

Improving Students' Synchronous Online Interactions by Enhancing Their Social Presence
in a Blended Learning Course of English for Engineers: a Case Study

A thesis presented by
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Submitted to the School of Languages of
Universidad de Antioquia, Medellin in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

MAGISTER EN ENSEÑANZA Y APRENDIZAJE DE LENGUAS EXTRANJERAS

APRIL 2023

Master's in Foreign Language Teaching and Learning



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ENGINEERS: A CASE STUDY

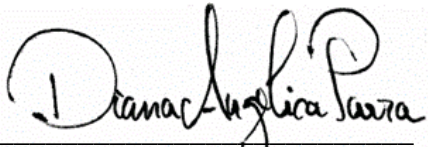
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DEDICATION

This paper is dedicated to my mother, who is the most important person in my life.
My paper is also a dedication to Universidad de Antioquia, where I developed as a person
and as a professional.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude to my advisor, M. A. Jorge Hugo Muñoz for providing support and guidance in this process. Along with that, I would also like to thank the faculty of the school of languages at Universidad de Antioquia for having taught me many valuable things. Finally, I would also like to thank my students, for having helped me in this project.

ABSTRACT

IMPROVING STUDENTS' SYNCHRONOUS ONLINE INTERACTIONS BY ENHANCING THEIR SOCIAL PRESENCE IN A BLENDED LEARNING COURSE OF ENGLISH FOR ENGINEERS: A CASE STUDY

APRIL 2023

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With the ongoing development of online education and online learning environments, student-to-student and student-to-teacher interactions are being affected. Therefore, online learning environments are often criticized for being impersonal or lacking social presence, then teachers should find a way to trigger interactions so that it positively affects learning in online courses.

The purpose of this study was to explore the benefits, withdraws or other features of enhancing the social presence in a blended learning course implemented in the language learning program of an Engineering faculty in an effort to improve students' synchronous interactions. I applied an intervention in which I enhanced the social presence of the class in order that students could take full advantage of the English course interacting more and succeed in their second language learning process. This intervention had a technological

component and a focus on the concept of social presence from the Community of Inquiry framework (CoI).

This investigation was a single case study framed by qualitative research and implemented with a group of 14 students from a public university in Medellin, Colombia. I focused on a blended English course that the university offers, and I gathered data using a needs analysis survey, a focus group, a personal diary and a third person opinion. Results showed that enhancing the social presence within a course from the English for engineers' program promoted interactions in the synchronous class and positively impacted students' learning experiences in the blended environment. Students recognized they felt not only more confident to participate as a community but also freely expressed themselves during the classes, resulting in better learning experiences in general for them and their peers. It can also be stated that strengthening the social presence in my class benefited students' academic performance.

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Introduction

The English for Engineers Program (E4E) is part of the Engineering Faculty of a public university in Medellin, Colombia. This program started in the first semester of 2008 and offers six English levels, 4 hours of instruction per week. It has a total of 384 hours of instruction. The program aims at students accomplishing a B2 level of proficiency according to The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), Council of Europe (2001). The first three levels are focused on communication skills, which are reflected in the different textbooks and materials the program has. For instance, in level one, a textbook (English for Engineers 1) was created, but in levels 2 and 3, they started working with the Worldlink textbook series. In levels 4 and 5, classes go deeper into the engineering contents using different materials so that students can learn the language in engineering situations. In the last level of instruction, students have a course for preparing for taking international tests.

The English for Engineers program is designed with three modalities of instruction: on-site class, online class, and a mixture of these two modalities (one day 2 hours on-site and the other day 2 hours online). During the on-site class, students take face-to-face classes on the university campus; during the online class, students who live out of Medellin take their lessons online, and in the mixed program, students take 2 hours of class on-site and 2 hours of class online synchronously. For these synchronous sessions teachers use the Zoom platform for their online meetings, where English teachers and students can interact. However, according to the administration, these online classes do not make this program an online program; instead, they claim it is an on-site program mediated by an online environment. In other words, this is a face-to-face class using computer-mediated

communication (CMC), which according to Thurlow et al. (2004), refers to any human communication accomplished using technology.

I work as an English teacher in the modality that mixes on-site and online classes. For this modality, it was decided to implement one of the on-site weekly classes in a virtual environment. This decision was made because there were no classrooms available for the number of students in the language program. The online class is an administrative decision and not the result of research or a teaching implementation; therefore, the online session is a recreation of the on-site course. Teachers work four hours with the students because it is mandatory in their contracts, which could explain why the online sessions are very similar to those on-site and why there are no blended learning principles in the E4E synchronous modalities, hence there is an implicit disregard of the potential benefits of online instruction for students. As a result, even in the online classroom, the teacher gets the most crucial role in leading the class. Students are supposed to participate only when the teacher invites them to do so, restricting students' learning process to a teacher's decision during the class. This does not promote students' interactions as they do not feel comfortable with the online class, and it makes the class a teacher-centered one instead of a student-centered learning environment.

Another critical issue to notice is the fact that students have expressed their negative feelings towards online classes. Before conducting an intervention, participants completed a needs analysis survey (see appendix B) in which they described how, at the beginning; they felt lost in the online lessons; they stated the teachers in online classes are distant, thus some students usually prefer face-to-face classes over online ones (see figure 1). They may not feel comfortable in online sessions because they are not used to them. Students feel traditionally more comfortable with a teacher in the classroom and not online. Sometimes

they do not even know their teacher's names, and it is challenging to participate in class, and assuming their roles as online students is even harder. This could be one of the reasons why students' interactions in online environments decreased compared to face-to-face classes in the E4E courses I teach. Figure 1 summarizes what mentioned above, in which some of the responses about the online classes are negative in comparison to the on-site class.

Figure 1

Some responses from the needs analysis survey



I have worked in this E4E program since 2009 in the three modalities in levels 1, 2, and 3. Each one is different and interesting, but the mixture between the online class and the on-site class has an extraordinary potential that can combine the best of the face-to-face and online worlds. As reported in a study conducted by Sanchez and Chavarro in a Colombian private school (2017), blended learning creates opportunities to strengthen already acquired English oral skills. In their study, the authors used Skype to establish connections between participants so they could practice their acquired English beyond physical interaction and outside the classroom.

Thus, the lack of a blended learning design for this language learning program and students' reluctance to participate online during their synchronous classes presented an obstacle for the development of learning in the courses I had been teaching. Not only the fact there were not principles or guidelines to benefit from blended learning, but also there was no strategy to promote students' interactions during the E4E online classes. The need for improving students' interactions online might contribute to enhancing the blended language learning program at the engineering faculty. It would be an opportunity for both teachers and students to accomplish better results in language learning. Hence, the purpose of this study was to experience a blended learning design that could promote students' synchronous interactions in their English classes by strengthening their social presence.

To address this issue, I studied the concept of social presence from the Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework as a strategy to adapt a blended learning design that promotes my students' synchronous online interactions. The social presence from the CoI, according to Cleveland-Innes and Wilton (2018), has to do with the ability of learners to project themselves socially and emotionally so they can have a more important role when participating in class. It can be stated that in Colombia, no research or studies have been

conducted in which it is tried to promote participation and interaction in synchronous online English classes by triggering the social presence of the CoI framework.

My research intervention focused on implemented strategies to stimulate students' synchronous online interactions by strengthening their social presence during their English classes. As COVID-19 crisis changed the way instruction was established, at least for two years, the blended learning design implemented in a particular public university in Medellin changed to a synchronous and asynchronous perspective that demanded a bigger effort from students online. Therefore, a new design for students' language instruction could not include face-to-face interactions, but it needed a new design for online environments. To guide my study, the following research question was set: how can strengthening my students' social presence in the E4E blended learning environments promote more synchronous interactions?

Theoretical Framework

Technology and language learning

According to Chapelle (2001) language teaching and learning have benefited from using technology in the classroom. The author claims computer technology can be of immense value for learning, and it can also be a valuable source of knowledge for researchers working in the field of language teaching; however, to take the best of this tool, the technology-mediated activities must be designed with clear and meaningful objectives. Solares (2014) points out how introducing technology into the classroom makes learning significant, authentic, and appealing to students. Other authors such as Sharma and Barrett (2007) also state that...

The term technology covers a wide range of recent technologies, such as the Internet, CD-ROMs, and interactive whiteboards. It also includes the use of

computers as a means of communication, with applications such as chat and e-mail, and a number of environments that enable teachers to enrich their courses, such as VLEs (virtual learning environments), blogs, and wikis (p.7).

Warschauer et al., (2000) explain the benefits of e-learning and claim there are five reasons to use the internet for English teaching; those reasons, the authors explain, have to do with authenticity, literacy, interaction, vitality, and empowerment. The authors remark how teaching will always be more important than a tool when it is used with a purpose. Using technology in the classrooms may not be used as a panacea for ultimate teaching and learning, but it may offer great possibilities for students and teachers to collaborate, interact and facilitate the teaching and learning process.

Nowadays, with the continuing development of technologies in teaching and learning, we talk about information and communication technologies (ICTs). This is also a term used to refer to technology in the classroom. It refers explicitly to computer-based technologies such as computers, tablets, smartphones, and internet-based technologies such as any kind of software for the purpose of English teaching and learning (Davies & Hewer, 2009). In a study conducted by Sokol et al. in 2013, the authors explained how using ICTs increased motivation in class; students noticed its use in the lessons made learning more connected with the real world. Jayanthi and Kumar (2016) also claim ICTs have countless benefits in language teaching, since they offer availability of materials, ICTs improve students' attitudes and make them work autonomously, they offer self-assessment, help teachers find materials and make the class student-centered. Other authors such as Graham (2006) also explain that the integration of technology or ICTs in language teaching is known as blended learning; it is a teaching and learning modality that mixes face-to-face instruction and computer-mediated instruction.

Blended learning design

Authors such as Driscoll (2002) have provided a broad definition of Blended Learning (BL). The author states that it is a combination of "instructional methods or pedagogical approaches"; however, this is a general and conservative definition of BL. Gülbahar and Madran (2009), on the other hand, define BL as a hybrid of online teaching and learning with face-to-face communication and traditional learning and teaching methods, while Bonk and Graham (2012) define it as a combination of computer assisted and traditional face-to-face instruction. When discussing the objectives, Neumeier (2005) states that BL aims at finding "the most effective and efficient combination of the two modes of learning for the subjects, contexts and objectives" (p.164). For the purpose of this particular study, I use the definition provided by Sharma and Barrett (2007). The authors present the term 'virtual blend' to refer to this fact of using 'face-to-face online' teaching in 'live' webinars which happens when the blend only takes place online. Other authors such as Osguthorpe and Graham (2003, p.229) advocate that one must find a balance in the BL mode, this balance can be accomplished by first finding out when, where, how, and what students will accomplish during the online sessions, how they will interact with their peers and teacher, and with what purpose.

Among the benefits, different authors advocate BL offers significant benefits for the teaching and learning process. Tayebenik and Puteh (2013) for example, state it promotes a strong sense of engagement and community, so it motivates students to participate more whether being in the classroom or not. Senffner and Kepler (2015) also claim, BL lets students learn anywhere and at the time they prefer, with no limitation to partners or groups and Rhem (2012) advocates BL allows teachers to assign tasks in person or online.

Synchronous sessions and asynchronous tasks as a blended design

It is of great importance to consider the health situation the world went through starting in 2020. The COVID-19 pandemic has changed many things and has made teaching and learning move to a 100% online environment. That is why the concepts synchronous and asynchronous became of much significance to my study. Serdyukov, (2020) for instance, states that asynchronous learning happens outside the simultaneous class and not at the same time or place for every participant. The author claims it focuses on students' autonomy using different resources and "offers limited interaction with the instructor and class in a time-delayed format" (p.7). Among the many benefits it provides, Serdyukov talks about "better access, choice, flexibility, expediency, and comfort of homework".

On the other hand, Serdyukov (2020) also describes synchronous learning in an online environment as an interaction among participants that occurs simultaneously. What the author means by "synchronous interaction" is being in live video conferencing sessions "where the whole class or learning group communicates with each other in real-time seeing and hearing what is going on and engaging in the process contemporaneously" (p.8). In other words, the author argues, it cannot be like asynchronous learning that can happen at any time, any place, and anyway, but it must happen in specific manners, at a specific time, and in a specific online medium. For my specific study, I focused more on the meaning of synchronous sessions, tasks, participation and interactions that took place during the synchronous online lessons.

Community of Inquiry framework (CoI): Social presence

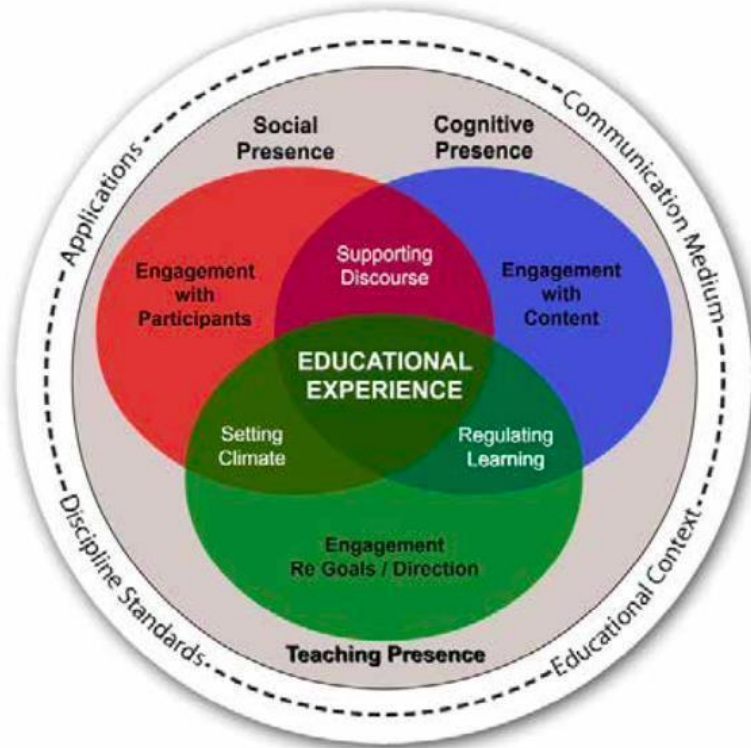
The Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework, originally developed by Garrison, Anderson, and Archer (2000), framed my blended teaching intervention design phase. This

framework focuses on giving significant engagement instead of giving direct instruction about the content (Cleveland-Innes and Wilton, 2018). The authors claim that “creating communities of inquiry in blended learning is one of the most researched pedagogical approaches in universities and colleges” (p.13) because it favors educational experiences and makes teaching and learning a process where knowledge, interaction and academy take place in a manner.

Cleveland-Innes and Wilton (2018) also discuss the three presences that the CoI framework brings. As for the first one, the social presence or “emotional presence” the way the authors call it, has to do with the ability of learners to project themselves socially and emotionally by expressing emotions and affection among people in a community of inquiry as they “related to and interact with learning technology, course content, students and instructor” (p.14). The second presence, the cognitive one, has to do with four components: “triggering events, exploration, integration and resolution” (p.14). These four different but overlapping elements of practical inquiry establish deep and meaningful learning. Moreover, the last presence, the teaching one, has to do with fostering peer-teaching among students; it allows teaching to be conducted not only by teachers but students themselves. Figure 2 summarizes this framework that Cleveland-Innes and Wilton retake.

Figure 2

The Community of Inquiry model



Taken from Cleveland-Innes & Wilton, (2018)

The social presence was not originally discussed in online environments (Jusoff and Khodabandelou, 2009). However, in distance online learning environments, opportunities for social interactions are limited due to physical distancing, which is why this presence plays an important role. Different authors in the field of social psychology and communication such as Tu (2002) define social presence as a complex construct that involves social relationships, communication styles, the nature of tasks, and feedback, among other features. Tu and Mcisaac (2002), established how social presence increased interaction in the online classroom by examining the social context, online communication, and interactivity to establish a sense of community. In a different study conducted in higher education by Garrison et al. (2000), the authors found how social presence had a significant impact on interaction, satisfaction and it improved learning and motivation. The authors did

this by using computer conferencing and creating a community of inquiry among the participants. And Garrison and Anderson (2003) add by saying that one of the biggest challenges for teachers is to establish social presence in e-learning so it is important that the student feels welcomed, as part of a community, so that they can openly communicate expressing acceptability and emotion.

Task-based learning to support the blended design

A task-based methodology for language learning (TBL) also helped me enhance learning in this blended course. TBL as stated by Harmer (2007, p.71) is an approach to language teaching and learning in which students are focused on the completion of a task. The author also claims that instead of focusing on a specific language feature, students are asked to perform an activity or task in which they solve a problem. Willis (1996) on the other hand, explains a framework for task-based language teaching which is divided into a pre-task in which the introduction to a task takes place, a task-cycle in which participants develop and present the task, and a language focus in which there is feedback and practice. Completing tasks synchronously or asynchronously in this study was appropriate to allow students to use the language with a real purpose and in real-life situations so that activities become meaningful. For this study, I used the definition of a task given by Willis (1996) in which he states that a task is a communicative activity with the main purpose of exchanging meaning.

Tasks become even more meaningful when combined with the use of technology. To explain this relationship between tasks and technology, González-Lloret and Ortega (2014) proposed the term “technology-mediated TBLT.” This approach shows the integration of technology into tasks. González-Lloret and Ortega claim that, when doing this integration, tasks become more significant and authentic. The authors also explain how

task-based language teaching (TBLT) principles can be matched integrally into the new language education and digital technology realities, thus transforming learning and language, and developing needs for proper curricular and instructional responses. For example, asking students to show different parts of their city to foreigners using Canvas or Genially, which are online platform to make slides, collages and presentations, would be an enriching experience as part of a tourism project.

For completing the tasks in this study, I guided the activities using one of the most worldwide frameworks for TBL. “The Willis’ TBL framework” (Willis, 1996, p.52). Here, Willis explains there are 3 stages for this approach. A pre-task, to introduce the theme, a task-cycle for planning the task and performing it, and a language focus, to report on the task performed and to analyze it. When integrating tasks and technology Chappelle (2001) uses the term Technology-mediated tasks, they “afford a wide variety of opportunities for producing comprehensible output or co-constructing meaning” (p. 62).

Research Methodology

The purpose of this study was to explore the benefits, withdraws or other features of enhancing the social presence in a blended learning course implemented in the language learning program of the Engineering faculty and so that it can improve students’ interactions. This investigation was a single case study framed by qualitative research. When defining qualitative research, Merriam (2016) explained how in this type of research, the study takes place in a real-world setting and the phenomenon being observed happens naturally. Creswell (2009) talks about the general characteristics of qualitative research and lists them as follows: “the research takes place in the natural setting, relies on the researcher as the instrument for data collection, employs multiple methods of data collection, is inductive, is based on participants’ meanings, is emergent, often involves the use of a

theoretical lens, is interpretive, and is holistic” (p. 162). Framed as qualitative research, authors such as Creswell, (2007) and Merriam (2016) defines case study as a description and analysis of a case (or cases) within a bounded system” (p. 39), authors explained how it is the unit of analysis what describes a case study instead of the topic of investigation. Creswell (2007) goes beyond when explaining that case study research is an approach in which the researcher explores in detailed a case or cases and reports the descriptions and themes. When conducting case studies, the author claims, the researcher has the possibility of using a wide range of data collection methods, such as “observations, interviews, audiovisual materials, documents and reports” (p. 73) in order to gather necessary data. Yin (2003) explains a “case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context. Especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clear” (p13). Thus, case study research helped me frame this investigation since I explored how the social presence of the CoI framework in blended learning environments (phenomenon) worked within my students’ real context (Yin, 2003).

Data gathering

Regarding the data collection process, different methods helped me gather data. Creswell (2007) defines this process as “a series of interrelated activities aimed at gathering good information to answer emerging research questions” (p.118). The author explains when conducting case studies, data can be collected by fieldnotes, interviews and observational protocols. Creswell (2009) states that to inform qualitative research, different strategies are used such as “purposeful sampling, collection of open-ended data, analysis of text or pictures, representation of information in figures and tables, and personal interpretation of the findings” (p. 17). In my study, information was collected using

questionnaires, interviews, observations, and a personal research journal; all these data collection methods helped me answer the research question.

Needs analysis survey

A needs analysis survey as an initial method of data collection was implemented with the participants before the intervention units (see Appendix B). The objective was to obtain information on students' beliefs and ideas about the online classes, learning processes, and their perspectives and assumptions about the social presence within the group. Creswell (2012) states that when conducting questionnaires, "you may ask some questions that are closed ended and some that are open ended" to predetermine close-ended responses to support concepts or to explore the reasons and identify comments in the open-ended responses (p, 220). I used this data collection method as a needs analysis of my students for this course, the purpose of this questionnaire was to collect self-reported data from my students' experiences, and conceptions. This method allowed me to gather information firsthand and directly from the subjects under study (Rea & Parker, 2005).

The focus group

There was also a focused group interview to examine participant's cases (see appendix C). This also included students' self-assessment of their participation and group work in class. When interviewing in case studies, Creswell (2007) claims researchers need to determine the type of interview that is practical for the study and if it is a focus group, "care must be taken to encourage all participants to talk and to monitor individuals who may dominate the conversation" (p. 133). Richards (2003) also claims that open interviews "introduce different sorts of questions and summarize basic rules for effective interviewee responses" (p.48). The focus group interview in this study was conducted with 8 students

that accepted the invitation to participate at the end of the intervention units. The purpose was to evaluate the whole experience with students and gather their comments.

A research diary

While being a “participant as observer” (Glesne, 2011), I did not only observe my student’s interactions, but I also participated, that helped me create a research diary. I became involved and interacted with my students as a facilitator in the online lessons to observe closely and learn from those findings. This revealed my students’ attitudes which helped me describe how their social presence was developed and determine whether it helped interactions increase in the blended learning class. Besides, it helped me take field notes during and right after each intervention lesson and record them in a research diary for further analysis and keeping track of my students’ changes in language use and class performance. Those notes became the income of a personal diary or a journal (see appendix D) that was used to keep a record of my field notes. Altrichter et al, (1993) explain “keeping such a diary ensures that data collection is not artificially separated from reflection and analysis” (p.13), since it helps in recording memos, ideas, building everyday researcher skills and recalling the fruits of daily observations. After observing, I wrote full descriptions of those events and in-depth reflections of the experiences of the 6-week intervention units. Frequently occurring situations, problems, feelings, anecdotes, and learning experiences and students’ performance were collected in this journal. I also wrote short memos and ideas that were presented frequently.

The third person’s opinion

Concerning somebody else’s opinion as something that Yin (2003) claims provide external validity, a colleague of mine was invited to observe three recordings of the classes when the interventions of some units occurred. External validity as Yin (2003) explains,

helps to find out whether results are generalizable beyond a study's case. Creswell (2012) also claims external validity "refers to the validity of the cause-and-effect relationship being generalizable to other persons, settings, treatment variables, and measures" (p. 303). This person was an external person who is also an English teacher and that had nothing to do with the study, but was just provided with some criteria to observe the classes (see Appendix E). After each one of these three classes observations, there was an interview with my fellow colleague to know his opinion and points of view about what happened in those classes. That helped me analyze situations and students' perspectives from a different and more unbiased perspective and then be able to generalize, which made the experience more enriching.

The Intervention

Participants and context

This research was carried out with 14 students from a public university in Medellin, Colombia. For this investigation, I focused on a blended English course that the university offers. In this study, there were female and male participants that were learning English as part of their university program curriculum. In terms of economic background, my students constituted low-income and high-income families, so it was a heterogeneous group. The students' level of English was Elementary, according to the English II course parameters, with a prerequisite of having achieved a previous English course. The age of participants varied from 17-20 years old. When I asked my students if they wanted to participate in my investigation without any kind of reward, 14 out of 14 accepted my invitation to take part in this project (see appendix A). I made sure to protect my students' identity by giving them numbers in the reports, so throughout this section I will describe them with their corresponding numbers. These ethical considerations were considered, following

Creswell's (2012) suggestions of collecting data in an ethical manner, with sensitivity to individuals and populations being studied.

Intervention units

This case study included some intervention units intended to strengthen students' social presence, to observe possible changes in students' interactions during the online classes. In this teaching intervention the social presence was enhanced to observe changes in students' interactions while participating in an online environment, which was students' 'online English classes held via Zoom meeting sessions. I decided to adapt for the intervention units of the blended course, the CoI framework (Garrison, et al., 2000), its three presences but more specifically, the role of social presence. The framework was used in this analysis to find weaknesses and make improvements in the course considering how to enhance the social presence and thus, improving students' interactions in the class and it also helped me foster meaningful learning opportunities for my students. Since the social presence of this CoI framework was the center of the design phase, the blend in this study mainly offered my students more opportunities to perform tasks cooperatively in synchronous sessions while being connected on Zoom video, and some asynchronous tasks, in which they needed to develop some assignments on their own or with their classmates.

The CoI framework and its three presences were considered for the design and implementation of the interventions in my blended course, focusing more on the social one. Guided by the cognitive presence, Task-based learning TBL helped me guide and implement tasks in the interventions so that students could practice the language. This cognitive presence and the tasks helped me engaged my students with the content of the course, which was related to familiar topics. Guided by the teaching presence, I set goals and drew directions so that my students were able to accomplish language objectives and

that leaning could be regulated and adjusted to students' needs. And focusing more on the social presence, strategies were planned to use in the intervention of the online blended course so that participants were more engaged, a friendly atmosphere was created, and a positive learning experience could take part.

Once the tasks were planned for the class, focusing on social presence, I proceeded to implement the interventions (see table 1), which occurred in the second semester of 2021. Taking into account the first pillar of this presence, open communication and following the indicators proposed by Garrison (2011) ...

-I strengthened confidence for interacting in the English class, I chose topics students could relate to and be familiar with so that they would feel more confident to talk about since it is something they have some previous knowledge.

-Feedback was also given in a friendly way with the purpose of providing opportunities for improving, not just for giving grades, the idea was for students to get better at what they were doing and care about them learning and not getting a passing score.

-Finally, I encouraged students to interact whenever they wanted to, this with the purpose of not missing a single interaction opportunity and a chance to practice the language and continue gaining confidence.

Taking into account the second pillar of this presence, group cohesion, and focusing on the indicators proposed by Garrison (2011) for this presence...

-I encourage students to give themselves a role when working in groups. The idea was for them to develop cooperation and understand it as a feeling of togetherness and feeling as a community.

-Students were always encouraged to give each other feedback so that they could learn from one another and so that it was easier for them to comment on their classmates' comments.

-And before and during tasks, there were moments to prepare themselves so that there were more interactions not only in the online class but before it as autonomous group practice.

As for the last pillar, personal/affective, considering the same indicators proposed by Garrison (2011) for this presence...

-I made students feel comfortable in class so that they were willing to do things that online students do not usually do. Things such as turning on cameras so that they could see one another and somehow show their physical appearance so that everybody felt they were talking to someone behind the screen.

-I encouraged them to support one another and offer help whenever needed, that way they could create a more friendly atmosphere.

-Finally, I have them feel they could express emotions and care about others' feelings by providing opportunities in the class to talk about personal issues and offer empathetic support.

Table 1

Intervention unit activities

Example of some activities in the interventions	Purpose	Strategies on the social presence	Strategies for the pre-task activities	Strategies for the while-task activities	Strategies for the post-task activities.
1	It was for students to confidently and sincerely talk	Being a friendly teacher, asking them	a. Students watched a video on Edpuzzle and answered	b. In class, students worked in pairs solving	c. Give and receive peer and teacher's feedback on

	and write about their superheroes and tell the class who can be a hero for them.	questions all the time, and creating an informal atmosphere helped students to feel confident and openly express feelings and talk about who can be a hero for them and why. At the same time, their classmates were supposed to feel confident enough to ask other questions about why they consider those people as heroes.	questions related to it autonomously (asynchronously). They did this to get introduced to the topic of next class. While in class, before starting, there were moments to share personal experiences and talk about how personal things were going (synchronously).	some of the exercises from their textbooks related to their personal heroes. (synchronously). Students presented their favorite heroes to the whole class. Topics were selected so that they catch students' attention, taking into account they are young population. Students needed to ask their classmates' questions and be ready to answer the teachers' questions (synchronously).	the activity about heroes. Focus on the new words learnt, structures of any doubts that may have emerged (asynchronously). All students were allowed to intervene when giving a student feedback about their work.
2			a. Students autonomously did some vocabulary exercises on their textbooks and had a look at some slides on NearPod in order to get	b. The whole class watched a video on Edpuzzle and read a text on their books, they did it cooperatively	c. We focused on the structures and vocabulary used in the topic of heroes. We gave feedback and

			<p>introduced to the topic of heroes (asynchronously).. They had the chance to confidently tell the teacher if they had liked the activity on the online platform.</p>	<p>y and asked questions related to vocabulary of pronunciation every time they needed it (synchronously).. Students answered questions related to the video and reading. Each students had the chance to participate while the others were expected to comment on their classmates' answers (synchronously)..</p>	<p>answered further questions (synchronously).. I kindly gave my students feedback and asked them if it was clear, I let them know it was intended for them to learn more and not just to get a score (synchronously)..</p>
3			<p>a. Students wrote a short piece of writing asynchronously. They were supposed to write about their heroes using the simple past. I asked them to be totally honest and openly write about their heroes.</p>	<p>b. Students connected to the class and uploaded their documents on Padlet. Each student was assigned a different writing composition for them to read and ask questions.</p>	<p>c. Students and teacher had a time to talk about each writing composition, ask questions to their classmates and receive peer feedback (synchronously).</p>

				Students took some minutes of individual practice to read (synchronously). Students were allowed to ask all the questions they had to their classmates about their superheroes (synchronously).	
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Description of some of the activities in the intervention

The intervention lasted six weeks, 6 hours a week (4 synchronous and 2 asynchronous) and happened within the syllabus content of an English course at a public university in Medellin, Colombia. In this course I implemented in a blended manner (synchronously and asynchronously) two of the six units of the textbook, using different technological tools (such as YouTube, Nearpod, Edpuzzle).

In the lessons, I asked my students to talk about their favorite movies (since this was proposed in the textbook). For the pre-task, students worked asynchronously and in pairs to read about movies and get ideas, structures, and vocabulary they may need. I let participants use the strategy they felt more comfortable with for this homework, and I let them choose the people they wanted to work with and the time and tool they would use to meet online. For these activities, we used platforms such as Padlet and Edpuzzle, which I previously prepared and shared the link with them during the synchronous sessions or

posted it on a platform that the university provides to the English courses. They also were able to watch videos in which they were exposed to vocabulary related to movies. The purpose of doing such activities was for my students to get introduced into the topic, to work collaboratively and brainstorm ideas and learn the vocabulary and some structures they would use in the synchronous sessions. In other pre-tasks activities, I asked my students to work on the platform Padlet, to upload and read their classmates' movie reviews before coming to the synchronous class. The purpose of these pre-task activities was for my students to become familiarized with the topic of the class and get to know their classmates' taste in movies while strengthening their confidence to use the language with their peers. That way they will feel confident in class to talk and comment about their movie tastes and their classmates' taste.

During the while-tasks, which mainly happened asynchronously, I asked my students to make presentations and share personal experiences in which they needed to talk about themselves and their favorite movies. I established an atmosphere in which students would feel confident to do this by letting them know that this activity had no right or wrong responses and that what mattered was participation and interactions rather than just getting a grade. Students used platforms such as Canva, Prezi and PowerPoint Presentations to show their classmates what they have prepared. The purpose of this activity was for my students to see what everybody had successfully prepared while working collaboratively and asynchronously and to offer opportunities for my students to interact among themselves and ask questions about the presentations. I was able to confirm they worked collaboratively and asynchronously thanks to a product they needed to create and upload on a platform (Padlet). They also needed to comment on their classmates' presentations and comments. I showed them movie trailers and gave them feedback on the discussions we

had in class and their presentations. But more importantly, I created opportunities for my students to feel totally free to express themselves and confidently discuss with their classmates. These opportunities were created using a variety of strategies such as letting them speak whenever they needed it, praising their comments, allowing them to use a sense of humor in the class and being an open and easy to approach teacher.

During the post-task activities, which happened synchronously, we expanded and answered further questions about the tasks presented in class. These were opportunities for my students to ask and answer questions about their performance and the English structures used in the presentations and synchronous discussions. Students received my feedback, and they gave each other peer feedback. The idea was for my students to have more opportunities for meaningful interactions in which they could complement, give, and receive feedback from the peers. I tried to establish a group cohesion for these kinds of activities so that participants care about commenting, praising, and interacting instead of just focusing on language features. I did this by letting them express freely and prompting them to ask questions and give comments to their classmates.

Data analysis

To analyze my data, I followed the recommendation of Creswell (2007) related to case study analysis and representation. The author claims “for a case study, analysis consists of making a detailed description of the case and its setting” (p.163). I paid special attention to this point to select very well the aspects that might evidence any kind of improvement in my students’ social presence in the class, hence increasing their interactions.

Creswell (2007) in his table “Data Analysis and Representation, by Research Approaches” describe and give the steps or characteristics to case study data analysis. First,

the author claims you create and organize data files, second you read the text and create initial codes, third, you provide a description of the case and its context, fourth, you establish themes or patterns, then you use direct interpretation or generalizations and finally you present results of the case using narrative, tables, or figures (p.157).

When I describe my data analysis for this case study, I can claim I followed Creswell's steps, manually on Microsoft Word. First, I always tried to be very organized with the data I was collecting, putting them into different documents and files. Second, when reading and interpreting the survey responses, the third person 's class descriptions and the focus group interview transcription, I started to highlight initial codes. Third, I had also provided a description of the case and its context and fourth, I started establishing themes, using different colors, from the codes I had highlighted before. Then I directly interpreted and generalized those themes into categories to finally present results in a narrative way and with figures (Creswell, 2007).

To raise the validity of this procedure (Yin 2003, Creswell, 2012) I included the analysis of two critical friends (third person opinion and my thesis advisor). I also used different data collection techniques such as: class observations and a journal writing, a survey, a third person opinion and a focus group interview to triangulate the information that allowed me to see data from different perspectives. The process of the research I present here was validated by my thesis advisor. For the organization of the categories and to help the interpretation, I manually used and categorized themes following the above-mentioned Creswell's (2007) Data Analysis and Representation steps for case study.

Results

The purpose of this study was to enhance students' social presence to explore improvements, withdraws or other features in students' interactions in a blended class from the E4E program. This study included a teaching intervention in which participants could experience a synchronous blended learning approach with some asynchronous tasks where the social presence was outstandingly promoted.

In this section I present a detailed description of the results obtained after a qualitative analysis of the data gathered in the present investigation. The categories of this study will be organized and named considering the three main pillars that are known when remaking the social presence (Garrison et al., 2003) in this case in online environments: 1) open communication, 2) group cohesion and 3) personal/ affective pillar. Each category will be supported by the already triangulated findings in data, including students' quotes.

Students' online synchronous interactions improved during the intervention.

This category is related to the pillar Open Communication that is included in the social presence of the CoI framework. This pillar refers to the willingness students have to ask and answer questions to their classmates, quote them, agree, or disagree with them and complement or show appreciation (Garrison et al., 2003).

From my experience as their teacher and observer, I noticed my students felt openly free to communicate their thoughts once the interventions started. Before the interventions, students would not turn on their cameras, would not open their microphones without being asked to do so and it was not common for them to talk to one another during the online class. It was problematic for students to participate in the synchronous online class because

they were not confident enough to do so, they did not feel comfortable in the online environment. As I started developing the interventions I realized, whether it was in class, during presentations, during the focus group, or in class reviews, my students changed their attitudes towards the class. I kept these situations as diary entries. Student 2, for example, claimed in the focus groups interview... “I liked it a lot, because of everything that I am saying, because of the interactions with my classmates, which was pretty good, and I was able to learn a lot....” This student was explaining why he liked the classes so much and the good results he got due to the interactions he and his classmates had. I think this happened since I offered them a space and opportunities for them to feel more comfortable and talk about familiar topics. For example, students started to openly communicate what they needed to express, they were not afraid anymore to interact, they completed tasks successfully, they would raise up their virtual hands and participate, they would turn on their cameras when making an intervention, in other words they gained confidence. As an observer, I experienced firsthand and kept records of moments in the class in which students corrected one another when using the wrong words in English and commented on topics being discussed in oral presentations which were topics they knew, such as their favorite movies and their favorite superheroes. Those topics were already suggested by the original E4E program, but I curated them so that students felt they could talk about something they knew, that way they would talk more. This made them express themselves, add vocabulary to the conversation, feel the necessity to ask questions, give comments about the discussion in class and state an opinion. “One feels nervous in virtuality too, sometimes” (claimed student 6 during the focus group). This student was explaining how it

is normal to feel nervous before doing the presentations in English they had as part of the intervention tasks, however they were able to do it because it was a topic they handled. No matter if they needed to reply to their classmates' opinions or comments, if they needed to ask questions to the teacher or classmates, or if they needed to agree or disagree with anyone, most of them would always do it without feeling shy and interventions using the target language started to become more complete since they started to use the language more in class. Student 7, for example, also stated "I'm very shy and I don't take risks asking questions, sometimes, but it's good, I mean, it's like you're in training and so are your colleagues and everything else". Student 7 was trying to say that even though she is shy, she felt able to reply to her classmates and express herself in class because it was necessary for learning. I think somehow, she gained some confidence during the interventions and was able to interact more and was not afraid of making mistakes. And student 4 expressed "Although sometimes I was wrong, I did not feel that fear of being wrong" meaning that he lost his fear and was not scared of participating in class anymore and giving answers when the teacher asked the questions, he was not afraid either of making mistakes and getting a low score because he understood feedback was for him to improve.

Further analyzing the way students always responded to others and interacted, I can say this was a characteristic which was very present in all my classes during the interventions. Students were always opening their microphones and complimenting someone's appearance, replying to others' opinions, and replying to my opinions. Student 7, for instance, claimed it was not only a matter of focusing on the English class but on personal things such as: "hey, how are you doing? How are things going at home? Well,

how is your family? Now we even care more because of the pandemic.” These significant things revealed to me that my students openly and successfully interacted more during their classes, they found moments to ask personal questions and their peers confidently replied to those questions, and more importantly they were using the target language more. A general analysis of the focus group answers also showed students felt free to ask questions during the synchronous sessions. As an observer, I was able to identify and keep it as diary entries that asking questions to one another in class increased and students were able to start conversations with their classmates in and outside the online session, since they would connect to the class and tell what they had done the previous days.

Finally, a third person’s opinion revealed students felt empathy and confidence when sharing and listening to their classmates’ stories. This third person was asked to observe three classes and was given a rubric with some criteria to consider when observing (see appendix D). According to the description of the observations made by this third person, I noticed the same feeling I found during my own observations. “Your students do not feel shy at all to express whatever they want to say. Whenever they need to say or ask something, they just do it, even without raising their virtual hand.” (H. Talero, personal communication, January 2022). This third person was also able to identify different examples that remarked this pillar related to open communication. For instance, he explained there were moments in which students were freely asking and replying to comments and questions from their classmates and the teacher, they would just interrupt and ask or reply to somebody else’s comment. He also found examples in which students

quoted other students, such as when commenting on someone else's favorite movie and why those movies were good or not.

Students' synchronous cooperative work was more efficient.

This category is related to the pillar Group Cohesion that is found in the social presence of the CoI framework. This pillar refers to the attitude students have in classwork in general, group work or pair work, the relationship they have with one another, and the feeling of being a whole and not an individual (Garrison et al., 2003). After an analysis of my diary entries, it could be observed there was a willingness to cooperate during and after the course, which while in class, developed a more interactive and collaborative feature in my students.

Before the interventions, students were only concerned with completing and obtaining approving grades. They used to work individually and were not much interested in helping their peers and breakout rooms on Zoom were never used. "She would just say the rules and that is it, we needed to do it like that. If you had internet or not, that was not her problem, she was kind of a schoolteacher", claimed student 5 trying to explain previous working experiences with former online courses. I notice that before the interventions, as long as they completed their tasks and submitted them, students would feel accomplished, however during and after the interventions data showed a big change.

Reflections on my personal diary and answers from my students in the focus group showed there is an emotional tie (friendship) or connection that they feel toward their classmates. During the classes, I could notice most of the time when working in pairs or groups, they assigned each other roles, and all participated equally, and they always treated

each other kindly and respectfully, as if they were already friends. Student 9, for instance, expressed

...in face-to-face classes, you always see a lot of small groups. They are always small groups..., so if one... If one wants to have different perspectives, to get to know more, then it is easier this way, with that method of working in random groups (Zoom breakout rooms), and that thing was very good.

This situation helped me understand that my students liked the methodology of working in pairs or groups randomly selected on breakout rooms, as most of them agree with student 9 during the focus group interview. Students started to use a more cooperative way to complete their tasks and while working in groups, they would openly talk, work and provide feedback to one another. Working more cooperatively meant that each member of a group would have an activity to do, and their peers would also provide support and feedback when accomplishing a task.

Another situation that helped me complete my observations and notes taken in my personal diary, happened when student 5 claimed during the focus group interview...

The truth is that I did feel that I learned a lot, teacher. And I think that is mainly because of that closeness that we all had, which, although it was not from the beginning of the course, it did feel like a good vibe.

Therefore, students' cooperative work was more efficient since it could be noticed that the outcome of the tasks had better performance. It was observed and recorded in the research diary how students felt cooperativeness, they helped one another, they provided each other feedback, they felt confident and recognized they were a group, they enjoyed working in

the breakout rooms and even assigned themselves roles when working in groups and making presentations in pairs. For instance, student 7 claimed, “those spaces offer you a way to strengthen a friendly relationship”, referring to the times in the online class in which they got to work in pairs or groups.

To conclude this category, the third person’s opinion helped me to confirm that my students’ cooperative work was more efficient. “I always noticed your students had a very positive and open attitude with their classmates and teacher. They considered and saw themselves as a group, not as an individual” (H. Talero, personal communication, January 2022).

Examples found during the observation and descriptions of the third person showed that students acted as good friends, allowing them to accept the roles and tasks they themselves assign to one another. Students did what they were supposed to in the group work and that was evident when they presented the results to the class, they were always acting as a community, using language that identified themselves as a group, such as we and ours. Besides, during the classes observed by this third person, he never noticed an uncomfortable or tense moment lived during the classes. “Everything always ran smoothly and in a very positive atmosphere, it was like they have been studying together for years, but they haven’t, have they?” (H. Talero, personal communication, January 2022).

Focusing on the social presence impacts students’ attitudes towards the class.

This category is related to the pillar Personal/Affective included in the social presence of the CoI framework. This pillar refers to the willingness students have to show any sign of emotions and feelings positively or negatively during the class, as well as the

desire to use a sense of humor (Garrison et al., 2003). After an analysis, data showed students had this sensation of being appreciated and making others feel the same, which impacted their interactions and attitudes to the English class positively. My diary entries, answers in the focus group and the third person's opinion show examples of this situations.

A deep analysis of my diary entries showed most of my students felt confident enough during the interventions to talk about their emotions and make others feel the same. Before the interventions, students were not that confident to show feelings and emotions, they just took the role of passive students who just do things the teacher asks them to do and answer when being inquired. During and after the intervention, whether negative or positive, they found moments in the class and spontaneously expressed feelings of friendship, happiness, vulnerability, and purpose which may have lowered their affective filter, causing positive attitudes to the English class. For example, student 2 even confessed in the focus group that she would always take some time from the breakout rooms activities to ask their classmates how things were going; a comment with which many of her classmates in the focus group seemed to agree. I also noticed during the interventions my students did kindly favors to other classmates, they were most of the time laughing with their peers, were expressing the desire to take their next English course together and felt empathetic when a classmate told an unfortunate life experience. This freedom of expressing emotions could have influenced their responses to the English class since they were not only thinking about getting good scores but enjoying and paying attention to what was being discussed in class, I noticed this and wrote in in my personal diary how they would interrupt and give comments on something without being asked to do

so. Students cared about making their interactions and feeling and making others feel appreciated, instead of being stressed or overwhelmed with the English class. “Yes, teacher! It somewhat motivated me more because as you know, I am bad at it, and I had not shown interest in learning”, claimed student 6 trying to explain how she felt more freedom and gained confidence to interact during classes, which she thought was positive for her learning process.

When I compare my personal notes with the focus group interview responses, I can ratify that my students felt free to show emotions in the class. Student 5, for example, claimed...

Well, I felt welcome. I don't know, I mean, I felt a totally different vibe. And the truth is that this was very positive for me because this helped me to become more interested in the class.

This ability of my students to show their emotions, I think, also helped them be more open and ask and interact more in class. This same student 5 gave a statement with which the other students in the focus group agreed. She wondered how it would have felt having on-site classes if having virtual classes felt so good.

Quoting another student from the focus group to support the idea that my students felt free and able to express their emotions, I think student 7 not only expressed what she felt but added that it motivated her more during the English class.

Well, the way in which they are combined is positive, things such as what you like and what you are learning, because this combination makes things much easier for you, well, it is motivating, it is interesting. (Student 7, focus group).

To conclude this category that found my students' response to learning was impacted, a third-person opinion supported my findings with his own appreciation of the classes observed. According to his remarks and notes taken during the classes observed, my students always felt free to express their emotions, which probably positively affects their learning process. "It really caught my attention when one of your students told you and the class, he was feeling anxiety as a long-term symptom after having Covid 19" (H. Talero, personal communication, January 2022). In the opinion of this third person, my students always felt free to be themselves to such a wide extent that they would joke about anything or express anything, which makes the online classroom a friendly and home-like atmosphere, helping them somehow in their learning process since they can freely explore.

"One of your students even told the class he is Venezuelan and that he met his girlfriend online and now they are living together. I think that is a high level of trustworthiness and confidence that you guys have within the whole class" (H. Talero, personal communication, January 2022).

Students' online experience

This last original category mainly emerged from the data analysis of the focus group interview, some questions in the needs analysis survey, and my personal diary. Even though it is not related to the CoI framework, I considered it worthy of description. This category refers to students' own reflections on their own online learning experiences during the intervention, and experiences with the technological tools to use the target language differently in the online class. After analysis, data showed students had different

experiences, negative and positive, most of them facilitating interactions in the class and improving the online experience.

Before the interventions, my classes used to be plain, and teacher-centered. Students did not use to participate much and there were not many opportunities for interaction. We mainly cared about completing the course syllabus. Student 2 in the focus group even said...

The teacher asked a question and answered it himself because no one was going to tell him anything. In this case, these types of interventions are currently required, as I told you, it tends to be uncomfortable for the student and for the teacher.

This showed me and helped me understand how online classes were before the intervention. Afterward, I was able to make comparisons and analyze changes in students' online experiences.

An analysis of the demographic questions in the survey revealed most of my students comfortably took their online classes (see figure 3). 12 out of 14 students used a laptop computer to connect to the class, sometimes tablets or cellphones (see figure 4). All of them were connected from their own houses to take the classes and not only in the city where the university is located but from their hometowns. This could suggest they had their classes from the comfort of home but with all the distractions, it may carry. I could also imply this is their first online experience for my students due to the COVID 19 pandemic, so they may have had to deal with feelings of anxiety and depression caused by the lockdown.

Figure 3

All students connect from home to the class.

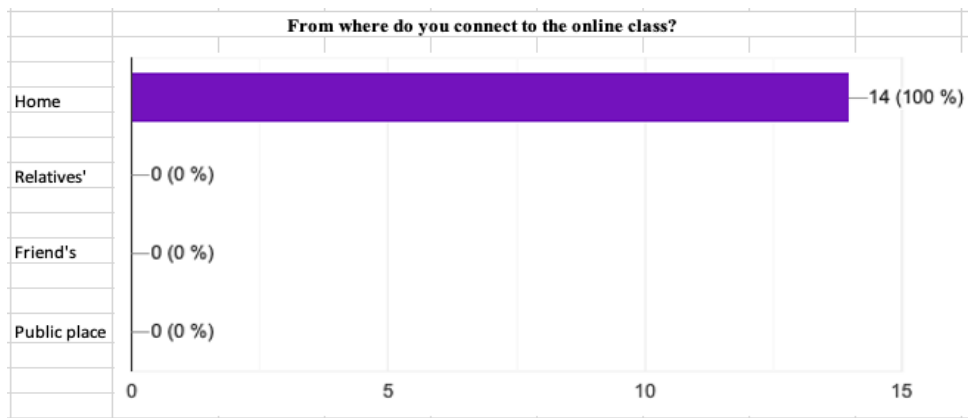
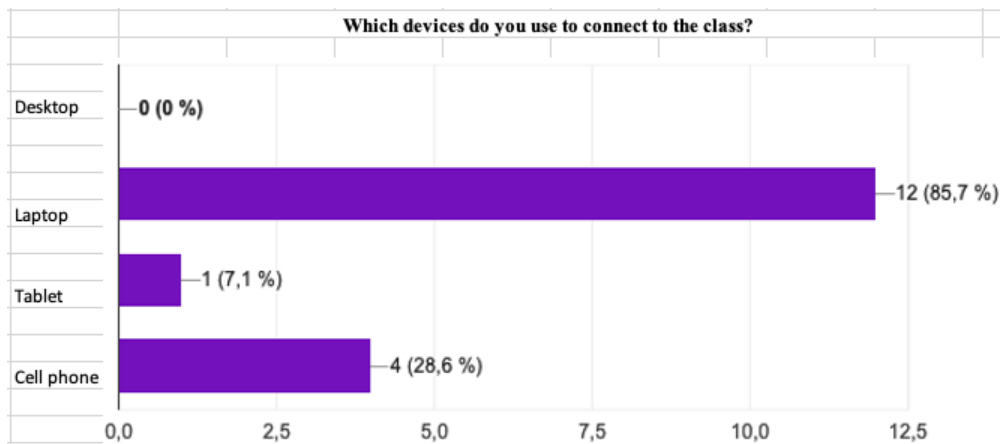


Figure 4

Main devices used to connect to the online class.



An analysis of the comments in the focus group and a comparison with my research diary notes showed a positive approach in students' course experiences. Student 2, for example, claimed, "I think the change was mostly in participation, since virtual English classes and virtual classes, in general, require a more active participation from us, students". This student was trying to explain something that, according to him, was a big change in this virtual English course. "It is much more flexible due to virtuality", claimed

student 6 when asked whether she thought having this online English course contributed to her strength or weakness. She further explained speaking in English through the microphone helped her understand others much better since it did not allow acoustic distractions to happen.

Student 9, for example, also claimed having an online virtual class was something positive. The fact of having the recordings of the classes available at any moment and at any time gave the virtually a plus. “Let's say when it is time for evaluations or reviews, one just goes to the class recording and that is it, we have a kind of a summary”. This same student 9 also expressed that the platforms used during the interventions facilitated everything. According to him, the fact that those platforms such as Padlet and Nearpod did not ask them to register to solve a task, made it very practical and user-friendly. Student 3 on the other hand described Zoom, in this blended English class, as a tool that gave him the possibility to get to know his classmates a little bit more. Thus, the tools selected offered the student opportunities to access to the course content, do extra practice, connect with their peers, and give written and oral peer feedback, that is how this experience was different from previous online courses some of the students had had.

Nevertheless, there were comments from the students in the focus groups that revealed negative experiences with the blended English class and virtuality in general. Student 3 for example, explains how the fact of not having a specific place at home to study and learn, makes it difficult to accommodate and fully concentrate in the online class. He also claimed some of the platforms used during the intervention were not very appealing to him since they were not very interactive. Student 9 seemed to agree with his classmate and

complimented by saying that one can easily lose attention in class and do other things, since “you are not in a learning space but at home”. In general, the main disadvantage my students in the focus group commonly agreed with, was the fact that you cannot fully concentrate because you have many distractions at home.

Discussion

One of the main problems with online classes in language learning is students’ difficulties for interactions. Sometimes teachers only focus on the technical tools, as well as content tasks, however there is not much emphasis on students’ social presence in online learning environments. My research study tried to establish students’ needs for feeling comfortable with the online class, so they could be willing to interact more. I found a positive outcome after analyzing data in terms of strengthening the social presence in an online blended class and consequently positively affecting students’ interactions.

In the next section, I first describe the main changes and effects that improving the social presence had on my students’ interactions in class. Then, I compare the results obtained in my investigation to other similar studies that have been conducted before, to talk about similarities or differences in findings, it would also be the opportunity to express my reflections on my research results. It needs to be mentioned that in the Colombian context, research regarding the social presence and blended design or online environments has not been conducted, so there is a clear gap in literature.

From my personal experience as their teacher and as an observer, I noticed that creating an atmosphere for the social presence to be promoted is necessary in order to make my students feel openly free to interact and communicate during classes. In my study,

students were always opening their microphones and complimenting someone's appearance or work, replying to others' opinions, and replying to my opinions; they also had the opportunity to interact using English for communication. A similar pattern of results was obtained in Taghizadeh and Vaezi's (2011) study, the authors found that asking questions, quoting from others, and expressing agreement, were significant indicators of the social presence in the class. In my study, the fact that participants interacted more can indicate there were more opportunities for it in the class, whether talking about class-related topics or personal matters. What I think created this mutual feeling of empathy and trust, was the friendly atmosphere my students felt since the beginning of the teaching intervention. Other authors such as Garramone et al. (1986) have stated that low levels of social presence often point to low interaction levels, and this is consistent with Nel and Ndeya-Ndereya (2011). In their investigation, the authors found that "the online discussions, in particular the problem discussion area, turned out to be very useful in encouraging student-to-facilitator and student-to-student interactions" (p.128). It is a critical issue to care for students' social presence in online environment as it offers different opportunities for students to grow on their confidence as well as changing their perceptions towards participating in online classes.

Furthermore, students' cooperative work can be more productive due to their willingness of being and becoming good friends during and after the course. This cooperative work also developed a more interactive and leadership feature among students. An overall analysis of the results makes me claim there is an emotional tie (friendship) or union that my students felt toward their classmates. The friendly atmosphere they had,

made them feel within a group of friends. They liked the methodology of working in pairs or groups randomly selected, which tells me they had no problem working with any of their classmates. Contrary to my results, previous studies have found different patterns. Authors such as Taghizadeh and Vaezi (2011), for example, found some differing outcomes, they examined the social presence within their participants in a virtual learning environment. They found out participants also made use of kind and friendly greetings at the beginning of the class and diverse ways to say goodbye at the end, plus, questions regarding the state of their classmates, but they never used the “we” pronoun or inclusive phrases. In their study, only 56% of the participants considered this element as important. The authors concluded the social presence in their virtual class did not completely exist.

On the contrary, my students felt in a community, using language that identified themselves as a group, such as we and ours, maybe because of the they know each other better or my strategies were different. Again, this was accomplished by triggering and intensifying the social presence in the online class, being a friendly teacher to start, and consequently making my students feel confident enough to do the same. Other authors such Cheng and Wang (2019) have also shown that “social engagements among students outside the classroom does have an impact on the effectiveness of classroom response systems” (p.113).

In addition, it is important to note the fact that the blended design with a remark on the social presence impacted my students’ response to learning since they felt confident and appreciated in the class. I think this same friendly and confident atmosphere my students were living in the class, helped them feel confident and appreciated enough to show their

feelings, emotions and even showed moments of sense of humor. This also made interactions easier for them, since they were always commenting in class and asking questions, even if it were to talk about feelings or to joke around. All this confidence also possibly helped them improve their speaking skills since they started losing the fear to talk in English. Thus, I can claim interactions also increased in the online English class, due to this confidence and appreciation emotion my students sensed. Whether talking about class-related topics, or personal issues, my students were always interacting during the synchronous sessions. Joksimovic et al. (2015) claimed the ability of students to project themselves within an online learning community was an important predictor of academic performance. The authors' findings also indicated that there was a positive relationship between active participation due to the social presence in the online class and good final grades. This is consistent with Liu et al. (2009) when they explained how the social presence helped students project themselves in a learning community, thus predicting a good academic performance.

Finally, I can also claim that the online experience brought different changes to all my students, facilitating interactions in the class, and having a nicer experience for online learning. To start, there were disadvantages my students mentioned about having classes online and it is a common trend that when students have classes online, anything can distract them and, since there is no one watching them or telling them what to do, they can just get distracted on their cellphones. From a personal point of view, distractions are the biggest challenge teachers have when teaching online. It is difficult, not impossible though, to make sure your students are really focused on the class and paying attention to it.

Other disadvantages mentioned by my students regarding taking classes online were the fact of not having a comfortable place to take their classes and the non-practical usage of online platforms. My students claimed they did not have a specific place at home to make it an office and fully focus; this is a reality for many Colombian students, sometimes it is their own bedrooms, sometimes it is the living room at home, where everybody is passing around, and sometimes they need to accommodate depending on where they get better internet connection. All these factors influence in having good or bad experiences in taking online classes and facilitate or not concentration. Furthermore, students claimed some of the platforms used in the teaching intervention were not very interactive. I think it could have been because all those online platforms require a one-and-only first-time instruction, meaning that if you are going to use them for the very first time, you need to spend time learning how to move through it and efficiently learn how to use it. A similar conclusion was reached by Szadziewska and Kujawski (2017), they concluded in their study that among the disadvantages of blended learning, the amount of the material presented by the teachers was insufficient and the lack of solutions to the issues on the platform were the key issues students reported in their blended course.

However, there were more advantages than disadvantages mentioned by my students after the teaching intervention. Things such as flexibility, the recordings of the classes, the user-friendly platforms, easier ways to listen and understand, and the opportunities to get to know their classmates better, were the issues mentioned as positive. Flexibility, because students were from the comfort of their homes and did not need to travel to a place to take the classes, recordings, because they felt they had a summary of

every single class available whenever they needed it, user-friendly platforms, because all of them did not ask them to create a user to access them for the first time, easy ways to listen and understand because listening through the computer speaker helped them understand English better and opportunities to get to know their classmates because, in all the group and pair activities, they had the chance to get to know their peers more.

All these advantages mentioned by my students happened because of a mixture of features. Some of them, features that virtuality brings, such as platforms, flexibility, and recordings of classes, and some others such as opportunities to get to know their classmates better, happened because of the social presence that was remarked in this course. It made them feel confident enough to freely communicate, express their emotions, ask and answer questions, and feel in a community, when working in pairs, small groups or as a whole class.

The findings from my study are connected with previous findings explained by Bouilheres et al. (2020), who found similar benefits in students' learning experience through blended learning. In their investigations, the authors found that student's perception of their learning experiences at the university was beneficially impacted because of the Blended Learning environment in each of their classes. Benefits such as Engagement, Flexibility of learning, and Self-confidence were a few instances mentioned by the participants in the study.

Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to enhance students' social presence to explore improvements, withdraws or other features in students' interactions in the E4E blended

class. The following research question guided this study: how can strengthening my students' social presence in the E4E blended learning environments promote more synchronous interaction? After an analysis of data, the following discussion was reached.

The main conclusion that can be drawn is that enhancing the social presence with my students within my classes from the E4E program promoted interaction in the class and positively impacted students' learning experiences in the blended environment. Students seemed to have felt more confident to participate in the synchronous class and freely expressed themselves, resulting in better learning experiences in general for them and their peers. Even though I did not analyze academic performance, it could be possible that strengthening the social presence in my class could have benefited students' academic performance, since there seems to be a relationship between social presence and active interactions in the class. Consequently, students' cooperative work was more efficient, and the intervention positively impacted their responses to learning.

Furthermore, students were also able to recognize the disadvantages and advantages of blended environments. Features such as flexibility, the convenience of class recordings, and opportunities to get to know their classmates better, happened because of the social presence that was remarked in the intervention. On the contrary, external distractions, not being able to fully focus and not having a comfortable place to make it into a studying environment, were some of the disadvantages mentioned.

In conclusion, the strengthening of the social presence seems to improve students' learning experiences in online environments. After my pedagogical intervention in which I

promoted this presence, data showed there was positive students' response to learning, which was a result of more interaction and better learning experiences.

Limitations

Being in lockdown due to the Covid-19 pandemic was the biggest limitation. The fact that we had to move from a blended course (with some on-site classes and some online classes) to 100% online lessons, made my investigation challenging. I had planned to address this social presence with a blended design where some classes were face-to-face while others were online, however, adapting to this new pandemic reality included changes and my blended design had a focus of only online synchronous lesson and some asynchronous assignments.

Another big limitation was a students' strike we had in the middle of the academic semester. Colombia was going through a time of protests due to government decisions at the time of my investigation. These protests were joined by most of students from public universities in the country including the one I was carrying out my study. This made us stopped right in the middle of the pedagogical intervention, which somehow cause a disconnection among my participants from their tasks. Fortunately, I did not feel it affected the social presence they have already build at the beginning of the intervention, since they continued being the same and acting the same once we returned to academic normality.

Implications

This study suggests implications for the other presences of the Community of Inquiry framework (CoI). For example, I can argue that the teaching presence could have a strong relationship with the social presence. In my investigation I acted as a friendly, kind, and closed teacher, who allowed students to be who they are. I think that influenced the

way they acted among each other. Perhaps, it would have been different if, even though remarking the social presence among my students, I had stepped aside and not intervened as a participant observer.

This study also suggests there is a need to revising and discussing the theoretical and designing foundations of virtual learning in the Colombian education system. Material, syllabus, virtual instruction, online training for students and teachers and the learning management system used in those courses should be reconsidered so that we really take advantage of education in online environments.

Ideas for Further Research

Future research should consider the potential effects of the teaching presence together with the social presence to improve the learning experiences in online environments. Not only the social presence should be enhanced, but also the way the teaching happens in the classroom and the teacher's way of teaching itself should be considered when identifying how this affects learning processes.

Future research should also be devoted to replicating these kinds of studies in which the social presence in different types of blended environments happens. Considering the social and teaching presence in projects in which students actually meet face-to-face and online would be of significance value to research in the field.

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Appendix A

UNIVERSIDAD DE ANTIOQUIA – FACULTAD DE INGENIERIA

CARTA DE CONSENTIMIENTO

Título del estudio: Implementando un diseño de aprendizaje mixto en un curso de inglés para ingenieros de una universidad pública colombiana: Un caso de estudio

Investigador Principal: José Alejandro Celis

Descripción de la investigación:

Usted ha sido invitado(a) a participar en esta investigación por ser estudiante del nivel II de inglés de la facultad de ingeniería de la Universidad de Antioquia y me puede proporcionar información muy valiosa para el propósito de esta investigación. Mi objetivo es indagar sobre cómo puede un diseño de aprendizaje mixto mejorar las interacciones y la participación de los estudiantes en la clase sincrónica, aplicado a una sección de este nivel II de inglés en el que se encuentra actualmente.

Esta investigación será un estudio de caso que hará uso de entrevistas, cuestionarios, observaciones y reflexiones. Sólo el estudiante investigador y el profesor supervisor tendrán acceso a la información que usted brinde y esta será utilizada solo con propósitos investigativos.

Si usted decide participar se le pedirá brindarnos 2 entrevistas, 1 antes de iniciar el programa, otra al finalizar la intervención. Las entrevistas serán audio grabadas con su autorización y serán borradas en un lapso después de que termine el proyecto. Estas tendrán una duración de entre treinta minutos a una hora. Además, se le pedirá que responda un cuestionario en línea.

Los resultados de esta investigación serán validados con usted y luego serán consignados en un informe final que se guardará en la Escuela de Idiomas de la Universidad de Antioquia. Dichos resultados puede que también sean publicados en uno o más artículos en revistas nacionales o internacionales. Su nombre no aparecerá en ninguna publicación o presentación y en cambio se utilizará un seudónimo con el fin de proteger su identidad en todo momento.

Su participación en este proyecto es completamente voluntaria y no remunerada. Usted tiene la libertad de retirarse de la misma si lo considera necesario, sin ningún tipo de repercusión de ninguna índole: ni en el curso que esté tomando, ni en su trasegar en el programa. Además, su participación no implicará ningún riesgo personal.

Información de contacto

Si tiene preguntas acerca de esta investigación, por favor contacte al profesor José Alejandro Celis por teléfono al 3206754359 o por correo electrónico a: alejandro.celis@udea.edu.co

AUTORIZACIÓN: marcar **SI** en la siguiente casilla indica que ha leído la información arriba consignada, ha entendido la naturaleza de este estudio, está de acuerdo en participar en el y acepta las condiciones.

Nombre: _____

¿Desea participar en este estudio? **_SI__** **NO__**

Fecha: _____

Appendix B

Cuestionario dirigido a los estudiantes de la facultad de ingeniería.

A través de este cuestionario queremos explorar tus necesidades como estudiante de pregrado de la Universidad de Antioquia en relación con tu aprendizaje del inglés como lengua extranjera. Igualmente, queremos conocer tus actitudes, preferencias, creencias, expectativas y motivaciones para aprender este idioma y para tomar tus niveles de inglés que ofrece la facultad de ingeniería.

Para esto, te invitamos a responder las siguientes preguntas las cuales te tomarán alrededor de 20 minutos. Recuerda que la información que compartas con nosotros no será usada para ningún propósito diferente al estrictamente académico e investigativo.

Tus respuestas nos ayudarán a definir cómo será tu experiencia en el nivel de inglés II que ofrece la facultad, así mismo como en el diseño de actividades y estrategias de enseñanza.

Te pedimos que leas cuidadosamente las instrucciones y respondas a cada una de las preguntas. ¡Muchas gracias por tu tiempo y honestidad!

1. CONTEXTO SOCIO-CULTURAL

INSTRUCCIÓN: Por favor, encierra la respuesta con la que más te identifiques.

1. ¿Cuál es tu género?

a. Masculino b. Femenino c. otro: _____.

2. ¿Cuál es tu edad?

- a. menos de 18 b. 19 c.20 d. 21 o más

1.1 HERRAMIENTAS

INSTRUCCIÓN: Por favor, escoge la respuesta con la que más te identifiques.

3. ¿Con qué dispositivo te conectas a clase?

Qué dispositivo es el que utilizas principalmente para tomar tus clases. Escoge mas de una respuesta si es necesario.

- a. Computador de escritorio
b. Computador portátil
c. Tableta
d. Celular Smartphone

4. ¿Desde dónde te conectas a clase?

- a. Desde mi casa
b. Desde la casa de un familiar
c. Desde la casa de un amigo
d. Desde un lugar público

1.2 EXPERIENCIAS PREVIAS CON EL INGLÉS

INSTRUCCIÓN: Por favor, marca una X en la opción o las opciones correspondientes.

5. ¿Has tenido algún tipo de instrucción para aprender inglés aparte de las clases en la universidad?

- | | |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Ninguna | Tutorías presenciales con |
| Cursos en algún instituto | profesores/ estudiantes de inglés |
| de la ciudad | |
| Cursos en | Tutorías o clases personalizadas en |
| internet | línea. |
| Otro | |

2. CREENCIAS DE APRENDIZAJE Y OPINIONES

INSTRUCCIÓN: Responde de manera breve las siguientes preguntas

6. ¿Cómo crees tu que se aprende mejor inglés?

7. ¿Por qué crees que las personas deberían aprender inglés?

3. EMOCIONES Y PREFERENCIAS

INSTRUCCIÓN: Escoge las respuestas que sean apropiadas para ti.

8. ¿Qué tan cómodo te sientes al realizar las siguientes actividades en la clase de inglés?

SITUACIÓN	Muy incomodo	Incomodo	Ninguna de las anteriores	Cómodo	Muy cómodo
1. Exponer individualmente un tema asignado en frente de toda la clase en sesión sincrónica					
2. Exponer en parejas o grupos un tema asignado frente al resto de la clase en sesión sincrónica.					
3. Cantar en inglés con todo el grupo.					
4. Cantar en inglés como solista para todo el grupo.					
5. Realizar y presentar ejercicios de improvisación (crear diálogos o escritos en un tiempo determinado).					
6. Realizar trabajos de manera individual					

asincrónicos (talleres, escritos, entre otros)					
7. Realizar trabajos sincrónicos en parejas (talleres, escritos, entre otros)					
8. Realizar trabajos sincrónicos en grupos (talleres, escritos, entre otros)					

INSTRUCCIÓN: Escoge las opciones correspondientes.

9. ¿Que temas te gustaría ver en las clases de inglés?

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Arte | <input type="checkbox"/> Música en inglés (historia, artistas y letras) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Astronomía (viajes interestelares) | <input type="checkbox"/> Salud |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cuentos e historias en inglés | <input type="checkbox"/> Teatro |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cine en inglés | <input type="checkbox"/> Turismo |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Deportes | <input type="checkbox"/> Video juegos |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Moda | <input type="checkbox"/> Otros, ¿Cuál? _____. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Medio ambiente | |

4. Emociones y sentimientos en clase

INSTRUCCIÓN: Responde las siguientes preguntas con toda sinceridad.

10. ¿Se te facilita o dificulta expresar tus emociones en clase?

11. ¿Cómo describirías tu relación con tus compañeros y compañeras de clase?

12. ¿Cómo describirías tu relación con tu profesor?

13. ¿Tu profesor cuenta anécdotas personales en clase? Si es así, ¿cómo te hace sentir eso?

- 14.** ¿Tú y tus compañeros hacen uso del sentido del humor en clase? Si es así, ¿cómo te hace sentir eso?
- 15.** ¿Te sientes libre de hacer preguntas en la clase virtual? Describe un poco.
- 16.** ¿Sientes que el trato del profesor hacia sus estudiantes es cercano o distante? Por favor, describe.
- 17.** ¿Sientes que puedes entablar una conversación con cualquier compañero o compañera de clase fuera y dentro de la misma? Por favor, explica.
- 18.** ¿Prefieres trabajar en grupo, parejas o individual? ¿por qué?

Appendix C

Interview protocol for focus group

School of Languages- Universidad de Antioquia
Master in Foreign Language Teaching and Learning
Semi structured interview

Date: October 20, 2021

Title of the study:

Research question: how can strengthening my students' social presence in the E4E blended learning environments promote more synchronous interactions?

1. ¿Cómo fue tu experiencia en general en estas últimas 8 clases? Enfócate en aspectos como el aprendizaje, la participación tuya y de tus compañeros y la motivación.
2. ¿Notaste algún cambio o diferencia en esta modalidad virtual de tu programa?
3. ¿Qué te parece bueno y que te parece malo de las clases en esta modalidad virtual?
4. Respecto a las plataformas tecnológicas utilizadas en clase como Edpuzzle, Nearpod, Padlet, Youtube, ¿en que o cómo te facilitaron el trabajo de la clase? ¿para qué te sirvió cada una de estas plataformas?
5. ¿Cómo describes que fue la comunicación interpersonal con tus compañeros de clase? ¿Los notaste cercanos o personas distantes? Por favor explica.
6. ¿Qué factores te ayudaron a que participaras más o no tanto en las clases? Por ejemplo, materiales, la modalidad, el compañerismo, etc.
7. ¿Generalmente sientes que te es fácil o difícil participar en clase o contar algo personal? Por favor explica.
8. ¿En este curso particular, que hizo que fuera difícil para ti participar en las clases? ¿Qué factores? Por ejemplo, prender cámara, no entender el tema, no tener vocabulario, no sentir compañerismo, etc. Por favor explica.
9. ¿Se te hizo fácil o difícil hacerles preguntas a tus compañeros en este curso? ¿Por qué?
10. ¿Cuándo participaste en las clases, cómo te comunicaste, crees que te hiciste entender, crees que fuiste claro expresando el mensaje, crees que tus compañeros entendieron el mensaje?
11. ¿Qué te gusta del trabajo en grupo? ¿Qué te intimida del trabajo en grupo?
12. ¿Fue fácil o difícil comentar el trabajo y la participación de tus compañeros en la sección de Zoom general?
13. ¿Sientes que el hecho de tener más confianza y comunicación interpersonal con tus compañeros y profesor mejora o desmejora tu proceso de aprendizaje? Por favor explica tu respuesta.

Appendix D

Personal research diary

My class diary

		Categorias		
Group cohesion 13	Personal, affective expression 12	Open communication 20	Experience of learning on a virtual environment	

Clase 1. septiembre 3

We started unit 9, lesson A. Regular and irregular verbs. I showed students the way some participants sent me their consent form already signed. There were breakout rooms at the end, independent group work.

Clase 2. septiembre 8

Continued on Unit 9. Past tense of irregular verbs. Students did an asynchronous activity on the padlet, some students used it for the first time. Some students are still trying to sign the consent form. Students suggested using Moodle in a more efficient way. Students worked in the breakout rooms at the end of the class.

Clase 3. septiembre 10

We started lesson B, unit 9. The mind and dreams. We practiced some vocabulary and structures to talk about dreams. We practiced reading collaboratively. We used Nearpod for a synchronous activity. Students worked in the breakout rooms and talked about the dreams they remember.

Clase 4. septiembre 15

We continued with lesson B, The Mind. Students practiced how to talk about their dream house and how to make questions in the past simple. I asked students how the group activity went. Students had the chance to intervene one at a time.

Clase 5. septiembre 17

We started unit 12, lesson A, Movies. Students had to prepare for this unit doing an asynchronous activity. We practiced vocabulary related to movie genres and intonation of questions. We practiced listening. I asked students if they watched the videos I sent them, some of them said they did not. **Students role played a conversation in front of the class.**

I noticed that when I asked my students in general about their favorite movies, most of them opened their microphones and gave their comments.

I asked one of my female students, as a joke, if she finally showered today, and she answered laughing saying yes. Their classmates commented on her answer. That same student made a joke to me telling me that I am in the sky, because I am using a sky filter in the zoom meeting.

When discussing different movies and actors, I noticed all my students replied to each other questions and comments.

When I asked my students if they watch the video they were supposed to for homework, 3 of them told me they didn't. That, although was not what I would expect, tells me they feel confident enough to tell me the truth about not doing their homework.

In the end, I entered one of the breakout rooms to help students the exercise they were doing. I noticed my students kept their same attitude and they kept their cameras activated.

Clase 6. septiembre 22

We started lesson B, movie remakes. Students wrote in the chat about the time they met someone online. A student told the class he is Venezuelan. I showed the class videos of some very famous remakes of movies and soap operas. We had listening exercises as well.

Students as usual, felt conformable and open to comment each of the movie trailers I showed them.

Some students feel comfortable enough to turn on cameras just because at the end of the class. That tells me there is a comfortable environment in my class.

In a class activity, there was a time for one of my students to speak, and he ended up telling the class he is from Venezuela, and he has been in Colombia for little time. He felt totally free and open to tell his classmates how his life was in Venezuela.

That same student told us how he met his Colombian girlfriend. He felt totally comfortable while telling his love story to the class.

Clase 7. septiembre 24

I started the class asking students to please connect to the next class, even though there is a strike next week. Students will try to connect. We continue developing lesson B, movie reviews. We collaboratively read and completed a true false activity based on the reading.

We started the class discussing about the strike that will take place in Colombia next class. Some students said they will not connect to class because they will attend the march, some others said they will connect to class.

Whenever they need, my students interrupt me when I am talking, to ask any questions they have. I think this is because they feel I am understandable, and I won't get mad.

In this class, we also watched some trailers of movies so that we could make movie reviews. Students freely turned on their microphones and commented what they liked and didn't like about those movies.

One student was playing with the Zoom filters, and he said he looked sexier with one filter. He must have felt very confident to say that in front of the whole class. I just laughed with him.

Most of us decided to turn on our cameras, use one Zoom filter and take a picture of the class.

I, as their teacher, told my class my favorite movie of all time. I told them I used that same review when I was applying for a job in the past. I told them I made some mistakes at that time.

Some students told they class a time they watch the movie Hachiko, and how they cried while watching the movie. My students always feel conformable and open telling they class some personal experiences.

At the end, one student told the class an anecdote of when she got drunk so bad, that she almost got robbed.

Clase 8. septiembre 29

In this class, each student needed to talk about their favorite movie. This was part of the speaking final exam, like a preview, or prior practice before the exam. Teacher gave feedback to each student. We finished the class with a short exercise in our textbook.

The first students that was going to present her favorite movie said she didn't take a shower, so that was why she would like to have the camara activated.

Each student turned on their cameras when it was time for them to present.

Every time my student turned their cameras on, I told them they looked good. They replied with a smile and a thank you.

One student told me that she didn't do the presentation on power point because I told them in the WhatsApp group that they needn't. I think my student trust me and think I am understandable so they can tell me the things they feel or need.

Clase 9. octubre 1

I started the class explaining to students how we will do the final written exam. Students will write movie reviews and their classmates will read each review and give comments. Also, I reminded them to watch the movie they will be discussing in the final oral exam. There was a general review of the present perfect tense in this

class and at the end, there was a section of asking and answering questions using the present perfect tense.

While discussing a song in the class, one student said she is always in the friend zone when it comes to talk about relationships. Again, my students are no shy or afraid of expressing what they feel.

Students participated in the class, as usual

When I asked students if they wanted to choose their partners or work with someone random, they chose to do it randomly and only one student said she wanted to work with a friend.

At the end of the class, students shared what they did in the breakout rooms. One of the groups decided to cate an online wheel with all the names so that it was like a game for people to participate. They needed to answer the question “have you ever...?”

Clase 10. octubre 6

We had the final written exam today. We used a padlet to share the students' movie reviews so that others could read them and give comments. In this class there wasn't much interaction because all students were taking the final written exam individually. Once they finish, they could leave the class.

Since today is the final exam, students already know they must have their camaras activated. So, from the very beginning of the session, most students already had their cameras on.

One student reminded us that we have been planning to go to the movies, and we cannot forget about that.

I asked my students if they wanted to take a picture of the whole class, since we had all the cameras activated. My students told me it was better to do it next class so that they put on make-up and dress for the photo. As always, my students have felt very open to share whatever they feel.

When each student finished, they turned on their microphones, said goodbye and left the Zoom session.

Clase 11. octubre 8

We had the final oral exam today. Each student got the chance to orally present their favorite character from a movie they had to watch. Each student made a powerpoint presentation. When each student finished the presentation, I sent them a link with a video to watch and gave a final comment on the message shared in that video.

What I noticed while my students were presenting their favorite character from the movie “the miserable”, was that my students identified with those characters. They

mentioned they identified with them because of their values or courage they showed in the movie.

Two students decided to work in pair and made a role play while presenting. They use background pictures and filters on their faces to present. They talked about the same movie review. I think they felt confidence enough and free to do that fun presentation they did. My class always has that open and friendly environment.

Right after each students finished their presentation, they were supposed to watch a video I sent them, this was part of the exam. That is why, there was no time for them to comment on their classmates' presentations.

Almost at the end of the class, one student told me we forgot to take a picture and she was ready for it in that class, she even made her hair. I told her I was sorry. This tells me she wanted to have a memory with her classmates.

Clase 12. octubre 13

In this class, we corrected the written exam (grammar and vocabulary based) . Students asked questions and I gave the final scores to everyone.

We started the class talking about how students are going in their university semester. I asked them how their semester is going and some of them opened their microphone and told me they are about to finish, and they are giving their best to pass their courses.

One student told me he was sad because of a math exam he just had. He thought it was kind of unfair because some students were asked multiple choice questions and he was asked an open question, so it was more difficult. He wanted to share that with the class because he was feeling upset.

In this class, we had a very informal and open environment in which I shared general feedback and the final score with students. My students were participating and asking questions and giving comments to me and their classmates.

Since we were correcting the written exam, all students were agreeing or disagreeing with their classmates and relying to their comments. I think this happens because my students feel confident and feel like they can respectfully correct their classmates.

One student shared some past experiences in other English courses. He just wanted to tell me and his classmates about it.

There was a moment when one student gave me feedback and said that he didn't like some of the activities in this course because some PDF documents were difficult to find. I think my students have always felt free to say what they need to.

When students had the chance to give their self-assessment grade, each one explained their reasons for giving themselves that score.

One student interrupted and claimed she felt very well in the second part of the course, she said she noticed a change in the methodology, and she congratulated me and thanked me. **I think that was a special feeling she wanted to share.**

Another student took the chance to express that she noticed a difference and positive change in the second part of this course, meaning when I started my pedagogical interventions. **I think that was something personal she wanted to share.**

Appendix E

Criteria to observe the interventions

Criteria to observe the interventions (focus on the social presence)		
Category	Indicator	Moments observed in class
Open communication	Quoting or replying to others	- -
	Asking questions to others	- -
	Complementing or showing appreciation	- -
	Agreeing or disagreeing	- -
Group cohesion	Using inclusive pronouns such as: we, us, our	- -
	Greeting and saying goodbye	- -
	Attitudes in group work	- -
Personal/affective	Showing personal emotions	- -
	Using sense of humor	- -
	Sing unconventional expressions that shows emotions	- -