Virtual Café: Equitizing Online Learning within Active and Meaningful Community of Learning in the EFL Content Subjects

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ABSTRACT

Emergency remote learning has led students and teachers to interact in distance by the involvement of media, platforms and learning strategies within a full virtual learning community. This study aims to investigate community of online learning in the E-learning class and how this can humanise the online learning. There are 26 students of Post-Graduate Program of a teacher training University in Bali involved in this mixed methods study. The data were gathered from Virtual Café using observation checklist and an interview guide. The checklist for observation was developed in three aspects of Community of Inquiry; Cognitive Presence, Teaching Presence, and Social Presence. Those presences are identified as quantitative data which then supported by an interview that combined 6 aspects of Humanising Online Learning; a liquid syllabus, adaptive teaching, visual and dynamic homepage, asynchronous video communications, asynchronous video discussions, and wisdom wall as qualitative data. The study revealed that students' posts and comments are categorised into life experiences, interests, and trending issues which lead them to have a community of online learning and feel humanised. The use of Virtual Café has facilitated the students to learn comfortably by not feeling left out in the content subject virtual class since it keeps engaging them to participate in interesting ways while being humane. This study implies that active, effective, and humanised online learning can be optimally carried out by considering all learning aspects as one community within humanised learning ecosystem.

Keywords: *Virtual Café, Community of Learning, Humanizing Online Learning, EFL, Content Subjects*

1. INTRODUCTION

The needs of collaboration in learning have been examined with trial and error specifically in online learning nowadays. [1] acknowledged that technology used in online learning contributes to and assists both teacher and students in the learning. The learning is in form synchronous and asynchronous learning modes [2], [3], [4]. In conjunction with the synchronous and asynchronous learning, asynchronous with text-based communication appears as the main and enjoyable learning method [5], [6], [2], [7]. Then, students' participation is really needed to support it [8]. In online learning, the students are encouraged to communicate themselves to bridging their learning as a basic skill in the learning community. However, according to [9], the communication is only focused in asynchronous mode, stressful online class and synchronous mode. This against the concept where the learning should be not mysterious yet thoughtful during the independent learning [8], [9]. Another issue is derived from the digital divide that appears along the journey of online

class which affects the community development in learning somehow the interaction and communication are counted in [10]. [6] found that the students did not have transactional distance with the teachers. It is only one – way communication even though asynchronous class has been implemented as well. To tackle this, the teachers have to work hard in providing assignments and mostly give feedback of the learning by involving the communication in a one learning community [11]. As the learning community gauges three main virtual concepts such as interactions, learning improvement, and emotional expressions, all of the learning taught is designed by purpose [12]. This is also assisted by the use of digital inclusion which was derived from the existence of digital divide between students who learn using full online [10].

In the classroom context, social networking sites take a part in promoting the interaction and community of learning. For instance, university students have been exposed to the use of web-based instruction as it is helpful for them to facilitate their learning and

communication among peers and groups [7]. The use of web-based instruction is also varied depending on the instructor's goal to make the students comfortable in learning. Even though the learning is carried out fully online, previous research revealed that the virtual learning is less humanised for the learners as it has stressing meeting, no expressions seen, limited chance to have distance interaction, and trust issue along the learning, the teachers' innovation and roles in designing the learning is in a need to be actualised [13], [14], [15], [16], [9], [10]. This study focuses on the use of a lecturer innovation called as Virtual Café in the online learning of a content subject and how it helps the students to share thoughts and convenience in their learning as their needs of learning community.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Sense of community in learning can be experienced by Community of Inquiry as basic of the online learning humanisation. The Community of Inquiry is the basic of Humanisation of Online Learning [17], [5]. The concept of teaching and learning process is to use technology and various suitable platforms and learning management system that needs to humanise the students and their learning [1], [10], [17]. These two complete one another. According to [18], [17], [5], [9], [19], Community of Inquiry is a meaningful online learning process within social, teaching, and cognitive presences. Social presence deals with the community build through social interaction by participating in the learning as a place to share emotion and knowledge [17], [5]. They act as they are in a real situation with the other participants in a real community. They all together maintain the bounding in the community through open communication, affective expression, and group interaction with tasks [18]. It was defined that Cognitive Presence refers to the presence of critical thinking and higher order thinking in the learning community. Again, communication is the most needed skill. It goes through the triggering phase, exploration, integration, and resolution [20]. Meanwhile, Teaching Presence is derived from meaningful instruction with planning, progressing, and implementing the facilities. According to [20], [17], teachers do need to design the learning, and facilitate all communication in the learning system, and give them cognitive opportunity to use the knowledge. Lastly, teaching presence is divided into three main components; instructional design, facilitating discourse, and direct instruction [9], [18]. Design organisation is a subcomponent of teaching presence which covers the teaching plan, process, interaction in it, and evaluation. Good planning equals to success learning fulfilment [9]. Facilitating discourse is the students' engagement and instructors' responsibility to maintain discussion and engagement in the virtual class [17]. Therefore, direct instruction and feedback in the learning process and the availability of the learning sources are important.

The idea to conduct a learning community has dealt with engagement too. Social, cognitive and emotional engagement are categorised as the learning community support [21]. It was highlighted that social engagement is the students' interaction quality they build, cognitive engagement deals with knowledge organisations and solving problem's ability, and they are expected to be emotionally engaged as a reaction toward learning experiences which covers about interest and sense of belonging in the learning community.

Online Learning Community as education growth within the use of technology [12], [22]. Teachers' strategies online learning affect the learning community as the teacher owns the roles of planning and facilitating the learning [22]. There are four advantages of learning instruction with technology assistance according to [21]. The first is work on creativity. The students will be triggered to learn themselves by the technology used. The second is interaction in online learning can benefit the students in term of social community and this promote their cognitive and understanding. The third is collaboration opportunity. The fourth is collaborative work and its way to track their learning. What facilitates the learning is matter in online learning. The use of audio and live video is considered demanding, for example, expressions in giving instruction will affect the meaning conveyed and learning environment [23]. That defines that being humanised is to have a learning environment which stand up for all students in the classroom as they will not feel left behind or even alone [23], [24]. [24] requires this as a warm introduction as the class is started as well as chances to be in the classroom discussion. Six thoughtful ways teachers create active, meaningful and humanised online learning are a liquid syllabus, adaptive teaching, visual and dynamic homepage, asynchronous video communications, asynchronous video discussions, and wisdom wall [24].

Other than that, educators can humanise an online learning in 6 other ways namely add tone, use expressive language, create biographies, create a virtual break room, model appropriate interaction, and create an ethical community of learners [25], [23], [16]. [14] added that humanisation is connected to the communication and interaction to gain the social and cognitive presences by emphasising the facial expression such as raising eyebrows, showing confusion, and volume of tone. In real implementation, synchronous online learning also makes the students experience themselves as "real people", have an authentic, spontaneous discussion, share experiences, share learning, trusting relationship [15]. However, the use of technology in online learning for higher students are varied depending on the criteria of their learning and the students' engagement. [16] added that playfulness can be a choice to open the online learning community up in order to build the students' trust and humanisation atmosphere. Once they trust, they are open to share thoughts, ideas, learning experiences as what has been set as the learning goals. Besides, this will help to actualise the humanisation of online learning as the

students are engaged in a real games as same as in the real meeting in face-to-face classroom [16], [25], [21].

3. METHOD

3.1. Participants

This study involves 26 students of post-graduate program who are majoring English Language Education in North Bali, Indonesia. The students join full online learning class in academic year 2020/2021.

3.2. Instruments

The Community of Inquiry (COI) and Humanisation of Online Learning (HOL) level of students are based on COI and HOL dimensions in the form of an observation checklist and interview guide. The observation checklist is adapted from [26] and [24] in which the expert judgment has been implemented to check the validity of the observation checklist. Gregory formula has been used and the result revealed that the instrument judgment is valid in 1.00. The checklist is used to gather the quantitative data as well as to confirm the availability of the COI and HOL dimensions in the online learning. Afterwards, students are interviewed online to strengthen the data as well as to gain the qualitative data. All of the data are interpreted at the same time by stating the results and followed by the discussions.

4. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

The findings from this study are a combination of the mean data from the Virtual Café observation checklist and the online questionnaire spread to the participants. It was found that the availability of teaching presence, social presence, and cognitive presence as well as the humanisation of online learning in its six dimensions including liquid syllabus, adaptive teaching, visual and dynamic homepage, asynchronous video communications, asynchronous video discussions, and wisdom wall. The community of online learning is separated into three analysis that can be seen in Table 1, 2 and 3.

Table 1. Teaching presence

Descriptive Statistics								
	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Sum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Statistic
YES	13	.00	1.00	1.00	13.00	1.0000	.00000	.00000	.000
NO	13	.00	.00	.00	.00	.0000	.00000	.00000	.000
Valid N (listwise)	13								

Through Virtual Café, the activities done by the master degree students are part of online learning community or presence. Specifically, the students can obviously experience the teaching presence with

maximum mean score or the score is 1.00. Virtual café is new for them. From the observation of Virtual Café and the comments leave by the students, it has shown that the learning has been facilitated with communication between both lecturer and students. Virtual Café has been known by the students as a way to yield engagement and productive dialogue in the form of less-strict virtual room. The data from the questionnaire has revealed that students stated beneficial impact of the Virtual Café.

"Virtual Café has helped me in getting to know my friends in online learning as I can see their favourite topics shared"

This proves that Virtual Café is recognised meaningful to relief the students' stress in learning as they can share thoughts and communicate. It has been accommodating the quality of teaching presence in the form of support to keep the students interacting themselves one another. A lesson learnt from their skill to write is automatically improved too. In addition, Virtual Café can motivate the students to check their e-learning.

"That is interesting. It is a stress healer"
"It is really helpful"
"It is good. It makes me relax in learning"

This confirms that Virtual Café is relevant to be used to share interest one another in online community. Other than that, the students are eased in accessing the course material and syllabus used. The students are provided with syllabus that can be easily accessed and checked through smartphone because it is designed to be handy. During the teaching and learning process, feedback is never be ignored as the representation of teaching presence. Various learning materials and methods lead the students to be motivated in learning as one real example of feedback experienced. Rich feedback is gotten in form of motivation both synchronous and asynchronous modes as well as interests posted in Virtual Café. The students' responses are recorded as follows:

"In academic context, my lecturer gives me motivation by providing us learning sources which is quite accessible. Meanwhile mentally, the lecturer always supports us by telling tips for learning and we are pleased to keep it up for better learning outcomes"
"Emotional support is given to encourage students in maintaining their learning motivation. One example done is the availability of learning sources"

"Constructive and positive feedback"

"Being facilitated in discussion and the lecturer helped us to reduce our anxiety of our grade as well as remind us to try our best"

"In the virtual meeting, the lecturer gives us support too"

"He listens to the students' concern in learning and help as much as possible he can do"

"Comments and suggestions are derived from learning community in the e-learning where materials are uploaded, peer review is maximized, and learning conduct is agreed beforehand"

According to these responses, the teaching presence within three subcomponents are well confirmed. As it covers the instructional design, facilitated discussion, and also the direct feedback from the lecturer even though the class is conducted fully online. This is relevant to the use of asynchronous video communications in the form of learning sources provided by the lecturers. The students click the link feature as follows:

Figure 1. Dynamic homepage and accessible learning materials

This facilitates the students to identify improvement needed and lessons learnt in the learning. According to [27] and [28], feedback is essential learning component so then it is helpful to guide students' to the learning goals. Virtual café and the online learning used in this course observed does not meet the component of wisdom wall. However, the feedback for the teaching presence dimension in the e-learning is utilised in each session of the topic. This is associated to the various kinds of method used by the lecturer which has become milestones for the students to love the learning. This is how Virtual Café helps the students to be encouraged in interacting with others while checking their e-learning. In its process to communicate the learning, the students are automatically engaged in social community too. Table 2 shows the result of the observation checklist.

Table 2. Social presence

Descriptive Statistics									
	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Sum	Mean		Std. Deviation	Variance
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Statistic
YES	9	1.00	.00	1.00	7.00	.7778	.14699	.44096	.194
NO	9	1.00	.00	1.00	2.00	.2222	.14699	.44096	.194
Valid N (listwise)	9								

Social interaction has been reflected by the social presence in the e-learning and Virtual Café. The participation and engagement to the online learning alert comfortable learning and room for discussion. According to the observation checklist, it was found that 0.78 is the mean of social presence dimension. Social presence in the checklist and survey has specified into communication and interaction opportunity in the learning process. Virtual café has opened wide forum to exchange ideas out of the lesson which can relax the students' learning anxiety. The Virtual Café has activated the comfortable course participations with the involvement of agreement and disagreement of a certain interest and issue.

"Virtual Café is a room to be me"

"Virtual Café offers me freedom in online class in this pandemic so I can know my friends better even they are coming from different class"

"Virtual Café gives space for socialisation as it allows funny and unique stories"

"We are supporting each other in Virtual Café"

"In the Virtual Café, I feel like I can express myself and write more than usual"

"It is a room of thought exchanges"

Virtual Café in its employment has agreed the concept of emotion actualisation, open communication and collaboration. During the lesson, the students work the assignments out by joining the Zoom breakout room managed by the lecturer. The students are usually switched partner and always provided with discussion theme. Students has seen this as a chance to develop their skills in collaboration in which Virtual Café support them behind.

"Breakout room in zoom"

"There are slots to drop comments and suggestions to the other friends"

"The discussion session is varied. Sometimes it is in a group, pair and the whole classes discussion"

"There is an article writing forum"

"The lecturer gives innovative challenge in the use of technology for learning, collaboration in online learning by conducting small group discussion, collaboration by sharing referencing files one another, no-stress discussion with colleagues, and introduction video for an individual self-introduction"

This is related to the humanisation of the online learning where the use of asynchronous video communication is fully engaged. The students in their communications are facilitated in the first page of the web and followed by fun Virtual Café in another session. One of the respondents said that it is not a need to response their friends' posts in Virtual Café, but it is more like their need to give responses. Interest, life experiences and trending issues hold the engagement itself. To teach virtually means to display adaptive teaching which every single student can enjoy and communicate the most. Ideally, the more chance to communicate, the more the students can feel the touch of the learning on themselves. Virtual café has proven the implementation of the high-touch communication with free time to bring topics also comments up. The students said that they are comfortable in using the learning management system as the homepage is dynamic. It is easy to be used by posting issues and the other friends can replied it directly. One of the discussions in Virtual Café is displayed as follows:
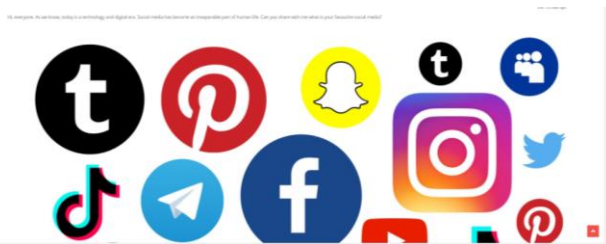

Figure 2. The use of Virtual Café to share thoughts about social media

The online learning community experience by the students acts important to the development of their cognitive level. As it deals with the way of thinking, the cognitive presence through Virtual Café also gives impact to the students learning which is discussed as follows.

Table 3. Cognitive presence

	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Sum	Mean		Std. Deviation	Variance
Descriptive Statistics									
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Statistic
YES	10	.00	1.00	1.00	10.00	1.0000	.00000	.00000	.000
NO	10	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00000	.00000	.00000	.000
Valid N (listwise)	10								

In this part, the learning in virtual class is managed by the lecturer to shape the students' understanding of the topics discussed. Learning structured and flows of the meetings are all informed to the students in the learning management system. The role of Virtual Café is to provide comments and responses to train them discussing topics and be active participants in a relaxing way. The students' responses can be seen as follows:

"I open Virtual Café right after I log in to the system and check the sharing in there"

"It is a new think. I like that"

"When I participate well in Virtual Café, I feel share enough and I feel comfortable to join the lesson"

"It is a space to share ideas out of the topics"

These will lead the students to an encouragement to enjoy the lesson. The skill built in the Virtual Café then is useful to confirm the phases shaping the Cognitive Presence by involving Teaching and Social Presence. The stage where the students have to trigger an idea to be explored is facilitated in the discussion forum. They picked title of their interest which is continued to share in the forum and the other students will respond to it. Their responses must be containing suggestions and comments as their open communication skills is required. The students responded that Virtual Café has help them to communicate better and applied it to the discussion session. It was also mentioned that Virtual Café page has the similar display as the formal lesson discussion. This tells the students to keep expressing their ideas even though the topics discussed in there was limited by their interests, hobbies, opinion, and fun discussions. In its impact to the formal discussion when the students think to determine an exact topic to be explored, the students will look back to the materials and resources provided by the teacher in the dynamic page of the learning management system. They feel humanised. Their learning is facilitated by the lecturer

where access to certain journals and webs are collected in a supplementary resource session.

Other than that, these following responses was showing positive response to Virtual Café's impact to the virtual learning.

"When I read the discussion in the Virtual Café, I feel motivated because my friends posted motivational opinion or quotes which represents my feeling too"

"Virtual Café has given me suggestions about things that I am confused about. When I raise my problems, they will respond to it and it makes me feel better"

These prove that Virtual Café has been helpful to raise the students' idea connection and how they find motivation to keep reading, be into to the topic they have chosen, and find an extra room for solution by sharing life experiences one another through Virtual Café.

The dynamic of Cognitive Presence has been affected by self-reflection contribution toward students' learning as well. Here are responses recorded during the online interview conducted.

"Virtual Café is a good alternative to begin the semester where I can learn myself to be more relax"

"Without Virtual Café, the online learning will be boring even we will not know what our friends like the most"

"Maybe without Virtual Café, I will be a passive learner because I do not talk that much and I guarantee my learning will be so monotonous"

"We have other groups to have a discussion too. But, in the learning, we are supposed to fully pay attention to the Zoom Meeting and here you go, after the meeting, your stress can be relieved by commenting or reading some posts in Virtual Café.

From those responses, Virtual Café has contributed in forming bounding and motivation to the learning where their tough learning is decrease by the learning humanisation offered.

5. CONCLUSION

Virtual café has been recognised as an innovation that an English content subject lecturer proposed for higher education. The students have agreed the dimensions from both community of inquiry and humanisation of online learning has been helpful in creating a comfortable learning ecosystem during the full online class. The students share thoughts, lessons, problems, concerns, ideas, quotes one another in the discussion posts provided in a relaxing learning mode. Virtual café purposefully engaged the students in the online learning through open communication, detail instruction related to the class section in the e-learning and the accessible learning materials provided. They are even encouraged by their peers and groups too to work on their learning. The essence of being humane during the learning has been successfully engaging the students through benefits experienced.

From this study, future researchers are expected to explore teaching methods with technology-based to assist the humanisation of online learning. This is to improve the playfulness in learning which can be realised as fun learning yet thoughtful. The exploration also needs to be conducted for the younger age students such as senior and junior high school depending on the students' current learning environment. This research can be a guidance for the policy maker in launching learning innovation and give support to the school, instructions, and students. Partly, the instructors need to be guided in conducting innovation in the meaning of professional development need to be facilitated.

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