

THE STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF THE TEACHER'S FACILITATION IN ONLINE GROUP WORK

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ABSTRACTS

This research examines the students' perception of the teacher's facilitation in online group work in English for Managers class at the Faculty of Business and Economics, Universitas Atma Jaya Yogyakarta. The study employed The Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework perspective, which consists of teaching presence, cognitive presence, and social presence. CoI has been widely employed in designing practical online courses. Thus, this descriptive qualitative research analyzed students' perceptions of facilitation in online group work using questionnaires and interviews. The research participants were English for Managers students. They were selected since they have experience participating in online group work. The results of the study show that most of the participants have demonstrated to possess a positive perception of the teacher's facilitation in online group work in EFM class at FBE UAJY.

ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received: February, 2023

Revised: May, 2023

Published: June, 2023

Keywords:

Community of Inquiry (CoI),
English for Specific Purposes (ESP),
Online Group Work,
Perception,

How to cite: Kristianto, I. (2023). The Students' Perception of the Teacher's Facilitation in Online Group Work. *Jo-ELT (Journal of English Language Teaching) Fakultas Pendidikan Bahasa & Seni Prodi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris IKIP*, 10(1), 52-62. doi:<https://doi.org/10.33394/jo-elt.v10i1.7163>

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has altered the teaching and learning process in education across the globe. Jordaan and Havenga (2021) study revealed that online teaching and learning was carried out in higher education despite existing challenges. This change also occurs in The Faculty of Business and Economics (FBE), Universitas Atma Jaya Yogyakarta (UAJY). The faculty members of FBE UAJY decided that some of the classes were conducted online to minimize the spread of Covid-19. English for Managers was one of the selected subjects to be conducted online.

Fellow researchers also experienced online learning. Khan et al. (2021) discovered that students positively accepted e-learning. During the Covid-19 online learning, Edy et al. (2020) found disparities and advancements in the students' learning outcomes. Gamage et al. (2020) emphasized the significance of preserving academic integrity while learning online. At the same time, Rojabi (2020) stated that online interaction and learning environment motivated students to understand the learning materials.

This study uses the community of inquiry framework to achieve its goal (Garrison & Arbaugh, 2007). This framework is commonly used in online courses. It consists of three connected parts: social, teaching, and cognitive presence. The intersection of the three different presences is an essential component of the CoI, according to which learning occurs.

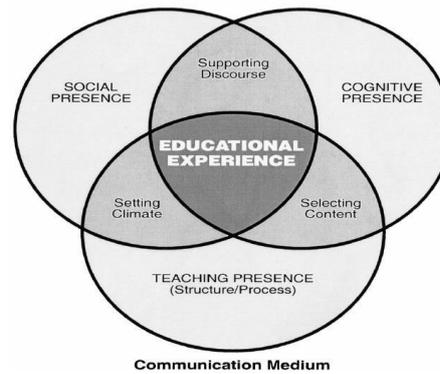


Figure 1. Community and Inquiry Framework (Garrison & Arbaugh, 2007)

Furthermore, Garrison et al. (2010) elicited that the ability of students to project their distinctive personalities to identify with and connect with the community and forge interpersonal connections is the first sort of presence or social presence. Teaching presence involves planning, facilitating, and managing social and cognitive activities to achieve the desired learning outcomes. The degree to which students can create and verify meaning through consistent speaking and thinking is known as cognitive presence.

The desire of students to take courses, engage in programs, and access resources online fundamentally alters the character of formal education. The severe adjustments imposed on numerous institutions and teachers caught them unprepared. Therefore, there is a critical need for research at FBE UAJY into effective teaching and learning strategies in an online environment.

Roberts (2004) stated that collaborative learning is scarcely novel. For thousands of years, people have been learning informally in groups. Since students are still expected to learn on their own, especially at the university level, practically all formal education today still takes place in this setting. To help them learn, however, students frequently create informal study groups. Furthermore, Curtis and Lawson (2001) discovered that online collaborative learning might produce results similar to those attained in a face-to-face classroom. In a collaborative learning setting, students cooperate to achieve shared learning objectives, such as a standard comprehension of the topic or a solution to a problem. Therefore, collaborative learning techniques aid students in developing more sophisticated knowledge and higher-order thinking abilities through shared goals, investigations, and the process of meaning formation (Brindley et al., 2009). Communication and cooperation skills are employed in online group work.

This study uncovers students' perception of the teacher's facilitation of online group work in English for Managers class at FBE UAJY. In philosophy, psychology, and cognitive science, Qiong (2017) defines perception as becoming aware of or understanding sensory facts. The Latin root words *perceptio* and *percipio*, translated as receiving, gathering, taking possession of, and apprehension with the mind or senses, are the source of the word perception. Furthermore, Qiong (2017) states that three stages make up the perception process: selection, organization, and interpretation. In addition, researchers need to consider perception's physical and psychological aspects to comprehend how humans create structure, stability, and meanings for the chosen inputs or how perception occurs. These two dimensions interact with one another to produce humans' perceived results.

Goldstone and Barsalou (1998) stated that much information from perception could be used to inform conceptualization so that the creation and application of concepts can alter perceptual processes. Goldstone et al. (2010) argued that using perceptually rich objects is advantageous if we consider education to be the training of perception. However, it is crucial to develop perceptual processes that can work over these problems.

English for Managers course at The Faculty of Business and Economics, Universitas Atma Jaya Yogyakarta, is an English for Specific Purposes class. According to Johns (2013), English for specific purposes (ESP) is the name given to teaching and studying English as a second or foreign language when the students want to apply it in a specific field.

Furthermore, Johns (2013) explains that the fact that the course objectives and material are tailored to the unique needs of the students is a crucial component of an ESP course. The language, skills, and genres relevant to the particular English-language tasks the learners must complete are hence the focus of ESP courses. ESP students are primarily adult learners, though this is only sometimes the case. In terms of learning objectives, but not usually in terms of language competency, they are frequently a homogeneous group. Critical issues in the teaching of English for Specific Purposes include how to identify learner needs, the genres that students must be able to produce as well as participate in, how to evaluate whether or not our students have been able to do this successfully, and what we can do to support them if they have not.

Gonzales Ramirez (2015) conveyed that the definitions of ESP have changed, reflecting the shifting perspectives of theorists, researchers, and practitioners. The common characteristics frequently referred to as “absolute features” in all the definitions offered, however, embrace ESP’s goal of fulfilling the exceptional needs of a specific group of learners. Considering that change is continuous in our globalized society, ESP will keep expanding on its past by charting its course in the upcoming years.

Reflecting on the previously mentioned studies, there is a need of further investigation into online learning in an ESP class. This research proposes new findings in students’ perception of teacher’s facilitation in online group work. Furthermore, this study aims to uncover the students’ perception of the teacher’s facilitation in online group work in English for Managers class at FBE UAJY.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study seeks to understand how students at FBE UAJY perceive the teacher’s facilitation of online group work in the English for Managers class. A descriptive qualitative method was used for this study. The method investigated how well the participants understood the material and their attitudes, perspectives, and beliefs (Nassaji, 2015). It was determined that this method was appropriate because it aimed to analyze students’ perceptions.

Research Design

This study employed an interactive model in qualitative research. According to Maxwell in Jones et al. (2021), the elements of a research study and how they could influence and be influenced by one another are included in an interactive model.

Subjects

The subjects of this study were 24 fifth-semester students participating in the English for Managers class of The Faculty of Business and Economics, Universitas Atma Jaya Yogyakarta. The students experienced online learning and group work in the English for Managers class.

Instruments

The online questionnaire was utilized to collect data from participants who already have experience participating in online group work in English for Managers class. The link to the questionnaire was distributed to English for Managers Microsoft Teams class. Based on the results, four participants were selected for interviews. The researchers asked four

participants to be interviewed based on their responses and agreement to participate in an interview. Each of the four participants was contacted digitally for the interview using the video-conferencing platform Microsoft Teams. The semi-structured interview consisted of seven open-ended questions. The interviews were conducted in Bahasa Indonesia and lasted 10 to 15 minutes each to offer the participants greater flexibility to express themselves. However, if they felt more at ease expressing themselves in English, the participants were free to mix or switch to it. After transcription, the interviews were analyzed.

Data Analysis

The results of the questionnaire and interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis, which produced some important themes. The researcher also presented the findings in figures to make it easier to understand for general readers.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Some themes were developed from the questionnaires and interviews: 1) Selection of the communication platform (teaching presence), 2) Groupings (teaching presence), 3) Online group work projects (cognitive presence), 4) Pre- and whilst-group work facilitation (social presence). The outcomes are shown in figures below, supported by the excerpt from the interviews with Tata, Tati, Titu, and Dani (all are pseudonyms)

1. Selection of Communication Platform (Teaching Presence)

The Lecturer Provided Platform for Online Group Work

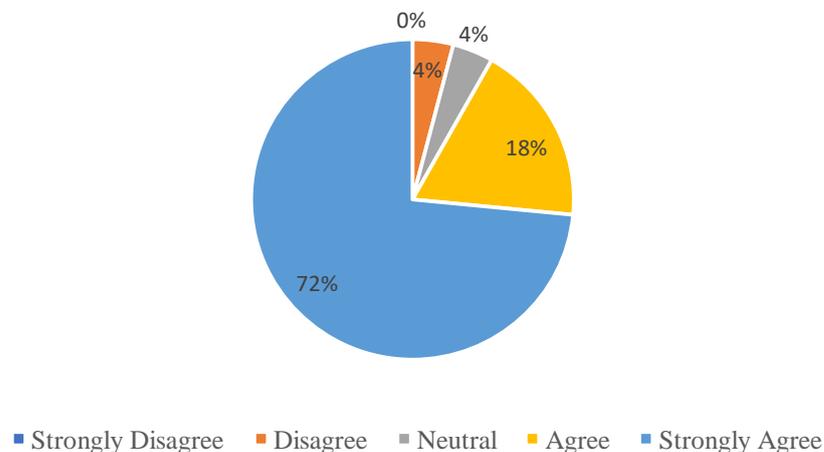


Figure 2. Provision of a Platform for Online Group Work

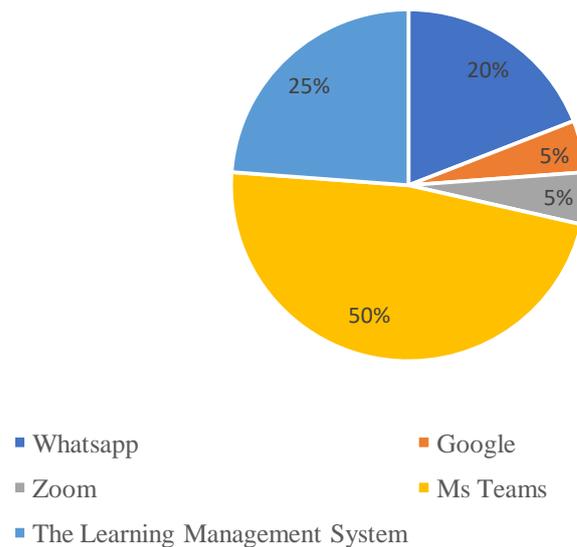


Figure 3. Types of Communication Platforms

Figure 2 and figure 3 indicate that the students perceived that the lecturer facilitated communication and discussion. The most utilized platform was Microsoft Team. Other media utilized for synchronous activities were WhatsApp and Google. At the same time, other tools for asynchronous activities were forum embedded in the Learning Management System, which can be accessed in kuliah.uajy.ac.id in UAJY.

One of the participants stated that the lecturer asked the students to use Microsoft Teams. However, the students were free to use other online communication platforms.

“The lecturer asked the students to use Microsoft Teams to do online group work. In Microsoft Teams, each group has its channels. By using those channels, the students could collaborate during online group work. However, other online communication platforms such as WhatsApp or Google Doc could also be used during the discussions.”

(Tata, interview)

Another participant, Tati, also noticed flexibility and stated that the lecturer allowed students to use other online communication platforms.

“The lecturer already made the class in Microsoft Teams. The lecturer also provided channels for the students to collaborate in online group work. Since the signal was not stable for all students, the lecturer let the students use other online communication platforms, such as WhatsApp, to support the discussion in Microsoft Teams.”

(Tati, interview)

Tata and Tati demonstrated that the lecturer had set up a platform to encourage student discussion. However, the lecturer would let the students select an online communication platform that would work best for all the group members regarding engagement outside class. The choice was made based on UAJY’s recommendation and the viability and accessibility of Microsoft Teams.

2. Groupings (Teaching Presence)

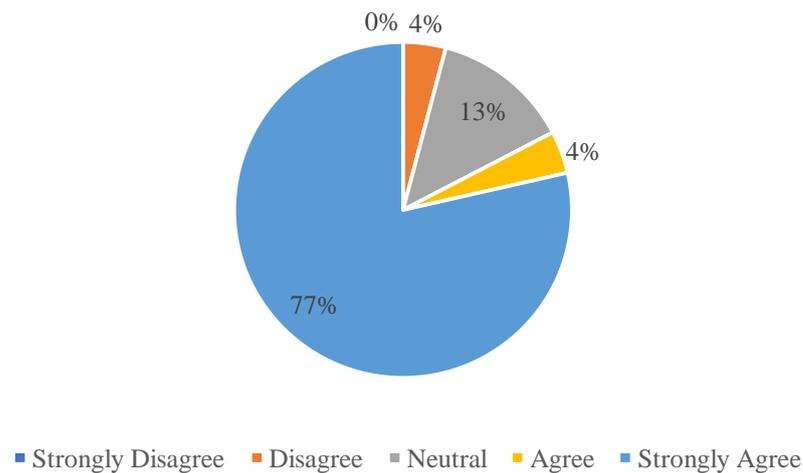


Figure 4. Groupings

When inquired about the lecturer's grouping method, most students had a positive perception of the method. According to the students, the grouping method helped and encouraged them to complete the project.

"The groupings method was excellent. However, online group work had its challenges, such as a lousy internet connection. Luckily, all the members of the online group work participated in the discussion."

(Titu, interview)

"The lecturer's method of making the group was good. I remember well that I know the members of my group well so that we could work together well."

(Dani, interview)

3. Online Group Work Projects (Cognitive Presence)

Figure 5 shows the students' perception of the projects completed in online group work.

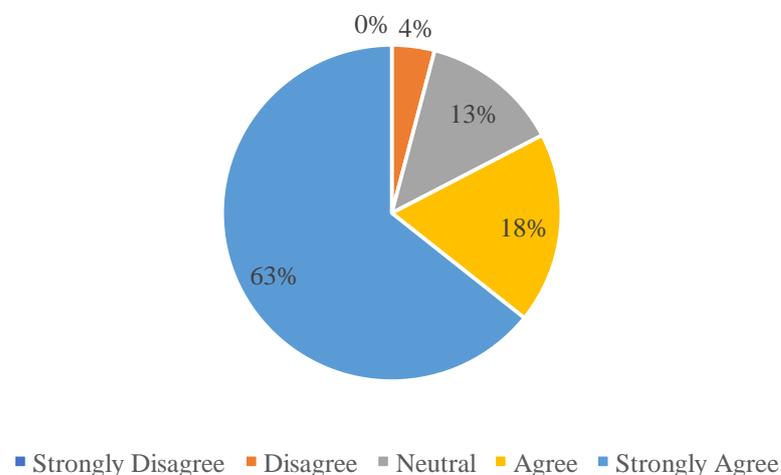


Figure 5. Provision of Projects for Online Group Work

Most of the students stated that the online group work projects provided by the lecturer could enhance their English skills. Moreover, the students also felt that their public speaking, communication, and collaboration skills improved.

“I enjoyed conducting the online group work projects provided by the lecturers because the projects were essential and related to my work life later.”

(Tata, interview)

“I think the online group work projects were good so that we could practice public speaking and our pronunciation.”

(Titu, interview)

4. Pre- and Whilst-Group Work Facilitation (Social Presence)

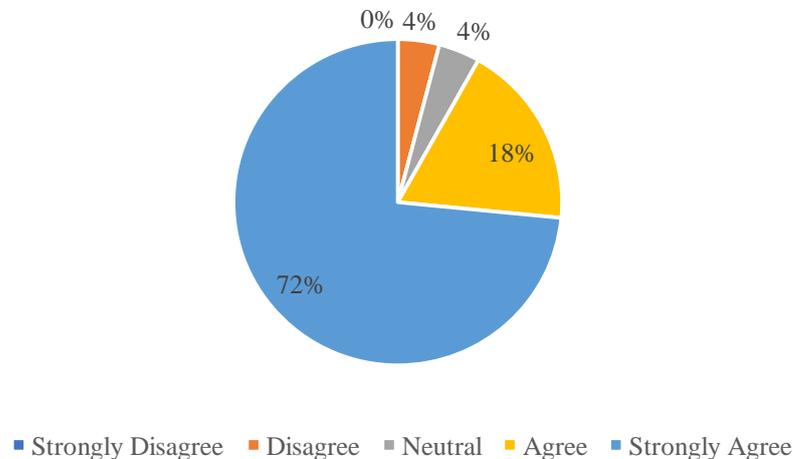


Figure 6. Provision of Clear Instructions

From figure 6, most students perceived that the lecturer provided explicit instruction for every group project. The students were happy that the instructions were orally presented during online class and provided in the Learning Management System in kuliah.uajy.ac.id. The interview showed similar results. According to Tata, Tati, Titu, and Dani’s statements from the interviews, the instructions for every online group work were clearly explained to the students in both written and oral form.

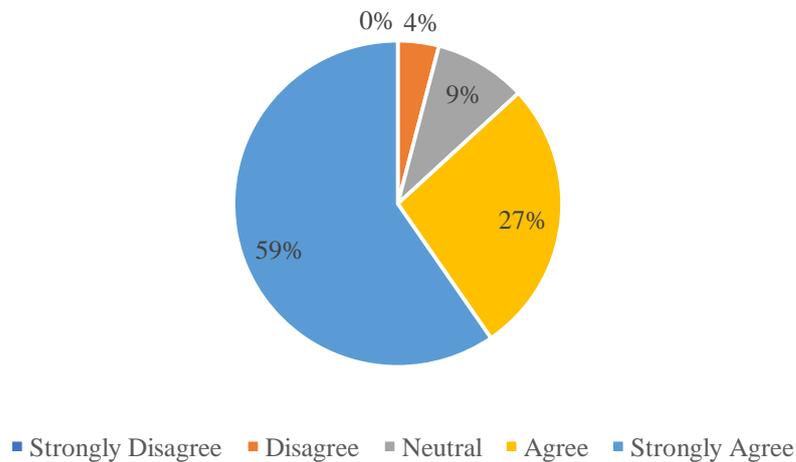


Figure 7. Provision of Online Group Work Monitoring

From figure 7, many students were satisfied with the lecturer’s monitoring during the online group work. The students stated that the lecturer visited each group while they were having online discussions in Microsoft Teams.

“The lecturer often reminded the students to complete the projects a few days before the deadline via Microsoft Teams chat.”

(Dani, interview)

“The lecturer often joined the online discussion in the Microsoft Teams channels and asked questions about the projects' progress.”

(Tati, interview)

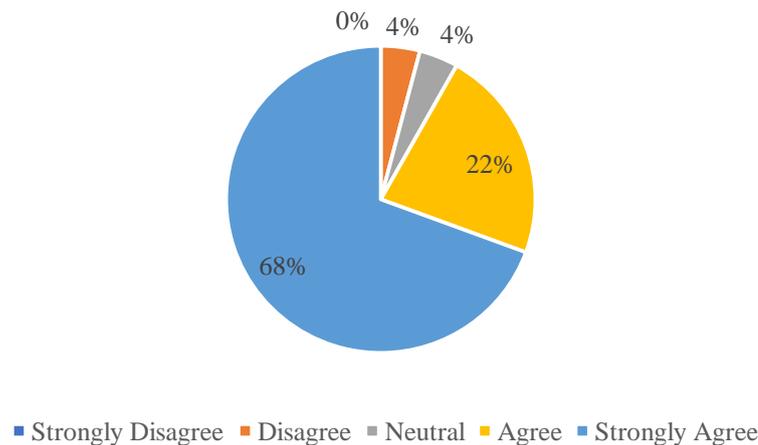


Figure 8. Provision of Feedback/Comment/Score

Based on the information from figure 8, most students positively perceive the lecturer's feedback/comment/score.

“The lecturer provided comments during the discussion in the Microsoft Teams channel. Furthermore, feedback was provided in the Learning Management System every time a project was finished.”

(Tati, interview)

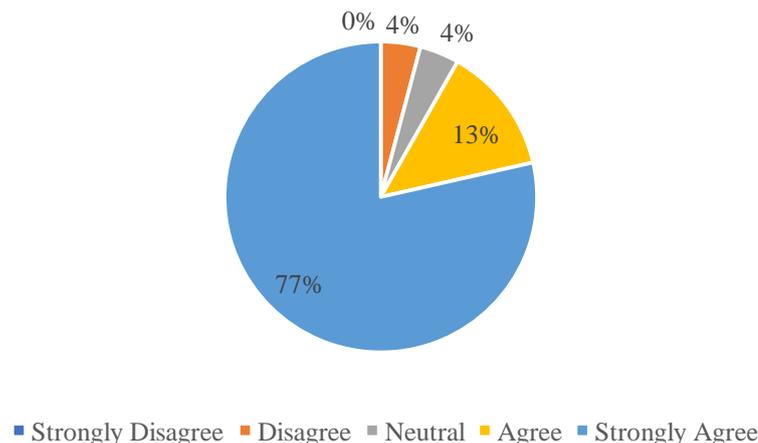


Figure 9. Provision of Consultation

Most of the students positively perceived the consultation time provided by the lecturer. The group consultation was facilitated both within and outside of the class.

“The lecturer provided consultation time for each group using Microsoft Teams' channels.”

(Dani, interview)

“The lecturer always replied to the students' chats. Moreover, the reply was quick and could answer the students' questions to complete the project.”

(Tata, interview)

DISCUSSION

In an ESP class that implemented the CoI, the intersection of cognitive, social, and teaching presence was crucial. Based on the findings, the students in EFM class at FBE UAJY positively perceived how cognitive presence took place through the learning models

design facilitated by the lecturer. The learning models led students to active learning in an English for Specific Purposes class, such as project-based learning. It supports a study by Kaczkó and Ostendorf (2022), which discovered that a criteria-guided, self-correcting, and context-sensitive inquiry could assist critical thinking when carried out with the necessary thinking abilities. However, in order to further develop cognitive presence in EFM class at FBE UAJY, the lecturer needs to find activities that drive the students to produce new ideas.

Since the lecturer facilitated them to converse and work together in online groups, the students positively perceived social presence. This result supports the study by Lachner et al., (2022) which hypothesized that social presence is one of the potential fundamental mechanisms of learning by teaching. Due to their familiarity with one another, the pupils felt at ease working together. According to Ribosa and Duran's study (2022), feelings of social presence may lead to elaboration. In online group projects, the students collaborate, talk to one another, and assist one another to finish the projects. Mohammad et al. (2023) stated that students and teachers could reinforce their interactions by including the CoI components in the classroom context, increasing the learning process's quality.

Furthermore, the results also show that students positively perceived the use of various facilitation tactics as a realization of the teacher's presence. When there were discussions, and all the students were encouraged to participate by the lecturer, students in an online learning environment experienced a more profound feeling of community. Suharno et al. (2022) stated that clarity of instruction, encouragement, reinforcement of a sense of community, comfort in conversing and student-student interaction, online discussion, combining new information, learning activities, and reflection were high in CoI-facilitated classes. The lecturer offered the students a variety of communications platforms to use for interaction, including private and group chats on social media. It has also been possible to communicate synchronously using Microsoft Teams. It was anticipated that the students would be able to maintain their interest in the course, their classmates, and the course material. The data corroborates the finding by Huizinga et al., (2022) that the efficient use of technology is anticipated to encourage greater interconnectedness among students.

CONCLUSION

Despite the challenges and complexities in online group work in EFM class at FBE UAJY, this study has demonstrated how the students perceived the teacher's facilitation. The students possess positive perception towards cognitive presence's facilitation, although, the lecturer needs to find activities that drive the students to produce new ideas. The participants possess positive perceptions since the lecturer encourages them to communicate and collaborate in online group work to facilitate social presence. The participants possess a positive perception since the lecturer provides explicit materials and instruction to facilitate teaching presence. Thus, it can be concluded that most participants have positively perceived the teacher's facilitation in online group work in EFM class at FBE UAJY. The limitation of the study is that assigning online group work among students in EFM class seems challenging, particularly in monitoring the collaboration and communication process.

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