Being present: is it the most important communication skill?

Oktifani Winarti[1], Ratih Pandu Mustikasari[1], Hanna Nurhaqiqi[1],
Valentin Cretto-Bergerat[2]
[1,]*Universitas Pembangunan Nasional Veteran Jawa Timur, Indonesia*
[2]*Université de Strasbourg, France*
oktifani.winarti.ilkom@upnjatim.ac.id

Abstract
The COVID-19 pandemic has made people rely on the presence of the internet to run their business. Businesses, schools, retail, religious gatherings, and other components are all required to use an internet platform in some way. People can meet face-to-face and the feature of the contact is reinforced by both verbal and non-verbal communication prior to the viral eruption, making conversation much easier. The goal of this study is to emphasize the importance of being present during the COVID-19 Pandemic as well as the future projection of presence post-pandemic. Being present, as before the pandemic, comes effortlessly without conscious reflection because the interaction takes place offline without any restrictions. This research is using a literature review by comparing and contrasting the previous studies and the result extend that being present is the most crucial communication skill; it is the most important and most challenging communication skill to have in this unprecedented times but arguably support an effective communication for various types of social interactions. it is also the foundation of communication and can aid in more effective engagement on all levels (perception, comprehension, reasoning, memory, and production).
Keywords: present; covid-19; communication; skill.

INTRODUCTION
Effective communication is changing from time to time depending the social situation such as the shifting that happens within traditional cultures, the move on social class stratification (Oktifani, 2018) or in this current matter since 2020, the meaning of effective communication changes because of global pandemic. Covid-19 has in fact, changed the way people live the daily routines and interactions. Hence, the big shift in communication. The rules of effective communication is changing, but the population is growing increasingly unaware of the rules, which is exacerbating the Covid-19 pandemic in Indonesia (Tawai et al., 2021). Thereafter, social frictions are more likely to happen during Covid-19

Pandemic and it creates a state of social panic, which in the surface people did so many panic buying of groceries.

Another example, Covid-19 is the subject of numerous hoaxes (Lestari et al., 2021). To prevent the virus from spreading, the COVID-19 pandemic has demanded social distance through social distancing, quarantine, and isolation (Sumandiyar et al., 2021). And subsequently, it creates an impact of numerous tactics to prevent the spread of the virus, such as the extreme lockdown strategy to Large-Scale Social Restrictions, has resulted in the emergence of an economic recession following the Covid-19 epidemic (Hidayat et al., 2021). Since the pandemic of COVID-19, online presence has been a constant option for people to run their activities. From businesses, schools, shopping, religion events, and all other aspects is somehow forced to online platform (Burleson, 2007).

Before the pandemic outburst, the way people communicate is much easier, as people can meet face-to-face and the aspect of the interaction is supported by both verbal and non-verbal communication. People can have more ability of "reading between the lines" (Burleson, 2007). Improved ways of communicating with children at school and at home are important for dealing with negative emotions (Setyastuti et al., 2021). Online student learning strategies are being implemented in schools (Ardiyanti et al., 2021). The online learning model is that the subject is bored most of the time, difficult to discipline, has a tendency to be lazy, and is dishonest (Mujiono & Susilo, 2021). Thus, communication between teachers and students must be productive and take place through the transmission of material that is easily understood by pupils (Syahrani et al., 2021).

Negotiation can be done easily over business dinner, emotional support can be delivered in a more comfort way through a hug, stressful situation is likely to be handled on the spot. In brief, before the pandemic of COVID-19, people is more alert and communicate in ways that contribute to other people being. As the feeling of being together in the same place, increase the sense of presence (IJsselsteijn et al., 2000). In business, for example, understanding consumers will allow potential to influence people's quality of life (Nugroho, 2021). Corporations are so deep in interpreting empathy for the COVID-19 pandemic (Septiarysa et al., 2021). However, the right marketing communication strategy is needed in maintaining customer loyalty (Wibowo, 2021). Coupled with the rapid development through social media (Hapsara et al., 2021);(Octaviana & Susilo, 2021). Indonesia is the largest social media user in Southeast Asia, and the platform has been rapidly changing (Susilo & Putranto, 2018).

However, a research in 2000 has already argue that the current pace of technological development as well as improvements in human-computer interaction is increasingly growing and a sense of presence of the user is really important for that technological developments to work, such as interactive or non-interactive media, training and education, telemedicine, entertainment and so many more (IJsselsteijn et al., 2000). It is rarely highlighted that the importance of technological development to create a user-friendly display, is to actually help projecting the presence of the user within a remote working setting.

The purpose of this paper, is to highlight the importance of being present for these current days of Pandemic of COVID-19 as well as the future projection of presence post-pandemic. As before pandemic, being present is something that happens naturally without conscious reflection as the interaction happen offline without any restriction. But on today's situation, Pandemic COVID-19 is alerting tech-people that visual interaction designs should be easy to use to promote user presence. Hence, the authors strongly believe that the post-pandemic life should ensure that the different level of skill in being present is rated as the most important communication skill both for online and offline interactions.

DISCUSSION
Communication Skill as A Competence

In this discussion aspect, the authors are using a literature review methodology, by contrasting and comparing the results and arguments from previous studies. Communication skill as a competence occurred differently in different settings of situation, as each people has different way of communicating to others. Some people show more skilful communication than others by being able to understand the social situation, hence they respond better through the message they deliver to others in a more effective and appropriate ways. Burleson (2007) claims that there are three competencies needed to deliver successful communication. The first one is linguistic competence, which means using the right grammatical rule. The second is understanding social rule from different communities and the last one is functional competence, which allow people to understand the meaning of interaction. Burleson also argues that functional competence is a competence that has been studied a lot in communication since the layers of functional competence is highly subjective due to personal characteristics and goals of others. A previous research claimed that functional competence can be more effective to persuade people to change habits such as smoking, drinking, drug use (Lambert & Gillespie, 1994). A study also mentioned that functional competence can act as a catalyst to the psychological abilities and motivational orientations to create an effective social interaction (Hart et al., 2003).

The highlight of functional competence as a communication skill is on an effective social interaction that meant to motivate and persuade other people to do or change something. And with the digital technology rapidly growing and a lot of people have become a social "influencer", it creates a bias for functional competence as the most effective communication skill, simply because everyone now wants to influence on so many aspects such as culture influence, business, political, to health care context. However, functional competence which is claimed as the most effective communication skill is focusing more on other people's actions and qualities hence it takes up so much energy and attention to be given to others instead of ourselves. As social perception is a *skill,* it is mostly used to create a perception of others. Such as understanding kids' difficulty, understanding partner's insecurity, or even misunderstanding the neighbour's favour. It gets more complicated when the need to understand a perception is to appreciate the perception itself.

Burleson (2007) then added that it is depending on each person *interpersonal construct* that makes one person has a better social perception process. People with better interpersonal construct can use multiple judgement and looking at different versions before making interaction evaluations. They can also take and remember better how the impression goes during the interaction, which makes it a high level of social perception skill. But on an important note, a high level of social perception comes with a process of remembering, understanding, and using more of the knowledge without a difficult and complicated process from the perceivers (Burleson, 2007).

The Role of Presence

The term *presence* is mostly use in a physiological term. In 2000, the stage of research in the concept of presence or 'being there' is still at the early stage (IJsselsteijn et al., 2000). Along the years, social presence or the 'nearness' of communicative partner has started to developed and research around presence got altered to presence of the virtual community when COVID-19 pandemic outbreaks, especially around teachers' presence during an online learning (Rapanta et al., 2020). However, research on teachers' presence is covering on the tips and trick of teaching skill during pandemic especially for teaching staff who are not yet experienced does not cover the importance of presence as a communication skill, but rather just a replacement from teaching offline to online.

Although the research argued that today's technology is built to make communication with better presence of the person virtually. However, there is still no clear measurement whether better presence is equal to effective performance of presence. Bouwhuis (2000) finds that along with a "better presence" claimed by previous research, comes a limitation called "access level" to a videophone due to the privacy that needs to be able to controlled the same as a face-to-face interaction. It is highly sensitive especially among the elderly. Hence the role of presence is still limited even with the technology built on today's situation during pandemic COVID-19. It is leaving a gap on how presence could be an important skill of communication as to what Burleson has mentioned about functional competence as the most important skill in communication.

It is leaving a gap whether presence is a functional competence to which the measurement is both subjective and objective and focusing on others, such as others' perspective, social rules & culture, and many more aspects that can affect other's social perception. Social perception on the other hand, comes with pressure which social rules or cultures created (Fiske et al., 2007) and it is a great highlight which the research comes up that social perception is both perceptual interpersonal & intergroup communication. It leads to the term *perceptual presence* or define as *mindful* or *being present* which is the act of giving present awareness and attention to what is happening inside one's mind. It is about oneself and not others. In contrary to the term *presence* that has been studied as functional competence, which again, focusing on others perception (Brown & Ryan, 2003) while perceptual presence is focusing on *conscious objects,* anything that happens from oneself under conscious awareness & decision.

The Relationship between Being Present and Communication

In the current research of psychology, most of perceptual presence or being consciously present has been linked a lot with mindfulness and it is highlighted on the person's well-being when they practice mindfulness. While on the communication area, mindfulness is a trend that is brought up for a training such as using mindfulness to solve workplace training, reducing communication and team work problems. As for public usage, mindfulness is taught for the public to detect scams & hoaxes, reducing racist acts & avoid misunderstanding in cross-cultural communication (Brown & Ryan, 2003). However, it is never being asked or stated that being present has become the most important communication skill that is needed, especially after pandemic COVID-19 which require people to be expert on both offline & online communications.

The research in the past since 1995 has written quite so many about mindless communication, such as Burgoon & Langer (1995) and Hample (1992). Mindlessness in communication has been proven by Burgoon & Langer (1995) to create a rigid, thoughtless, ineffective communication through a usage of language use in social interaction. Meanwhile Hample's mindlessness research is focusing on the quality of writings when it is written mindlessly as he agrees with communication theory stating that "most of genuine importance to scholars of human communication usually occurs unconsciously". However, writing is not part of social interaction, writing mindlessly, in fact, is a strong tool to create a mindful social interaction. It helps people being more present with their perception, comprehension, reasoning, memory, and production. Being present and communication has been a focus of research in both psychology and communication area. The links between the advantage of being present and the outcome of a communication by being present can release the pressure and stress coming out of an interaction.

In sum, being present is focusing on the mind's consciousness, which is comprehending what is the content in our head, why is it there, and how to act on it consciously. It is toping up a step backward before oneself acts on functional competence by trying to understand other people perspective. Being present is arguable the most important communication skill to have right now at post-pandemic, where both offline and online communication are equally important alongside the dynamic innovation of digital technology. Being present is the most important and most challenging communication skill to have in this unprecedented times but arguable support an effective communication for various types of social interactions.

CONCLUSION

It is indeed an interesting statement to answer that being present is the most important communication skill, it is the core of communication that can help a more effective interaction from every dimensions (perception, comprehension, reasoning, memory, and production). However, it is needed to conduct a further analysis on interaction preferable on conversation analysis as it will help understand how other people interactions more clearly.

REFERENCES

Ardiyanti, H., Kustandi, C., Cahyadi, A., Elihami, E., & Pattiasina, P. (2021). Efektivitas model pembelajaran daring berbasis tiktok. *Jurnal Komunikasi Profesional, 5*(3), 285–293.

Bouwhuis, D. (2000). Parts of life: configuring equipment to individual lifestyle. *Ergonomics, 43*(7), 908–919.

Brown, K., & Ryan, R. (2003). The benefits of being present: mindfulness and its role in psychological well-being. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 84*(4), 822.

Burgoon, J., & Langer, E. (1995). Language, fallacies, and mindlessness-mindfulness in social interaction. *Annals of the International Communication Association, 18*(1), 105–132.

Burleson, B. (2007). Constructivism: A general theory of communication skill. *Explaining Communication: Contemporary Theories and Exemplars*, 105–128.

Fiske, S., Cuddy, A., & Glick, P. (2007). Universal dimensions of social cognition: Warmth and competence. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences, 11*(2), 77–83.

Hample, D. (1992). Writing mindlessly. *Communications Monographs, 59*(3), 315–323.

Hapsara, O., Casmudi, C., Sjuchro, D., Murtono, T., & Asfar, D. (2021). Perspektif digital marketing communication dalam memasarkan skincare di indonesia. *Jurnal Komunikasi Profesional, 5*(3), 209–221.

Hart, C., Newell, L., & Olsen, S. (2003). *Parenting skills and social-communicative competence in childhood.*

Hidayat, E., Susilo, D., & Garcia, E. M. A. (2021). Handling Covid-19 in Sampang: leadership and local elite public communication strategy. *Jurnal Studi Komunikasi, 5*(2 SE-Articles), 319–335. https://doi.org/10.25139/jsk.v5i2.3613

IJsselsteijn, W., De Ridder, H., Freeman, J., & Avons, S. (2000). Presence: concept, determinants, and measurement. *Human Vision and Electronic Imaging V, 3959*, 520–529.

Lambert, B., & Gillespie, J. (1994). Patient perceptions of pharmacy students' hypertension compliance-gaining messages: Effects of message design logic and content themes. *Health Communication, 6*(4), 311–325.

Lestari, P., Kusmantini, T., & Chandrasari, Y. (2021). Digital literacy communication model of 'tular nalar' curriculum during COVID-19. *Jurnal Studi Komunikasi, 5*(3 SE-Articles), 693–708. https://doi.org/10.25139/jsk.v5i3.4135

Mujiono, M., & Susilo, D. (2021). Alternative learning media post-covid-19: uncertainty reduction theory perspective. *Jurnal Komunikasi Profesional, 5*(5 SE-Articles), 469–480. https://doi.org/10.25139/jkp.v5i5.4242

Nugroho, R. S. (2021). Menelaah kembali perilaku belanja makanan online di era pandemi covid-19. *Jurnal Komunikasi Profesional, 5*(5 SE-Articles), 443–450. https://doi.org/10.25139/jkp.v5i5.4117

Octaviana, V., & Susilo, D. (2021). Impact of@ RaikuBeauty instagram campaign content on brand image. *Jurnal Komunikasi Profesional, 5*(3), 270–284.

Rapanta, C., Botturi, L., Goodyear, P., Guàrdia, L., & Koole, M. (2020). Online university teaching during and after the Covid-19 crisis: Refocusing teacher presence and learning activity. *Postdigital Science and Education, 2*(3), 923–945.

Septiarysa, L., Marta, R. F., & Agung, H. (2021). Anotasi Rasa Empati selama Pandemi COVID-19 pada Konten Digital Pariwara Youtube Rosalia Indah. *Jurnal Komunikasi Profesional, 5*(5 SE-Articles), 451–468. https://doi.org/10.25139/jkp.v5i5.4125

Setyastuti, Y., Suminar, J. R., Hadisiwi, P., & Zubair, F. (2021). Schooling from home: millennial moms family communication and media uses in COVID-19 . *Jurnal Studi Komunikasi, 5*(3 SE-Articles), 709–728. https://doi.org/10.25139/jsk.v5i3.3844

Sumandiyar, A., Husain, M., Sumule G, M., Nanda, I., & Fachruddin, S. (2021). The effectiveness of hybrid learning as instructional media amid the COVID-19 pandemic. *Jurnal Studi Komunikasi, 5*(3 SE-Articles), 651–664. https://doi.org/10.25139/jsk.v5i3.3850

Susilo, D., & Putranto, T. (2018). *Indonesian Youth on Social Media: Study on Content Analysis.* https://doi.org/10.2991/sshr-17.2018.15

Syahrani, A., Asfar, D. A., Perdana, I., Pattiasina, P. J., & Nadeak, B. (2021). Mendengarkan dan berbicara untuk berkomunikasi: apa yang guru lakukan dan siswa pelajari dari

penilaian kelas. *Jurnal Komunikasi Profesional, 5*(4 SE-Articles), 335–344. https://doi.org/10.25139/jkp.v5i4.3908

Tawai, A., Suharyanto, A., Putranto, T., de Guzman, B., & Prastowo, A. (2021). Indonesian covid-19 issue on media: review on spiral of silence application theory. *Jurnal Studi Komunikasi, 5*(2 SE-Articles), 286–301. https://doi.org/10.25139/jsk.v5i2.3758

Wibowo, P. (2021). Strategi Komunikasi Pemasaran Sharp Indonesia di Era Pandemi Covid-19 dan Kenormalan Baru. *Jurnal Komunikasi Profesional, 5*(1). https://doi.org/10.25139/jkp.v5i1.3003

Winarti, O. (2018). Language Shift of Krama to Bahasa Indonesia among Javanese Youths and it's Relation to Parents' Social Class. Jurnal Studi Komunikasi, 2(3), 290-300.