A Decadal Examination of Community of Inquiry and Blended Learning in EFL/ESL Development: A Systematic Review

Zinat A Tabassum
Department of Language and Literacy, Faculty of Education, University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Mohd Rashid Bin Mohd Saad
Department of Language and Literacy, Faculty of Education, University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Corresponding Author: msaadmr@um.edu.my

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Abstract
The rising trend of blended learning, combining online and traditional classroom learning, shows its efficacy for teaching English as a foreign or second language. Utilizing the community of inquiry framework, it aims to establish effective online learning environments and merge them with blended learning to teach English to non-native speakers. The significance of this research lies in evaluating how this integration affects English teaching as a foreign or second language. The main research question, covering the last decade, investigates this approach's specific challenges and long-term impacts on language learning. This study uses PRISMA guidelines to analyze Web of Science, Scopus, and Google Scholar data. It includes a manual selection of highly cited studies for a systematic review methodology. Through a theoretical lens, it assesses predictors and outcomes and identifies trends in English as a foreign or second language oral instruction. The findings highlight the dimensions of knowledge, research methodologies, effectiveness, skill enhancement, and obstacles in integrating the community of inquiry with blended learning. Conclusively, the study offers recommendations to improve instructional quality and support the development of students, educators, and stakeholders for the continued growth of this pedagogical integration.

Keywords: English as a Foreign Language, English as a Second Language, the community of inquiry, blended learning, systematic review

Introduction

In recent advancements, the integration of the Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework and Blended Learning (BL) strategies has been recognized as a transformative educational approach for enhancing English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction, particularly in speaking skills. This innovative combination seeks to develop critical thinking, enhance communication proficiency, and foster intercultural competence within interactive and collaborative learning environments. Building on the foundational work by (Garrison et al., 2010), who defined CoI as a framework facilitating meaningful learning through critical discourse and reflection, and the insights from current studies such as (Suprapto et al., 2024), highlighting the practical applications of BL to overcome educational challenges post-COVID-19, this approach marks a significant shift from traditional educational methods.

The dialogue on the effectiveness of this pedagogical strategy is ongoing within the EFL teaching community. As such, an exhaustive examination of existing literature is crucial for directing instructional practices effectively. This paper synthesizes a comprehensive review of literature focusing on integrating BL and CoI to enhance EFL speaking skills. It addresses pivotal areas, including existing research on CoI and BL in EFL speaking instruction and the primary elements of CoI and BL. It also covers the synergy between CoI and BL and strategies for seamless integration in EFL teaching.

CoI is characterized by its foundational pillars: cognitive, social, and teaching presence, as elaborated by Garrison (Garrison et al., 2010). Cognitive presence is essential for progressing through the stages of learning, from exploration to knowledge creation and problem-solving (Anderson et al., 2001), while social presence emphasizes the importance of social interactions in a conducive learning environment. Teaching presence involves the instructor designing, facilitating, and organizing practical learning experiences, where cognitive and social presences interact to enhance the educational process.

Historically, the focus on online learning since the 1990s revolved around the sociodemographic aspects of technology adoption and cognitive factors promoting advanced learning concepts. The teacher's role as a facilitator was underscored as crucial for student engagement and learning success. This introduced the three core elements—social, cognitive, and teaching presence—as a cohesive framework for understanding educational dynamics, especially in online and higher education contexts (Garrison et al., 2001).

The domain of EFL speaking instruction focuses on developing oral language skills, where effective teaching is measured by student achievements, engagement, and satisfaction (Ratan et al., 2022). Success in this area is evidenced by students' fluent and coherent communication, including pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and discourse mastery.

The motivation behind this review is driven by the necessity to thoroughly comprehend the integration of CoI and BL in fostering effective EFL instruction. Through a systematic review of literature from 2013 to 2024, this study aims to identify the evidence, essential components, and principles underpinning this integration. Moreover, it explores the impact of this amalgamation on EFL language proficiency development and its efficacy in enhancing EFL language training. The following objectives guide the review: firstly, to delineate the challenges associated with integrating CoI and BL in EFL teaching; secondly, to uncover the fundamental elements and principles of both CoI and BL; and lastly, to investigate how the interaction between CoI and BL influences EFL language proficiency and the overall effectiveness of EFL instruction. Adopting CoI and BL in EFL is primarily motivated by its potential to enrich language learning experiences.
As Guan (2023) eloquently states, "Blended Learning is a brainchild of technology advancement, providing a dynamic way to help EFL learners and teachers interact smoothly and effectively" (p. 2). This assertion underscores the role of technology in fostering engaging and interactive learning environments (Guan, 2023). Whereas Bourogianni claimed within a blended learning environment, Cognitive Presence is vastly related to advanced learning (Maria-Eleni, 2023).

**Literature Review**

Numerous approaches have been explored to assess the efficacy of online discussions in education. Prior research has consistently demonstrated that collaborative CoI practices are intricately connected to significant and impactful learning experiences (Zehra & Garisson, 2011). The integration of CoI with BL in EFL/ESL education has arisen as a notable area of focus.

**Theoretical Foundations and Implementations**

Bourogianni (2023) explores the application of the CoI framework within BL environments, particularly emphasizing its role in fostering deep learning approaches. The study concludes that "within a blended environment, Cognitive Presence is highly related to deep learning" (p. 8), highlighting the CoI framework's critical role in enhancing EFL/ESL learning experiences (Maria-Eleni, 2023). Suharno (2023) also focused on one investigation into the real-world applications of the CoI framework in foreign language distance education, highlighting that "implementing the framework in secondary schools had a little impact... [however,] it is associated with improved language proficiency" (p. 12). This mixed outcome suggests a complex relationship between CoI implementation and its effectiveness in different educational contexts (Suharno et al., 2023).

Also, Suprapto (2024) provided insights into the application of BL in elementary education, underscoring the necessity of integrating various learning models to overcome educational setbacks post-COVID-19. They note that "blended learning can be a valuable alternative for managing student learning at the elementary school level” (p. 15), indicating its broader applicability beyond EFL/ESL instruction (Suprapto et al., 2024). Another study delved into blended synchronous learning challenges and strategies for online learner engagement, revealing "inadequate online learner–instructor interactions" and "technological constraints" as significant barriers to engagement (p. 600). Their work suggests essential considerations for effectively integrating CoI principles in BL settings to enhance learner engagement (Wang & Huang, 2024).

**Effectiveness of Blended Learning with Community of Inquiry**

The integration of CoI into BL designs has shown promise in enhancing student engagement and learning outcomes. Wang et al. (2023) performed a comprehensive literature analysis. They found that "students' personalized learning, collaborative learning, peer interaction, and student engagement are targeted to be strengthened” through mixed teaching methods derived from the CoI framework (Xiaoyu Wang, Nurhasmiza Sazalli, & Wan Nur Asyura Wan Adnan, 2023). This finding emphasizes the potential of CoI to support a more interactive and engaged learning environment in EFL/ESL instruction.

Furthermore, some papers explicitly incorporate the CoI framework as a theoretical lens in their research design and data analysis. These studies delve into the presence and impact of teaching, social, and cognitive elements within online learning environments (Almalki & Sabir,
They investigate how these aspects interact and contribute to the overall learning experience. Notably, fostering a sense of community and interaction among online learners is crucial in nurturing social presence. This involves creating a supportive and engaging social environment, promoting peer collaboration, and utilizing practical communication tools—all of which closely align with the social presence component of the CoI framework, which centers on learners projecting themselves socially and establishing interpersonal relationships (Cheng, 2022).

Cognitive presence, encompassing strategies that promote critical thinking, problem-solving, and reflection among learners, is equally emphasized as a significant factor in online learning (Bailey et al., 2022). Active learning approaches, such as case-based learning, collaborative activities, and discussions, feature prominently in enhancing cognitive presence. These approaches resonate with the CoI framework's focus on exploring, constructing, and confirming understanding through critical discourse—a cornerstone of cognitive presence (Dalbani et al., 2022).

Moreover, Mielikäinen (2022) investigated the perceptions of ICT engineering students regarding the CoI presence in a blended setting and reported that "students had a better overall experience with the blended course (p.13)." Mielikäinen and Viippola (2023) suggested that the CoI framework can effectively enhance the quality of BL experiences, potentially leading to better learning outcomes in EFL/ESL education. The importance of investigating the integration of the CoI and BL for language learning is underscored by the distribution of studies across Iran and other countries, highlighting its significance both within and beyond Iran (Pourdana, 2022). Educators, researchers, and policymakers in English language education can gain from these findings as they add to knowledge and provide insights (Nami et al., 2018).

Methods

The Review Protocol: PRISMA

The research adhered to the established publication guidelines for executing a systematic review by the preferred reporting items for systematic reviews and meta-analyses (PRISMA) by Moher et al. (2009) and further updated by Page, Moher, et al. (2021). The PRISMA framework offers a streamlined, systematic direction for identifying relevant studies, processing Information, and assessing content across a vast array of research. Several previous systematic reviews have explored the topics of CoI, BL, and EFL discourse. Like many studies employing systematic review methodology, this research adhered to the PRISMA framework.

Furthermore, the recommendation undergoes regular review and updates by methodology specialists and editorial board members Sohrabi et al. (2021), ensuring a strict standard. Recently, various education studies have employed PRISMA to guide their systematic reviews. These studies include Crompton and Burke (2023), Khashaa (2020), Noor Al-Qaysi et al. (2018), and Na and Jung (2021), with a specific focus on English language teaching. These research projects explore the challenges of teaching English in a flipped classroom (Turan & Akdag-Cimen, 2020). The studies mentioned above provide a helpful reference for this research. The following sections outline how the PRISMA framework is applied in this study (Refer to Figure One in Appendix A).

Resources

The study's primary data source was obtained through online database searches. The three primary data sources, namely Scopus, Web of Science (WoS), and Google Scholar, were utilized
for the searches. A specific search strategy focusing on CoI and BL for EFL/ESL learners was employed.

**Eligibility Criteria**

The criteria for inclusion and exclusion were set at the beginning of the data-gathering phase. Peer-reviewed, freely accessible journal articles published in English were included in this study. To ensure a consistent focus for the study, book chapters, dissertations, systematic reviews, and conference papers were considered ineligible.

**Study Selection**

Three primary systematic review processes were implemented to select the studies—the initial step involved identifying potential studies through database searches and manual exploration. The possible articles were screened according to predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria—the last step involved assessing the studies' eligibility (Refer to Figure One).

**Identification**

The identification process began with defining the primary keywords, followed by identifying related and synonymous terms using a thesaurus and Boolean operators. Additionally, potential articles were sought through manual searches. The initial search strings were formulated after placing all pertinent keywords in April 2023. From the initial search across three databases for this systematic review, 127 studies were retrieved. After conducting a manual search and applying the inclusion and eligibility criteria, the final selection was narrowed to 18 studies.

Table One shows the keywords we used to search for relevant academic materials. These keywords are essential for finding comprehensive and relevant scholarly literature for our research.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Database</th>
<th>Search String</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scopus</td>
<td>TITLE-ABS-KEY(&quot;community of inquiry&quot; OR CoI OR &quot;teaching presence&quot; OR &quot;cognitive presence&quot; OR &quot;social presence&quot;) AND (blended OR &quot;blended learning&quot; OR BL OR hybrid OR e-learning OR face to face) AND (EFL OR &quot;English as a second language&quot; OR &quot;English as a foreign language&quot; OR ESL AND speaking OR oral OR fluency)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Web of Science (WoS)</td>
<td>TS = (&quot;community of inquiry&quot; OR CoI OR &quot;teaching presence&quot; OR &quot;cognitive presence&quot; OR &quot;social presence&quot;) AND (blended OR &quot;blended learning&quot; OR BL OR hybrid OR e-learning OR face to face) AND (EFL OR &quot;English as second language&quot; OR &quot;English as a foreign language&quot; OR ESL AND speaking OR oral OR fluency))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Google Scholar</td>
<td>Publications were sourced using targeted keywords from Scopus and Web of Science (WoS), employing Boolean operators, phrase searches, and field code functions where suitable.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table Two presents the eligibility and exclusion criteria established for our research study, outlining the parameters of the selection and exclusion process.
Table 2. The eligibility and exclusion criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion</th>
<th>Eligibility</th>
<th>Exclusion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Article type</td>
<td>Journal (Research articles)</td>
<td>Books, book series, book chapters, systematic review articles, and conference proceedings non-English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Non-English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timeline</td>
<td>Between 2013 and 2023</td>
<td>Published in 2013 and earlier than this</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study area</td>
<td>Education field &amp; ESL/EFL</td>
<td>Except Education and Language learning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Screening Phase**

Guided by a specific set of inclusion and exclusion criteria, the articles identified in the search are reviewed during this stage. A total of 127 studies were obtained through the initial keyword search across three databases (Refer to Table One), while an additional 32 studies were identified manually. All studies were evaluated against four exclusion criteria (Table Two): timeframe, article type, language, and study area (Figure One). After the screening process, 73 articles were excluded, resulting in the remaining 54 studies.

**Eligibility**

In the review process, 54 studies initially deemed relevant were further assessed through a two-step evaluation involving abstract and full-text analysis. This led to the exclusion of 35 studies for inappropriate sample characteristics or a focus beyond the review’s scope, leaving a refined set of studies pertinent to the research interest.

**Data Extraction and Analysis**

Through a detailed search process, 127 studies were initially identified. After applying exclusion criteria, 109 articles were excluded for being outside the review's scope, leaving 18 studies for detailed analysis and data extraction. These studies were selected based on criteria such as sample selection, outcome domains measured, integration of CoI and BL in EFL/ESL studies, data type and analysis level, research design, and emerging trends.

A thematic analysis of these 18 studies focused on primary research concerns, study nature, and their alignment with prior work on CoI and BL in EFL/ESL contexts. This analysis identified recurring themes and trends through a rigorous and representative process, as outlined by (Makri et al., 2014), ensuring the themes' validity and alignment with research questions. The analysis was connected to existing literature, refining and discussing the themes. The study adhered to the thematic analysis procedure and employed the PRISMA flow chart (as illustrated in Appendix A, Figure One) for guidance (Page et al., 2021).

**Results**

**Sample Selection and Geographical Region of the Study**

This review primarily examines English language learning studies within a BL framework, aligning with the CoI components. A significant portion of the research, particularly highlighted by studies conducted in Iran, focuses on integrating CoI and BL in EFL/ESL settings. The concentration of studies in Iran underlines the interest in evaluating these educational strategies within its context.
Moreover, the review extends to 15 studies from diverse countries where English is not the primary language, including Bangladesh, China, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Nigeria, Poland, Germany, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, Taiwan, and Turkey. This wide geographical distribution reflects global interest in exploring CoI and BL's effectiveness in enhancing language learning outcomes. Including various international contexts suggests the universal applicability and potential of CoI and BL approaches to improve English language instruction across different cultural and educational backgrounds (Refer to Figure Two).

The integration of the CoI framework components has been extensively studied across all 18 studies in blended language learning. These studies spanned extensive proficiency in reading, writing, listening, and speaking, serving as the focal points of the research. The primary objective was to assess the effect of the CoI framework on student performance in these language domains, thereby evaluating the efficacy of the learning environment. While all studies shared this common objective, there was variability in the specific language domains examined. Notably, 94% of the studies (17 out of 18) focused on assessing students' language proficiencies, with Article 17 uniquely exploring educators' perspectives.

The studies (Articles 1-18) investigated the impacts of social, cognitive, or teaching presence on learning outcomes. For example, Article 5 emphasized enhancing second language (L2) writing skills, incorporating the Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) approach, and highlighting the prevalent use of technology across these investigations. A consistent finding among the studies was the positive role of interactive engagement, facilitated by technology in blended or flipped classrooms, within the CoI framework. Specific instructional contexts were also explored; Article 4 examined the correlation between social, cognitive, and teaching presence; Article 10 investigated learners' behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement. Article 14 utilized Facebook as a learning tool, presenting a distinctive approach to technology use.

Overall, these studies offer critical insights into the benefits of incorporating CoI elements into language learning settings, emphasizing the value of interactive engagement and technological integration in enhancing the BL experience. The various domains investigated and the inclusion of teacher perspectives in Article 17 highlight this research area's comprehensive and multifaceted nature.
nature. The findings significantly enhance our grasp of effective language learning strategies, offering essential insights for educators, researchers, and policymakers in language education.

Figure 2. Summary of publication per year
This systematic review analyses 18 articles published from 2013 to 2023, revealing a significant concentration of studies in 2022, with 12 out of 18 (Refer to Figure Three). This distribution suggests a marked increase in research interest, particularly in 2022, likely influenced by the post-COVID era's impact on education. The review highlights the growing adoption of BL and the COI framework in response to the challenges presented by the pandemic, aiming to enhance language learning outcomes. The increase in articles during 2022 highlights the acknowledged benefits of technology-mediated learning and the effectiveness of combining online and in-person teaching. These trends reflect a shift toward more interactive and collaborative educational practices, prompted by the need for flexibility and adaptability during COVID-19.

Integration of Community of Inquiry and Blended Learning as the Outcome of Language Learning

The discourse presented underscores integrating the CoI framework with BL as an outcome of language learning. These insights highlight the crucial roles of teaching, social, and cognitive presence within the digital learning setting, aligning seamlessly with the corresponding components of the CoI framework.

Instructors play a central role in designing and facilitating online courses, offering clear instructions, and fostering students' engagement in meaningful learning activities. These aspects align with the instructional design and facilitation component of teaching presence within the CoI framework. The research underscores the correlation between interactive activities and heightened student engagement. For instance, Almalki and Sabir (2022) revealed that integrating interactive activities into online learning significantly enhances student engagement. This finding corresponds with the work of Annamalai et al. (2015), who demonstrated that peer feedback within online collaborative learning environments fosters elevated levels of engagement. Similarly, Dalbani et al. (2022) found that the incorporation of gamification elements in online courses positively influences student motivation—a finding in sync with the discoveries of Bailey et al. (2022), who noted increased motivation when social media platforms are integrated into online courses, promoting collaborative learning and peer interaction.

Moreover, multimedia resources have been used in online instruction to enhance the retention of course material and student comprehension (Kabilan & Annamalai, 2022). This
enhancement of student engagement, understanding, and information retention aligns with the insights of Qu et al. (2022), who emphasize the value of multimedia presentations and visual aids in online lectures. Bailey et al. (2022) illustrated that integrating social media platforms within online courses fosters student collaboration, facilitating deeper learning and knowledge construction. Consistent with this correlation, Chen (2022) demonstrated that Online discussion forums, encouraging a sense of community and collaboration among online learners, aid in knowledge construction.

Enhancing the learning experience by catering to individual learner needs was demonstrated by Satar and Akcan (2018) by utilizing adaptive learning technologies in online courses. The study by Mirabolghasemi et al. (2020) reinforces these findings, revealing that self-paced online learning modules enhance student autonomy and flexibility in learning.

Table three (Refer to Appendix B) offers an encompassing perspective on the scrutinized studies, laying bare the theoretical underpinnings and sub-components explored within each research endeavor. Our analysis of the 18 selected studies has distilled three overarching themes of paramount importance.

First and foremost, a meticulous examination of the CoI framework underscores its pervasive presence as a guiding theoretical construct within the research landscape. This recognition highlights the enduring relevance and applicability of the CoI framework in diverse educational contexts.

Secondly, the studies concentrated on the cultivation and augmentation of the CoI framework and its attendant proficiencies. The emphasis on nurturing these skills underscores their intrinsic value in enhancing the quality of EFL/ESL education and fostering meaningful learning experiences.

Lastly, the investigations explored the nuanced terrain of challenges and benefits associated with seamlessly integrating CoI and BL methodologies within the EFL/ESL learning milieu. This exploration is a testament to the dynamics and multifaceted implications of implementing these pedagogical approaches, offering invaluable insights to educators and researchers alike.

**Facet 1: Social Presence**

Social presence emerges as a prominent and recurrent theme across the reviewed literature. Almalki and Sabir (2022) underscored the crucial significance of social presence in online language learning environments, delineating its positive influence on EFL learners' motivation, participation, and overall learning outcomes. The study underscores the significance of creating a supportive and collaborative online community to amplify social presence. Annamalai et al. (2015) accentuated the design of interactive learning environments to optimize social presence, leading to heightened learner satisfaction, engagement, and communication readiness. Dalbani et al. (2022) accentuated the instructors' vital role in fostering social interactions and nurturing a sense of community, which is crucial for effective communication and collaboration, as further substantiated in collaborative writing by Kabilan and Annamalai (2022).

The relationship between social presence and learner engagement within online discussions is prominently expounded by Bailey et al. (2022). Their study delves into the pivotal role of social presence in cultivating intercultural communication skills within language exchange programs. Cheng (2022) and Mirabolghasemi et al. (2020) focused on social presence’s significance in promoting learner autonomy, while article eight examines its impact on learner motivation and
engagement. Satar and Akcan (2018) focused on the crucial role of social presence within online communities, particularly its effect on the professional development of future language teachers. The study explains how an online course focusing on teaching and social presence augments pre-service EFL teachers' online participation skills, interaction, and network cohesion. Kurek and Müller-Hartmann (2019) explored how teaching presence fosters a Community of Inquiry in blended teacher training, impacting students' self-regulated learning. A resounding 75% of the articles accentuate the significance of social presence in fostering engagement, communication, collaboration, intercultural skills, autonomy, and professional development within online language learning environments.

**Facet 2: Cognitive Presence**

Dalbani et al. (2022) investigated the role of cognitive presence in online classes and its profound influence on learners' perceptions and experiences. Their research illuminates the pivotal role of cognitive presence in creating an intellectually stimulating learning environment. Instructors can facilitate deep learning among students by providing clear instructions, effective course material structuring, and encouraging critical thinking and reflective activities. Conversely, Kabilan and Annamalai (2022) delved into the influence of teaching presence on collaborative writing within online EFL classes, spotlighting the significance of cognitive presence in fostering successful communication and the co-construction of knowledge. Instructors who employ scaffolding techniques, feedback mechanisms, and activities to boost cognitive presence can enhance learners' collaborative writing skills.

Bailey et al. (2022) highlighted the significance of cognitive presence in fostering learner engagement and active participation in online English as a Foreign Language (EFL) discussions. They underscore that student satisfaction and engagement levels rise when instructors cultivate meaningful relationships, encourage critical thinking, and engender intellectually stimulating debates to bolster cognitive presence. The active assistance and participation of instructors in online discussions are deemed essential by Bailey et al. (2022) to enhance cognitive presence and promote successful language learning. Articles three, four, and five predominantly accentuate instructors' roles and the significance of cognitive presence in encouraging learners to think critically, reflect, collaborate, and actively participate.

**Facet 3: Teaching Presence**

In the literature reviewed, teaching presence plays a critical role. Almalki and Sabir (2022) underscored the crucial role of teaching presences in building an engaging and helpful online learning environment. Instructors are pivotal in developing and facilitating educational activities that nurture critical thinking, problem-solving skills, deep learning, and cognitive presence. Annamalai et al. (2015) examined the influence of teaching presence in computer-mediated communication among EFL learners, underscoring the need for instructors to provide assistance and facilitation that fosters cognitive presence. Dalbani et al. (2022) emphasized the importance of teaching presence in online language courses and its influence on learners' cognitive engagement and learning outcomes. Educational activities that support cognitive presence include offering scaffolding, devising engaging tasks, and encouraging reflective thinking.

Kabilan and Annamalai (2022) explored the significance of teaching presence in collaborative writing in online EFL classes, underlining the instructors' vital role in fostering cognitive processes, such as critical thinking, metacognitive awareness, and knowledge...
construction. These characteristics are crucial to improve the outcomes of collaborative writing. Bailey et al. (2022) analyzed teaching presence and learner involvement in online EFL dialogues, stressing its significance in supporting learners' cognitive processes, including reflection, knowledge construction, and critical thinking, fostering knowledge creation, and active involvement in online discussions. Mirabolghasemi et al. (2020) found the importance of teaching presence in online language exchange programs, highlighting enhancing learners' cognitive processes, including metacognitive awareness, intercultural awareness, and knowledge creation. Chen (2022) explored how instructor presence enhances student autonomy in online EFL courses, emphasizing the implication of teaching presence in facilitating learners' cognitive processes, including self-regulation, metacognitive awareness, and goal setting.

These articles underscore the importance of teaching presence in virtual language learning platforms. They accentuate instructors' pivotal role in designing practical learning activities, promoting cognitive engagement, offering guidance and support, and fostering critical thinking and deep learning (Articles 1-7).

Development and Effectiveness

Kabilan and Annamalai (2022) underscored the pivotal role of skill development in fostering social presence, while Mirabolghasemi et al. (2020) highlighted the acquisition of proficiency in utilizing instructional technology and learning tools. The integration of the CoI framework with BL offers a myriad of advantages. By honing practical online instructional design skills, instructors can craft engaging and interactive BL environments that foster active learning and student engagement (Almalki & Sabir, 2022). Furthermore, cultivating facilitation skills in online environments Annamalai et al. (2015) empowers instructors to effectively nurture discussions and provide timely feedback, thus fostering a sense of community and collaboration. Developing skills promoting learner autonomy is pivotal in empowering students to take ownership of their learning in blended learning environments (Bailey et al., 2022).

Integrating collaborative activities improves problem-solving ability and creates student involvement, leading to higher-order thinking abilities (Cheng, 2022). Moreover, creating inclusive online learning environments allows instructors to develop a sense of community with diverse learners (Qu et al., 2022). Skill development involves equipping instructors with the ability to utilize technology and educational tools to enhance learning experiences effectively (Mirabolghasemi et al., 2020). Instructors' facilitation of meaningful interactions and promoting active learning through integrating the CoI framework and BL, as exemplified in approximately 70% of the studies, create a supportive and engaging environment wherein students can thrive.

Benefits and Challenges of Integrating Community of Inquiry and Blended Learning

Integrating the CoI framework and BL for EFL instruction presents various challenges, as elucidated in the articles. Kabilan and Annamalai (2022) highlighted the need for a systematic approach to ensure the balanced integration of teaching, cognitive, and social presence, alerting against unstructured integration. Furthermore, Mirabolghasemi et al. (2020) observed no significant correlation between social presence and learners' satisfaction in BL, highlighting the need for additional research on effectively integrating social presence in blended EFL instruction. To enhance the effectiveness of EFL learning, Qu et al. (2022) recommend further development in mobile learning software optimization for hybrid distributed terminals. These challenges underscore the need for meticulous instructional design, thoughtful planning, and pedagogical
interventions to successfully integrate the CoI framework and BL into EFL teaching (Canals, 2022; Nami et al., 2018).

**Design and Methodological Insights**

This systematic literature review analyzed 18 publications, employing diverse research designs and methodologies to explore the integration of the CoI and BL in language education. A subset of articles (1-3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 12, 14, and 16) used qualitative methods, while another (4, 13, and 17) opted for quantitative approaches, offering detailed insights and empirical evidence into the study area.

The research designs were categorized into cross-sectional, longitudinal, and dyadic studies. Most studies (1-15 and 17-18) utilized a cross-sectional approach, capturing data at a single point to analyze specific phenomena, which helped outline a framework for CoI and BL strategies. Articles seven, eight, and nine conducted longitudinal research, as illustrated in Figure Four. Meanwhile, Articles eleven and sixteen used a dyadic approach to explore interactions and learning processes between pairs of individuals in CoI and BL environments.

This blend of quantitative and qualitative methodologies, alongside diverse research designs, provided a comprehensive examination of the topic. Qualitative research uncovered deep insights into participants' experiences and perspectives, while quantitative analysis brought forward statistical evidence of the strategies' effectiveness. The methodological diversity enriched the review's findings, ensuring a robust and thorough understanding of the integration of CoI and BL in language education.

![Figure 4. Summary of research design and methodology](image)

**Discussion**

Addressing the research questions and objectives on the integration challenges and impact of CoI and BL on language learning, our literature review across Articles 1-18 reveals predominantly positive insights. Key findings established the effective learning environment through social, cognitive, and teaching presence. These presences contribute to active learning, enhanced student engagement and autonomy, critical thinking, and inclusivity.

In discussing the challenges of integrating CoI and BL and their impact on language learning, our systematic review, underpinned by 18 articles, highlights both the potential and the hurdles of such integration within EFL education. The synthesis of recent literature further
enriches our discussion, allowing for a detailed understanding that draws from contemporary research.

Our findings align with the positive outcomes reported in the research by Ramalingam et al. (2022), who emphasized the importance of collaborative learning, learning management systems, social media applications, and technology-based learning in ESL education. Similarly, Chen (2022) highlighted the positive correlations between the CoI dimensions, perceived learning, and learning engagement in blended learning contexts, reinforcing the importance of deliberate practice and online community engagement for EFL students' performance.

Despite these benefits, integrating CoI and BL poses notable challenges. Establishing a robust social presence remains a significant obstacle, as highlighted by Xiaoxing and Deris (2022), who found that fostering active participation in online discussions requires specific teaching practices that emphasize the CoI's teaching presence. This suggests educators need to adopt more engaged and responsive online teaching methodologies.

Furthermore, the transition to BL is not without difficulties, as indicated by Fu (2023), who discusses the challenges in designing BL courses that effectively integrate synchronous and asynchronous learning activities. The study underscores the need for instructional designs that foster greater synchrony-asynchrony cohesion, suggesting that meticulous planning and pedagogical strategies are crucial for maximizing the educational benefits of BL.

Our review also illuminates the pedagogical advantages of integrating CoI and BL in EFL instruction. The emphasis on social presence by Ramalingam et al. (2022), cognitive presence by Chen (2022), and teaching presence by Xiaoxing and Deris (2022) as foundational pillars yield numerous benefits, including enhanced learner autonomy, critical thinking, and inclusive learning environment.

The evidence from recent literature corroborates our findings on the effectiveness of interactive activities, gamification, multimedia resources, online collaboration, adaptive technologies, and online simulations in enhancing language learning outcomes. These strategies are pivotal in fostering learner engagement, motivation, comprehension, and practical skill development, echoing the potential of innovative pedagogical approaches in transforming EFL education.

Limitations of the Study

While this systematic review provides valuable insights into integrating CoI and BL in EFL education, it has certain limitations. The review's 18 articles may not cover all relevant literature, potentially overlooking significant studies. Additionally, it exclusively includes articles in one language, introducing a language bias that may exclude significant contributions from non-English sources. The mix of qualitative and quantitative studies also adds variability in research methods, which could affect the synthesis of findings.

Furthermore, the review's specificity to EFL education limits the generalizability of its conclusions to other educational contexts or subjects. Recognizing these limitations is crucial for accurately interpreting the review's results. Future research should aim to overcome these constraints for a broader understanding of CoI and BL in EFL education.

Conclusion

In conclusion, combining the Community of Inquiry framework with blended learning methods in teaching EFL and ESL shows excellent potential for boosting learning outcomes.
However, it is essential to recognize the difficulties in effectively applying these strategies in different learning situations. Research from the last decade points out the need for approaches that can adjust to BL environments' specific needs and challenges. Future studies should investigate how CoI and BL can work together, focusing on new and creative ways to make EFL and ESL teaching more engaging and successful. Future research should aim to find effective strategies and innovative teaching methods that help to overcome the limitations of traditional teaching, making language learning more interactive and beneficial for students.

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**Authenticity:** This manuscript is an original work.

**Artificial Intelligence Statement:** AI and AI-assisted technologies were not used.

**About the Author:**

**Zinat A Tabassum** is a PhD Fellow. She is affiliated with the Department of Language and Literacy at the Faculty of Education, University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Her doctoral work is in the field of EFL and teachers’ training. Her academic pursuits encompass a deep interest in linguistic exploration and literacy development. Email: zinattabassum@gmail.com

ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1374-4239

**Mohd Rashid Bin Mohd Saad**

**Mohd Rashid Bin Mohd Saad** is an accomplished scholar in the realm of Language and Literacy. He holds a Senior Lecturer position in the Department of Language and Literacy within the Faculty of Education at the University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. His academic contributions include 24 articles, six books, and 21 education, language, and literacy chapters.

ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1050-294X

**Reference**


Appendices
Appendix A
PRISMA Flow Chart

Identification of studies through databases and registers

Records identified from the database:
- Scopus (n = 49)
- Web of Science (WoS) (n = 43)
- Google Scholar (n = 35)
Total: 127

Records screened (n = 54)

Records removed before the screening:
- Duplicate records removed (n = 3)
- Records marked as ineligible by automation tools (n = 70) due to book, systematic review articles, conference paper (published before 2013)
- Records excluded by authors (n = 1) due to studies that are not conducted in English medium (Arabic)

Records excluded (n = 36) as the scope of studies did not meet the criteria (ESL/EFL learning and speaking)

Studies included in the review (n = 18)

Appendix B
Overview of 18 Identified Studies

Table 3. Overview of 18 Identified Studies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authors &amp; Year</th>
<th>Study of Context</th>
<th>Main Study Design</th>
<th>Community of Inquiry</th>
<th>Development and Effectiveness</th>
<th>Challenges and Benefits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Almalki &amp; Sabir, 2022)</td>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>Mixed Mode (Cross-sectional)</td>
<td>SP CP TP</td>
<td>Establishing learning communities in online classes</td>
<td>Well-designed activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>√ √ √</td>
<td>Improving teacher-student interaction.</td>
<td>Adaptation and adjustment of teaching strategies to the online learning environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Encouraging interaction among students</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study</td>
<td>Country</td>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>Findings</td>
<td>Recommendations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annamalai et al., 2015</td>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>Mixed Mode (Cross-sectional)</td>
<td>✓ ✓ ✓</td>
<td>Cognitive, teaching, and social presences in online interactions&lt;br&gt;Improvement in narrative writing ability&lt;br&gt;Positive impact on narrative writing ability</td>
<td>Online teaching and learning activities&lt;br&gt;Availability and accessibility of online platforms and resources for effective teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dalbani et al., 2022</td>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>Mixed Mode (Cross-sectional)</td>
<td>✓ ✓</td>
<td>Transitioning from traditional teacher-centred approaches to flipping&lt;br&gt;Need for extensive training and guidance for instructors</td>
<td>Professional development workshops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kabilan &amp; Annamalai, 2022</td>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>Qualitative (Cross-sectional)</td>
<td>✓ ✓ ✓</td>
<td>Intricacies, deficiencies, and challenges in online teaching&lt;br&gt;Integration required for teaching, cognitive, and social presence</td>
<td>Comprehend the tools and technologies employed in the OTL&lt;br&gt;Careful planning and implementation of online teaching and learning&lt;br&gt;Systematic assessment and evaluation processes of OTL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bailey et al., 2022</td>
<td>South Korea</td>
<td>Mixed Mode (Cross-sectional)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>Positive relationship between social presence and L2 writing strategies&lt;br&gt;Enhanced focus on planning and reviewing strategies&lt;br&gt;Building blocks to a vibrant social presence</td>
<td>Courses with a videoconference component</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mirabolghasemi et al., 2020</td>
<td>Iran</td>
<td>Quantitative Mode (Cross-sectional)</td>
<td>✓ ✓</td>
<td>Satisfaction in blended learning by teaching, cognitive presence,</td>
<td>New educational methods in teaching and learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study (Year)</td>
<td>Country</td>
<td>Mode</td>
<td>Presence</td>
<td>Impact</td>
<td>Challenges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Cheng, 2022)</td>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
<td>Mixed Mode (Longitudinal)</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>BYOD initiatives can enhance student learning experiences. Facilitating different forms of presence within the CoI framework. Promoting meaningful learning within blended classroom environments. For poor and under-privileged family tough to bear the costs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Chen, 2022)</td>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>Quantitative Mode (Longitudinal)</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>Improved learning performance and engagement through online learning communities and deliberate practice. Positive correlation between CoI dimensions, perceived learning, and engagement. Technical challenges.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Satar &amp; Akcan, 2018)</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>Mixed Mode (Longitudinal)</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>Participation, interaction patterns, and social presence in online communication. Improved online participation skills and network cohesion. Dropout and insufficient participation in online communities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Qu et al., 2022)</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>Quantitative Mode (Cross-sectional)</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>Hybrid distributed terminal incorporating a mobile learning model. Synchronous and asynchronous learning with multiple evaluations. CoI-based learning for collaborative study. Teachers’ consideration of the connection between content, learners, and technology.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Pourdana, 2022)</td>
<td>Iran</td>
<td>Mixed Mode (Dyads)</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>Impact of computer-assisted diagnostic assessment on collaborative writing and engagement. L2 learners’ challenges on a complex task.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country/Mode</td>
<td>Region</td>
<td>Learning Environment</td>
<td>Research Questions</td>
<td>Findings</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iran</td>
<td>Mixed Mode</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>Sustainable writing improvement in lower-level skills</td>
<td>Active behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland &amp; Germany</td>
<td>Qualitative Mode</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>Asynchronous exchanges in a discussion list for professional dialogue</td>
<td>Opportunities for knowledge construction and peer instruction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>Mixed Mode</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>The function of teaching presence in enhancing CoI</td>
<td>Its impact on students’ self-regulated and co-regulated learning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
<td>Quantitative Mode</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>Use of Facebook for educational purposes</td>
<td>Designing effective discussion activities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada &amp; Spain</td>
<td>Mixed Mode</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>Exploring the role of teacher social presence in online learning</td>
<td>Limiting understanding of student social presence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada &amp; Spain</td>
<td>Mixed Mode (Dyads)</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>Investigating social presence in virtual courses (MOOCs)</td>
<td>Role of the instructor, peer, and self-social presence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada &amp; Spain</td>
<td>Mixed Mode</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>Perceptual gaps between educators and students</td>
<td>Translanguaging impact</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Tabassum & Saad (2024)
## A Decadal Examination of Community of Inquiry and Blended Learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Research Methodology</th>
<th>MM</th>
<th>CoI</th>
<th>SP</th>
<th>TP</th>
<th>CP</th>
<th>ZPTD</th>
<th>OTL</th>
<th>L2</th>
<th>BYOD</th>
<th>MALL</th>
<th>Impact of COVID-19</th>
<th>The transition from online to offline learning</th>
<th>Effective facilitation of the interaction circle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Mamman et al., 2022)</td>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>Qualitative Mode (Cross-sectional)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Examining social and cognitive presence in virtual discussions</td>
<td>Applying Vygotsky's ZPTD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Li, 2022)</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>Quantitative Mode (Cross-sectional)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Understanding the significance of social presence in virtual learning environments</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*MM = Mixed Mode, CoI = Community of Inquiry, SP = Social Presence, TP = Teaching Presence, CP = Cognitive Presence, BYOD = Bring Your Own Device, MALL = Mobile-Assisted Language Learning, OTL = Online-Teaching Learning, L2 = A Second Language, ZPTD = Zone of Proximal Teacher Development