational experience.

The "Contribute" label on these warm-up activities implies student engagement.

The "Contribute" label on warm-up activities signifies an essential aspect of students' engagement in the online learning process. This document explores the implications of this label, emphasising its role in fostering active participation, collaboration, and a sense of ownership among students. By examining the significance of contribution in educational settings, we can better understand how to enhance student involvement and improve learning outcomes.

Student engagement is a critical factor in effective learning. When students are actively involved in their education, they are more likely to retain information, develop critical thinking skills, and cultivate a love for learning. The "Contribute" label serves as a reminder that students are not just passive recipients of information but active participants in their educational journey. Based on the data from the canvas designed by the lecturer, there are several activities when students access the course for the first time, the student feels welcomed. P6 said in the interview:

> **Excerpt 4**: When I access the course, I felt welcome because there is a guide from the lecturer before the first meeting, I also got the chance to ask about the course to the lecturer at that time, and there are also modules prepared by the lecturers that provides much information that I need for learning. (Rina [P6], 2 December 2024)

Warm-up activities labelled with "Contribute" encourage students to share their thoughts, ideas, and experiences. This participation took various forms, such as group discussions, brainstorming sessions, or collaborative projects. By inviting students to contribute, the lecturer created an inclusive environment where every voice is valued, fostering a sense of community and belonging. The "Contribute" label also highlights the importance of collaboration among students. When students work together to solve

problems or complete tasks, they learn from one another and develop essential social skills. Collaborative learning experiences led to deeper understanding and retention of concepts, as students engage in dialogue and exchange diverse perspectives. Evidence of these behaviors was sought in the messages that were posted by students as they interacted in online work groups. Analysis of students' contributions reveals that there is substantial evidence of collaboration, but that there are differences between conventional face-to-face instances of collaborative learning and what occurs in an asynchronous, networked environment.

When students are encouraged to contribute, they take ownership of their learning. This sense of responsibility motivated them to invest more effort into their studies and strive for excellence. The "Contribute" label empowers students to take initiative, ask questions, and seek help when needed, ultimately leading to a more enriching educational experience. In summary, the "Contribute" label on warm-up activities is a powerful tool for promoting student engagement. By fostering active participation, collaboration, and a sense of ownership, the lecturer created a dynamic learning environment that enhances student outcomes. Emphasising the importance of contribution not only enriches the educational online experience but also prepares students for future challenges in their academic and professional lives.

The presence of "Class/Zoom Prep" sections imply synchronous sessions in which students participate in online learning.

Social presence is also specifically mentioned in discussion boards on canvas, group projects on creative space, and peer feedback activities, which are standard methods for increasing social presence in online courses. In this context, the data from the participant statement said by P4 that the "Orientation" Module clearly communicates the course goal. The data showed:

> **Excerpt 5**: The orientation module provides the information related to the course goal, the lecturers and other course participants so that I can identify all the elements in the course and build interpersonal relationships with the lecturers and friends. (Ujang [P4], 2 December 2024)

The inclusion of "Class/Zoom Prep" sections in online courses indicates that there are scheduled synchronous sessions where students engage in real-time learning. These sessions are crucial for creating a sense of community and immediacy among participants. By allowing students to interact live, the lecturer facilitated discussions, clarify concepts, and encourage collaborative learning experiences. This synchronous interaction is essential for building relationships and enhancing the overall learning experience. In this context, social presence refers to the degree to which participants in a community feel connected to one another. In online learning, social presence is vital for student engagement, motivation, and satisfaction. When students feel a sense of belonging, they are more likely to participate actively and contribute to discussions.

Based on the observation session, I saw the connection can be fostered through various methods done by the lecturer. There are discussion boards "creative space" that provide a platform for students to share their thoughts, ask questions, and engage with their peers asynchronously. These forums allow for reflection and deeper engagement with course material, as students can take their time to formulate responses. By the design of the canvas, its enhanced students' social presence by pushing the students actively participating in these discussions, prompting further dialogue, and encouraging students to respond to one another. The lecturer called the collaborative group projects in "creative space". Those are another effective way to enhance social presence. By working together towards a common goal, students can build relationships and develop a sense of teamwork. The lecturer facilitated this process by providing clear guidelines and support for group dynamics. Not only collaborative group projects but also there are peer feedback activities which allow the students to provide constructive criticism and support to one another. This process not only helped students improve their work but also fostered a sense of community and trust. When students engage in giving and receiving feedback, they developed a deeper understanding of the material and strengthen their connections with peers.

Figure 5 introduced a session titled #CreativeSpace 1, emphasising the lesson plan and learning objectives. The use of a hashtag in the session title suggested an effort to create a shared learning culture, one that is dynamic, identifiable, and potentially extended into social or collaborative digital platforms. This naming practice itself is symbolic: it communicates inclusivity, openness to expression, and a focus on student centred creativity. The content is formalised in a digital format (Google Slides), indicating that the lecturer employs structured instructional design while remaining adaptive to technology-enhanced collaborative contexts. The presence of a clearly dated agenda highlights the value placed on transparency, orientation, and instructional scaffolding, which are key to effective online learning environments.

Document Analysis 4

Figure 5. Creative Space Instruction 1 (Students' work collaboration) (Data from Document Analysis 2, 5 February 2024)

Other data from the document analysis can be seen on Figure 6 clearly frames the session with a title #CreativeSpace 1, signalling an intentional, thematic learning experience focused on "Lesson Plan & Learning Objectives." This early introduction of a structured, humanised space builds the foundation for later collaborative learning dynamics, such as peer discussion, co-creation, and reflective dialogue. It also enables students to anticipate their role in the digital classroom, smoother onboarding into social presence practices (introductions, group work, storytelling), scaffolding of digital literacy and responsibility, especially when followed by interactive tasks or discussions. Moreover, as this is presented on a Google Slides platform, it reflects the multimodal fluency required in TELL online course environments, preparing students to navigate and contribute to digitally mediated collaborative learning spaces.
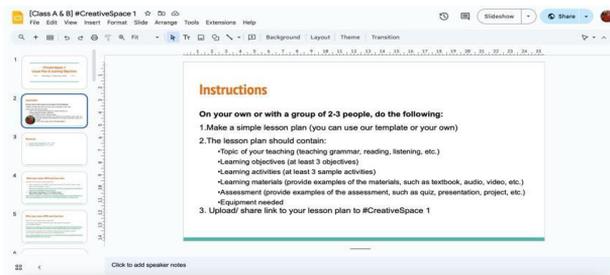
Document Analysis 5

Figure 6. Creative Space Instruction 2 (Lecturer's Instruction) (Data from Document Analysis 2, 5 February 2024)

In conclusion, the presence of "Class/Zoom Prep" sections in online courses highlights the importance of synchronous learning experiences in fostering social presence. However, it is equally important to incorporate asynchronous methods such as discussion boards, group projects, and peer feedback activities to create a well-rounded and engaging online learning environment. By prioritising social presence, the lecturer enhanced student engagement and satisfaction, ultimately leading to a more successful online learning experience. Another statement strengthened the previous statement stated by P2 showed how social presence is provided by the lecturer to accommodate in the context of online learning:

> **Excerpt 6**: Canvas online discussions and group work, I and my friends or my group mates would discuss the assignment, divide work, and it helps me develop collaboration sense because we worked together. (Dina [P2], 30 November 2024)

Based on the statement, the learning management system canvas which is modified by the lecturer and his role in providing social presence is vital. By creating opportunities for students to engage in discussions and collaborative projects, lecturer helped students feel more connected to their peers. This connection is essential for developing a collaborative mindset, as students learn to communicate, share ideas, and work towards common goals. In summary, the integration of social presence through online discussions and group work not only enriches the learning experience but also fosters a sense of community among students. This collaborative environment is essential for effective online learning, as it encourages students to engage actively with their peers and develop essential teamwork skills.

The role of Social Presence in driving collaborative learning in TELL online course, specifically, it focused on how social presence influences students' sense of connection and promotes collaboration within online language courses. Collaborative learning, as a pedagogical approach, is central to fostering a sense of community and mutual support, especially in online environments where physical interaction is absent. The findings suggest that the design of social presence in Canvas plays a vital role in promoting interaction and connectedness among students, ultimately enriching their educational experience. The concept of Social Presence, as defined in the CoI framework (Garrison et al., 1999), refers to the degree to which students feel connected to others in an online environment. It is a key enabler of collaborative learning as it allows students to communicate, share ideas, and work together effectively, even in asynchronous and geographically distributed settings.

This study found that students who perceived a higher degree of social presence were more inclined to engage in collaborative activities. Social presence is associated with the establishment of trust, open communication, and a supportive atmosphere, which are necessary for effective collaboration. These findings are consistent with Richardson and Swan (2003), who argued that social presence fosters students' engagement and collaboration by creating a sense of community and shared purpose. In the context of TELL online course, where students are often dealing with language barriers and isolation, social presence enhances the quality of interactions and collaboration. Bowers and Kumar (2015) argue that collaborative learning in language courses significantly improves students' language skills, as it provides opportunities for real-time peer feedback, reflection, and negotiation of meaning. As social presence increases, students were more likely to actively participate, initiate discussions, and collaborate on problem-solving tasks. Study from Curtis and Lawson (2019) argued that the literature on collaborative learning has identified a range of behaviors that characterise successful collaborative learning in face-to-face situations.

Collaborative learning referred to a online teaching and learning method where students work together to achieve shared learning objectives. In TELL online course, collaborative learning was facilitated by online tools such as discussion forums, group

projects, peer assessments, and synchronous video meetings. The findings from this study suggested that collaborative learning not only improves language acquisition but also plays a crucial role in enhancing social presence and students' sense of connection. Connection, in this context, refers to both emotional and cognitive connections between students, which were found to be significantly stronger when collaborative learning was integrated into the course design. students in the study reported feeling more connected to their peers and lecturer when they participated in collaborative activities, such as group discussions, peer reviews, and collaborative tasks especially in creative space. This finding is in line with Garrison et al. (2010), who proposed that collaborative learning, when underpinned by strong social presence, leads to the creation of a community of inquiry, fostering both cognitive and emotional connections among participants. The role of collaborative learning as a driver of connection is particularly important in language learning, where interaction is key to overcoming anxiety, building confidence, and developing linguistic skills. According to Zhou (2021), students who engage in collaborative activities report feeling less isolated and more emotionally invested in their learning, which in turn leads to improved language proficiency. This sense of connection also facilitates knowledge construction, as students bring diverse perspectives and experiences to the collaborative tasks, enriching the learning process.

The findings also highlight the importance of peer interaction and peer feedback in driving connection within TELL online course. Peer feedback, facilitated by collaborative learning activities, allowed students to share insights, correct each other's mistakes, and offer emotional support. The study found that students who provided and received feedback in group settings on creative space reported feeling more connected to their peers and more confident in their abilities to use the language effectively. This result aligns with the work of Gikandi et al. (2011) who found that peer feedback enhances social presence by encouraging students to engage more actively and personally with their peers. Collaborative learning fosters a reciprocal learning environment where students are not just recipients of knowledge but also contributors to the learning process of others. This mutual interaction builds trust and connection, essential components of effective social presence. Moreover, interaction quality was found to be more important than quantity. Students in the study reported that meaningful, constructive feedback, rather than frequent or superficial interactions, contributed more to their sense of connection and engagement. This is consistent with Swan and Shih (2005) who argue that the quality of interaction in collaborative settings directly influences students' emotional and cognitive engagement.

The study also examined how various technological tools enhance collaborative learning and foster social presence. Online discussion forums, video conferencing, and shared digital workspaces (e.g., Google Docs, Google Slide, magicschool.ai, and invideo. ai) were identified as key enablers of collaboration. These tools allow students to participate in real-time interactions, share resources, and engage in reflective dialogues that deepen their understanding of language and culture. The findings suggest that

technology acts as a bridge for communication, especially in a diverse, multilingual learning environment. For instance, Zhang and Zou (2021) showed that technology-mediated communication tools help students overcome geographical and cultural barriers, creating a sense of closeness and shared experience. By allowing students to work together in real time or asynchronously, technology ensures that social presence is not limited by time zones or physical distance. However, while technology enhances the opportunity for collaboration, its impact on social presence and connection depends heavily on the instructional design. According to Anderson et al. (2001), without careful integration of social presence enhancing strategies (e.g., structured group work, peer collaboration activities), the potential of technology to drive meaningful connection may be underutilised. Thus, instructional strategies that promote social presence purposefully integrated with technology tools to maximize the benefits of collaborative learning.

One of the literatures claimed the positive view of the social presence from Zhang et al. (2024) defined that social presence positively impacts learning satisfaction and persistence in online learning environments, reducing student disengagement and isolation. The findings of this study have several implications for the design and implementation of TELL online course. First, as lecturer prioritised collaborative learning activities that encourage frequent and meaningful interactions among students. These activities structured to foster social presence by providing opportunities for students to share ideas, collaborate on tasks, and give and receive feedback in a supportive environment. Second, students' autonomy should be incorporated into the collaborative learning process. Giving students the responsibility to organize and lead collaborative activities encourages them to take ownership of their learning and enhances their emotional and cognitive engagement with the course content. This finding is consistent with Lai and Hwang (2023), who emphasise that students centered approaches are crucial in maximising the impact of collaborative learning on social presence. Finally, lecturer trained to facilitate collaborative learning in online environments effectively. According to Swan (2002), lecturers need to actively monitor and engage with collaborative activities, providing guidance, support, and feedback, when necessary, while also creating a space for students to take initiative and collaborate with their peers. This helps in creating a strong community of inquiry, where social presence and collaborative learning go hand-in-hand. In conclusion, this study underscores the critical role of Social Presence in driving collaborative learning in TELL online course. Collaborative learning fostered connection by encouraging students to engage with peers and lecturer in a meaningful and supportive manner. This connection not only enhances students' emotional and cognitive engagement but also plays a significant role in improving language acquisition outcomes.

Lecturer Presence as a Catalyst

The significance of visible lecturer engagement in an online learning environment, emphasising how consistent communication and interaction enhanced social presence among students. By examining the impact of weekly video updates and timely responses to student inquiries, I aimed to highlight the essential role the lecturer plays in creating a supportive and engaging learning atmosphere. Visible lecturer engagement, such as weekly video updates and prompt responses to questions, was highlighted as a critical factor in fostering social presence seen in the online learning process. The personal touch of video updates allows lecturer to connect with students on a more human level, making the learning experience feel more personalised and invested.

> **Excerpt 7**: The weekly video updates made me feel like the lecturer was really invested in our learning. (Siti [P5], 2 December 2024)

This sentiment underscores the importance of lecturer being present and active in their course. When student perceive her lecturer as approachable and engaged, it led to increased motivation, participation, and overall satisfaction with the course. As shown on Figure 7, the course homepage displays a visually engaging, student-centred design with a warm welcome banner, a cartoon image depicting community learning, and a brief introductory video embedded at the centre. The textual welcome explains the course duration, goals, and humanistic orientation emphasising that teaching with technology should be "not only technology-advanced but also still humanising." This homepage serves not just as an entry point to course content, but as a relational and motivational space, setting a tone of community, clarity, and care.

Document Analysis 6

Figure 7. Home module lecturer welcoming the students (Data from Document Analysis 1, 29 January 2024)

The lecturer presence acted as a powerful catalyst in creating a supportive and dynamic online learning environment, crucial for encouraging learner engagement, social

connection, and motivation. In online language learning settings, the lecturer's active and visible participation has significant implications for social interaction, emotional engagement, and ultimately, the success of collaborative learning outcomes. The concept of Social Presence, as introduced in the CoI framework (Garrison et al., 1999), mentions to the degree to which students feel, they can express themselves and form interpersonal relationships in an online learning environment. Social presence enhanced communication and interaction, which is essential in language learning, where affective and cognitive engagement plays a crucial role. The findings of this study suggested that lecturer presence defined as the extent to which the lecturer actively engages with students and provides clear, timely, and supportive feedback directly influences the development of social presence in TELL online course. Lecturers' active involvement in both synchronous and asynchronous communication channels not only reinforces students' sense of connection but also creates an emotionally supportive learning environment. This is consistent with the work of Garrison et al. (2010) who assert that lecturer presence is a key component of social presence and significantly impacts students' emotional and cognitive engagement. Lecturer in this study who was actively present in discussions, provided immediate feedback, and facilitated peer-to-peer interactions were perceived as more approachable, thereby enhancing students' comfort level in expressing themselves, which is particularly important in the context of language learning. This emotional connection facilitates learning by promoting positive affective responses and reducing anxiety, which is often heightened in language learners, particularly in virtual settings (Richardson & Swan, 2003).

Observation 4

The lecturer said many times that the students can ask for help if they find difficulties or challenging situation such as canvas problem, topic or unclear instruction through chat on canvas, WhatsApp group or e-mail (Online Course Observation Form #1, 29 January 2024).

The finding from Observation 4 demonstrated that lecturer presence serves as a catalyst for increased students' engagement in online language course. Specifically, when lecturer was perceived as present and involved, and willing to present in any mode and platform, students were engaging actively with the course material, collaborate with peers, and participate in online discussions. Active engagement with the lecturer was seen as a means of confirming the relevance of the learning content and the value of the students' contributions. This aligns with Chickering and Gamson's (1987) principles of good practice in undergraduate education, which emphasise the importance of active teaching and faculty involvement in fostering a sense of connection. The results also support Hrastinski (2009), who highlighted that lecturer presence, especially when engaging in real time interactions such as video conferences and live discussions, has a profound impact on students' emotional and cognitive engagement. students often view

lecturer as role models and their active engagement not only enhances the quality of the learning experience but also promotes sustained motivation throughout the course.

Interestingly, the study found that students who perceived a higher level of lecturer immediacy defined as the use of warm, empathetic, and supportive communication styles reported feeling more connected to the course and to their peers. Nonverbal cues, such as tone of voice in video lectures or the speed of response in discussions, were also highlighted as important factors that contributed to this heightened sense of connection. According to Burke and Roberts (2017), these behaviours signal that the lecturer is genuinely interested in the students' success, thereby increasing student engagement.

Motivation is one of the most significant factors influencing successful learning outcomes, particularly in the challenging context of language acquisition. The study's findings suggest that lecturer presence plays a central role in enhancing learner motivation. Students who reported a strong sense of lecturer presence also reported higher levels of intrinsic motivation and a stronger commitment to their language learning goals. This finding is supported by Tinto (1997), who emphasised that student motivation is closely tied to the presence of supportive, engaged faculty members who create a nurturing and interactive learning environment. Lecturer actively participated in discussions and provide timely, constructive feedback help students overcome obstacles and maintain a positive attitude toward the course content. According to Teo et al. (2015), lecturer presence not only helps foster a sense of motivation but also facilitates a more personal and humanised online learning experience, which is essential in language courses where emotional engagement is vital.

The study also identified that lecturer presence is essential in creating and sustaining a learning community in online language course. In TELL online course, a sense of community is critical to sustaining motivation, engagement, and connection among students. The lecturer's role in fostering this community extends beyond merely delivering content; it included initiating discussions, providing feedback, and actively participating in peer interactions. This finding resonates with Lave and Wenger's (1991) theory of communities of practice, where learning is viewed as a social process that involves interaction, participation, and collaboration. In the context of TELL online learning, the lecturer's active presence helped create a dynamic, inclusive, and interactive community of students who are able to support one another in the language learning process. Garrison et al. (1999) further emphasise that lecturer's active involvement is crucial for establishing a "community of inquiry," where students are not passive recipients of knowledge but active participants in constructing their learning.

The lecturer encouraged group work, facilitated peer feedback, and responded to students concerns promptly was able to foster a sense of belonging and interdependence

among students. This sense of community increased students' confidence in their language skills and created a supportive environment in which they felt comfortable taking risks and making mistakes an essential component of language learning. The study explored how technology can be leveraged to enhance lecturer presence in TELL online learning. Online tools such as video lectures, discussion boards, and live chat sessions were identified as effective in facilitating lecturer interaction. However, the impact of technology on lecturer presence was contingent on how actively the tools were utilised by instructors. Zhou (2021) emphasises that technology mediated communication tools help lecturers maintain presence across time and space, offering students flexibility while still maintaining meaningful engagement. The study found that lecturer used asynchronous video feedback or held synchronous office hours via video conferencing tools were perceived as more present and engaged, thereby improving students' perceptions of social presence and fostering more meaningful interactions.

Furthermore, digital storytelling, podcasts, and real-time annotations in shared documents were highlighted as effective methods as lecturer to personalize his presence, making learning more interactive and human centered. These tools not only foster collaboration and communication but also serve as a reminder to students that the lecturer is actively involved in their learning journey. The findings underscore the importance of lecturer presence in the design and delivery of TELL online course. The lecturer prioritised features that facilitate active involvement and create opportunities for real-time interaction between lecturer and students. This includes incorporating tools such as video conferencing, live chats, and discussion forums that enable lecturer to engage actively with students. Additionally, lecturer trained in maintaining a balance between cognitive presence (content delivery) and affective presence (emotional support). The use of nonverbal cues, timely feedback, and empathetic communication emphasised in online learning process. This ensured that lecturer is not only seen as content experts but also as guides and mentors, further enhancing the students' sense of connection and motivation.

In conclusion, lecturer presence is identified as a critical catalyst in fostering social presence and enhancing students' engagement in TELL online courses. Lecturer was actively present and engaged in the course contribute significantly to the creation of a supportive and interactive learning online environment, which enhanced students' motivation, emotional engagement, and connection to the course content and peers.

CONCLUSION

Educators in higher education should consider implementing the following strategies to enhance social presence such as personalising communication and feedback, encouraging collaborative activities and peer interaction, maintaining a visible and active presence in the online learning classroom. This study underscored the critical

role of social presence in humanising online learning environment in higher education. By fostering emotional engagement, collaboration, and lecturer visibility, educators can create more inclusive and supportive digital classrooms. Future research should explore the application of these findings in diverse educational contexts and investigate the long-term impact of humanised online learning practices.

While this study provides valuable insights, it is not without limitations. The focus on a single graduate programme may limit the generalisability of the findings to other disciplines or education levels. Future research should explore the role of social presence in diverse context, including undergraduate programs and cross-cultural settings. Longitudinal studies could also examine the sustained impact of social presence strategies on learner outcomes over time. Fostering social presence is essential for humanising online learning. Emotional engagement, collaboration, and lecturer presence were identified as key components that contributed to students' sense of belonging and motivation. The results align with prior research emphasising the importance of social presence in enhancing online learning experiences. However, this study provides unique insights into the specific strategies and actions that foster humanisation in higher education contexts.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest in this work.

DATA AVAILABILITY

No new data were created or analysed in this study. Data sharing is not applicable to this article.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CONTRIBUTIONS OF AUTHORS

Ratu Sarah Pujasari: Conceptualisation, Methodology, Writing – original draft preparation, Data collection

Januarius Mujianto: Supervision, Project administration, Formal analysis, Writing – review and editing.

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STATEMENT OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) USE

The use of artificial intelligence in this manuscript complied with the journal's ethical guidelines. ChatGPT (OpenAI, GPT-5) was utilised for linguistic refinement and preliminary idea development under the direct supervision of the authors. No generative content was included without human verification, and the authors bear sole responsibility for the accuracy and integrity of the work.

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