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Implementation of the Community of Inquiry Model for a Blended EFL Writing Course

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Using the Community of Inquiry (CoI) model as a framework, this case study sought to describe the development of EFL blended learning course and explore students' perceptions on the value of teaching, social, and cognitive presences of the CoI. The study involved 21 students enrolled in blended English writing courses. Data were collected through observation of the blended classroom, questionnaire, reflective journal, and interviews. Implementing the CoI framework to this course, it created new indicators in teaching, social, and cognitive presence. The CoI questionnaire yielded numeric findings of value for each presence, and reflective journal and interviews were qualitatively analyzed to provide students' detailed explanation of the value placed on each presence. The result indicated that the CoI framework created new indicators for this study and could be served as an adequate model for describing the course development. In regards to students' perceptions on CoI framework, the result showed that students agreed on the effectiveness of each presence in general, but teaching presence was placed to be the most effective element for learning English writing in a blended learning environment. Detailed description of the helpfulness of each presence is shared with implications for EFL blended courses.

[Community of Inquiry/Blended Learning/Teaching Presence/Social Presence/ Cognitive Presence]

I. INTRODUCTION

With the increasing improvement of technology and online networks, Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) has led to a new paradigm in higher education. In order to overcome the limitations of either fully online or traditional face-to-face

classrooms, universities have been adopting blended learning as an effective educational method which combines the best practices of distance learning with those of the traditional classroom. Such blended learning approaches have also been implemented in the EFL classrooms for its added benefits of interactional opportunities. Recent research shows that blended learning for language learning had yielded positive outcomes in academic achievements and provided positive influence on learners' satisfaction (Hinkelman & Gruba, 2012; Kim, 2011; Lee, 2015; Rovai & Jordan, 2004; Yoon & Lee, 2010;). Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) classes, too, have been directed to a more integrative approach of blended learning to enhance active learning through interactive strategies (Graham, 2006).

While the blended learning has been gaining popularity in the language classrooms at both the undergraduate and graduate level, there is a lack of research studied the EFL blended learning courses from a structural framework. The fast growing blended learning also puts pressure on faculty members to provide meaningful educational experience in the EFL blended learning environment. In order to fill this gap, this study firstly intended to seek a framework that could be applied to a blended learning environment for the EFL classrooms.

Researchers have examined extensively to invent a structural framework from which to review online or blended learning experiences. One of the good examples is the Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework. The CoI framework is a well-structured model and serves as a set of guidelines to create effective learning communities in online and blended learning environments (Garrison & Vaughan, 2008). Given that the CoI framework has been most widely adopted and studied by many researchers (Garrison & Arbaugh, 2007; Arbaugh et al., 2008), this study decided to adopt it for developing the blended EFL course.

Within such a framework, EFL blended learning needs more practical guidelines on the development of courses and ways to evaluate learners' blended learning experiences. This research took a case study method to apply the CoI model to one of the EFL blended writing courses in the graduate school. Then the study garnered students' views on the CoI model and based on that, it attempted to offer guidelines for the implementation and assessment of the blended courses in the future.

The purpose of this paper is two fold: first, to describe the implementation of the CoI framework for a blended EFL writing course; and secondly, to examine students' perceptions of the CoI through a mixed method approach. This study is expected to contribute to the EFL online or blended learning through practical application of the framework. In order to meet the purpose of the study, following questions are being asked:

(1) How have the different presences (teaching, social, and cognitive) of the CoI model implemented in a blended English writing course?
(2) What are the graduate students' perceptions of the CoI model in terms of teaching, social and cognitive presence?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Blended Learning in Higher Education and SLA

It is no doubt that the blended learning approach in higher education is continuously catching popularity (Bliuc, Goodyear & Ellis, 2007; Dziuban, Hartman, & Moskal, 2004; Graham, 2006; Oh & Park, 2009; Osguthorpe & Graham, 2003). The previous research on blended learning in higher education showed positive learning outcomes. To name a few, Vaughan (2010) examined the impact of incorporating the use of technology to psycholinguistics course and students reported to have greater satisfaction, improved retention rate, and increased scores than in the previous course. In Collopy and Arnold (2009)'s study, students showed higher satisfaction and motivation when they studied in a blended learning class than in a traditional class. Time flexibility was found to be the primary factor for student's high satisfaction and consequently resulted in increased learning outcomes (Dziuban et al., 2004).

The blended learning studies had also shown the improved classroom interaction both in quantity and quality, which was considered to be the key focus of research and theory in blended learning (Graham, 2006). Wagner (2006) explained interaction as "the defining attribute for quality and value in online learning experience" (p.44). The literature related to interaction in blended learning showed that interaction between learner-instructor and student-student contributed to student and teacher satisfaction. For instance, Bliuc et al.'s (2007) study showed how learners perceive integration of two different modes of classroom (face-to-face and online) interaction affected their academic achievement, and suggested to generate the quality of students' learning experiences. Several studies also showed that students' academic preparedness and understanding of course content increased as learners were more apt to engage in textual dialogues in online discussions (Amaral & Shank, 2010; Shroff & Vogel, 2010).

In the realm of second language acquisition, it has been only within the past decade since the researchers began to use the term 'blended learning' in relation to language learning. Before that, the field of CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning) has been extensively examined including the various formats of blended language learning cases since its beginning in the 1960s. Therefore, much of literature reviews on blended

learning were dependent on the field of CALL research which has a relatively longer history. Many researchers in blended learning also draw upon studies on CALL although these studies did not use the term 'blended learning' because the studies adopted blended learning environment (e.g., Hong & Samimy, 2010; Wiebe & Kabata, 2010; Neumeier, 2005). However, it is still ambiguous to demarcate blended learning from CALL and vice versa. Neumeier (2005) also encapsulated that "in the realms of blended learning, there is still a lot of undiscovered territory to be explored and mapped out" (p.176), which in another sense, indicates that blended learning in the field of SLA is still in its early stage.

2. The Community of Inquiry Framework

The Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework is a process model of online learning. The CoI framework was first developed by Garrison, Anderson and Archer (2000) in order to describe the interactive features of online learning experiences in higher education. Figure 1 introduces the three presences of CoI which are necessary to create a meaningful learning experience.

FIGURE 1

Community of Inquiry



The genesis of the CoI model is in John Dewey's work who believed that community and inquiry are the core value of educational experience (Arbaugh et al., 2008). Teaching presence is the fundamental element to integrate all the other elements that are

necessary to create a meaningful community. Teaching presence has three categories: (1) instructional design and organization; (2) facilitating discourse; and (3) direct instruction (Garrison & Arbaugh, 2007). Instructional design and organization includes "the selection, organization, and primary presentation of course content, as well as the design and development of learning activities and assessment" (Garrison et al., 2000, p. 3). Facilitating discourse is important to sustain interest and motivation of the students (Anderson, Rourke, Garrison, & Archer, 2001). A teacher needs to support students to create a learning community by constantly communicating through postings and discussions. Direct instruction is accomplished when the teacher offers scholarly leadership as a subject matter expert and shares his/her knowledge with students (Garrison et al., 2000). It is critical for the teacher to play multiple roles as described above to boost active learning and interaction for the construction of knowledge (Garrison et al., 2000).

The second element of the CoI framework is social presence which is defined as "ability of participants to identify with the group or course of study, communicate purposefully in a trusting environment, and develop personal and affective relationships progressively by way of projecting their individual personalities" (Garrison, 2011, p. 34). Social presence encompasses three categories: (1) open communication; (2) group cohesion; and (3) affective expression. Open communication encourages learners to have meaningful conversations with mutual respect, and group cohesion is described as "focused collaborative communication that builds participation and empathy" (p. 101). Lastly, affective expression means having to share emotions upon establishing interpersonal relationships, which, according to Garrison, Anderson and Archer (2000), is "indicated by the ability and confidence to express feelings related to the educational experience" (p. 99). Recent research on social presence in online interaction supports that social presence is the foundation for cognitive development and critical thinking, and that collaborative tasks promote social presence in community establishment in online environments (Arbaugh, 2008; Rovai, 2002; Shea & Bidjerano, 2008; Swan & Shih, 2005).

Garrison and Arbaugh (2007) explained the last element, cognitive presence, as "the extent to which learners are able to construct and confirm meaning through sustained reflection and discourse" (p.161). Cognitive presence is further explained by four phases which is an "idealized sequence of the process of critical inquiry" (Garrison et al, 2001. P.4). These four phases are: (1) triggering event; (2) exploration; (3) integration; and (4) resolution. In the triggering event phase, an instructor poses problems and issues to motivate leaners to explore the content. The second phase is exploration in which learners make sense of the issues by gathering information. Then in the next phase, integration, students connect ideas through reflecting on the content. Finally, in the

resolution phase, learners identify solutions to the problems by applying new knowledge. In the cognitive presence, learners are expected to take each stage sequentially; however, researchers (Garrison & Arbaugh, 2007) note that it seems to be difficult to move beyond the exploration phase to achieve critical thinking.

Several studies examined the implementation of CoI in either face-to-face or blended learning in relation to students' academic achievement, motivation and perception. For example, Kucuk and Sahin (2013) found no difference between face-to-face group and blended learning group in terms of academic success but found a significant difference in some categories of motivation, satisfaction, and CoI. Other research studies have also examined the three presences of the CoI framework (e.g., Arbaugh, 2008; Kanuka, Rourke, & Laflamme, 2007; Swan & Shih, 2005) in online and blended learning environments. However, there is a lack of research focusing on EFL blended learning on the basis of CoI and even less research which examined all three elements simultaneously. This study aimed to focus on the CoI implementation in the EFL blended learning context.

III. METHODOLOGY

1. Participants

21 adult Korean EFL students participated in this study. They were enrolled in an English writing course which was one of the elective courses required for degree completion. Background information of the participants is introduced in Table 1. All of their majors were in the humanities department and they ranged in age from 24 to 52. Except for four students, the majority of the students did not have experiences in blended learning.

2. Research Setting

The English writing class met once a week for two hours and 40 minutes in a face-to-face classroom and students worked in an online classroom outside those hours. Naver online café was utilized to create an online classroom for its popularity and easy access. Naver is a domestic search portal that is most widely used in South Korea. Each face-to-face class was mainly used for instructor's lecture on weekly lessons and each week's announcements were made during the class hour to explain further activities to be done in the online classroom. Online classroom involved two types of participation: one was obligatory participation which was subject to evaluation and the other was voluntary

participation which was done at their own free will. Obligatory activity included checking weekly announcements, reading guidelines for assignments, uploading weekly assignments, posting opinions in a group discussion forum, and writing feedback between peers. Voluntary activities included replying to teacher's diary, writing a short memo, and leaving messages in student's diary board.

3. Data Collection

Data were collected for 15 weeks from the first week to the last week of the semester from two blended writing courses. The qualitative and quantitative data were collected through observation of the classroom, individual interviews, reflective journals, and surveys. In the first week of the course, students had filled out information background survey which provided basic information of the students regarding their major, age, gender, program, English proficiency and online learning experience (Table 1).

TABLE 1

Background Information of Participants

Students	Age	Gender	Program	Major	Online Experience
A	35	F	MA	History	No
B	32	M	MA	Culture	Yes
C	30	F	MA	Musicology	No
D	32	M	MA	Informatics	Yes
E	50	M	Ph.D.	Ethics	No
F	24	F	MA	Culture	No
G	36	F	Ph.D.	Art History	No
H	33	F	Ph.D.	Musicology	No
I	45	F	Ph.D.	Linguistics	No
J	30	F	MA	Musicology	No
K	28	F	MA	Musicology	No
L	24	F	MA	Musicology	No
M	44	F	Ph.D.	Korean Literature	No
N	33	F	Ph.D.	Musicology	Yes
O	32	M	Ph.D.	Korean Language	No

P	44	F	MA	Education	No
Q	26	F	MA	Korean Language	No
R	27	F	MA	Anthropology	No
S	43	F	Ph.D.	Anthropology	No
T	47	F	Ph.D.	Korean Language	Yes
U	52	M	MA	Political Science	No

Semi-structured interviews were conducted twice; first interview was done after individual background survey in the second week and the second interview was administered in the last week after the Community of Inquiry survey. At the first interview, the researcher asked general questions about the participants' previous experiences in blended learning and their expectations for the course. The last interview's questions focused more on evaluative, reflective and suggestive comments about their perceptions in blended learning for the EFL writing course. The interview was useful in providing a counterbalance to the data received from the surveys.

Community of Inquiry (CoI) survey (Appendix A) was used to measure students' perceptions of teaching, social and cognitive presences. The survey was designed using Likert-scale ratings of 1(strongly disagree) to 5(strongly agree) based on the CoI model. The survey was composed of 13 items (indicators) measuring teaching presence perception, nine items measuring social presence perception, and 12 items measuring cognitive presence perception (Akyol & Garrison, 2008).

4. Data Coding and Analysis

The first research question about implementing the CoI model to this EFL writing course was analyzed with the CoI template (Table 2) following a deductive category application. The blended classroom was described using the predefined categories of CoI. Examples of indicators were identified within each category of CoI and these categories were grouped by each element, which together composed the Community of Inquiry. For example, in the area of teaching presence, the instructor posted a deadline of each assignment in the announcement board to inform students of the due dates, which was coded under the *design* and *organization* category of teaching presence. Likewise, adapted from the the CoI template, three presences were illustrated by coding for indicators of the social, teaching and cognitive presence in context.

TABLE 2
Community of Inquiry Template

Elements	Categories	Indicators (examples only)
Teaching Presence	Design and organization	Setting curriculum and methods
	Facilitating discourse	Sharing personal meaning Focusing discussion
	Direct Instruction	
Social presence	Open Communication	Risk-free expression
	Group Cohesion	Encourage collaboration Emoticons
	Emotional Expression	
Cognitive Presence	Triggering Event	Sense of Puzzlement
	Exploration	Information exchange
	Integration	Connecting ideas
	Resolution	Apply new ideas

Adapted from Community of Inquiry Coding Template (Garrison et al, 2000)

The second research question about the perception of CoI firstly acquired numeric findings from the CoI survey. The survey was used to measure students' perceptions on the efficacy of teaching, social, and cognitive presences in the blended EFL writing course. Based on the quantitative findings, students' interviews and reflective journals were analyzed qualitatively to generate related themes in each type of presences.

IV. DESCRIPTION & FINDINGS

1. Implementation of Community of Inquiry in a Blended English Writing Course

1) Teaching Presence in the English Writing Course

This blended English writing course was designed following the Community of Inquiry model. Table 3 describes how the different categories of teaching presence was implemented in this study.

The first component in the teaching presence is *instructional design* and *organization.*

In this blended English writing course, the online classroom was designed through Naver café. The format of the online classroom was reorganized and the new manuals were created to serve different functions of the online classroom communication. The curriculum and methods were set by posting a course syllabus on the course information board, time parameters were established by putting up the deadline on the announcement, and guided rules including netiquettes were provided for students to follow in the online classroom.

The second element of the teaching presence is *facilitating discourse*. Anderson et al. (2001) described it as establishing and maintaining classroom interaction through the modeling of behaviors, encouragement, support, and the creation of a positive learning atmosphere. *Facilitating discourse* was especially important for the participants since all the participants said they have not experienced online classrooms previously. In order to familiarize students with a new type of class format, much effort was put into explaining how to use the online classroom. Students interacted with the instructor through various mediums such as emails and café boards, among which was the Teacher's Diary Board. The Teacher's Diary Board was used for the instructor to write and share her personal stories. This elicited active responses from students as they freely wrote their feelings and ideas in this board.

TABLE 3

Teaching Presence with New Indicators

Elements	Categories	Indicators (Examples)
Teaching presence	Design and organization	2 hours and 40 minutes of face-to-face classroom per week and online classroom were available. OL: Course information, guided rules, and netiquettes were posted. Time parameters (e.g., deadline) were established.
	Facilitating discourse	F2F: Online classroom activities, informal lunch meetings were demonstrated OL: Self-introduction board was created. Frequent email transactions were used. Tips for group discussion were posted. Teacher's diary was uploaded weekly.

	Direct instruction	F2F: Lecture was given. Solved exercise questions as a sample. Writing conferences were held. OL: Introduced discussion topics and related websites available on a link. Assessment: Teacher feedback on writing assignments was given promptly. Questions were posed to motivate self-editing. Writing conferences were held. Students kept short diaries in student's diary board.

* F2F: Face-to-Face / OL: Online Learning / N/A: Not Available

The third element, *direct instruction* describes the instructor's role as a subject matter expert, sharing knowledge with the students (Garrison & Arbaugh, 2007). Since this was a blended course, weekly content was first introduced in the face-to-face classroom, then individualized feedback sessions on students' writing work was done in the online classroom. In the online classroom, students were able to download handouts from the Materials Board with website links to extra references, too. They could also click on the linked websites for additional information and check on the writing samples of their weekly assignments. Discussion Board was activated when the writing assignment needed pros and cons opinions. This was used as a brainstorming stage in the writing process. Considering the feature of English writing course, additional component, 'assessment' was added to direct instruction which was mostly providing feedback and soliciting self-editing in this study. The instructor provided personalized feedback for each assignment using the Practice/Task and Feedback Board.

2) Social Presence in the English Writing Course

The social presence entails three categories: *affective expression, open communication,* and *group cohesion*. Table 4 presents how each category was implemented in this course. *Affective expression* includes expressions of emotion, attitudes and sharing personal insights (Rourke, Anderson, Garrison, & Archer, 2001). Learners can express themselves better when there is a feeling of solidarity and a sense of belonging because it helps to build trust among themselves. In the present study, participants used emoticons and different types of facial icons available in the café to express their

feelings. Although the instructor led the way in guiding a friendly environment through multiple mediums such as email and synchronous chatting, learners' interaction did not show *affective expression* much possibly because interaction was heavily relied on text-based communication mode.

The element of *open communication* is described as "reciprocal and respectful exchanges [exemplified by] mutual awareness and recognition of each other's contributions" (Garrison et al., 2000, p.100). This indicates risk-free expression, continuing a thread, agreeing/disagreeing, giving advice and questioning and answering. *Open communication* was achieved through various activities such as ice break, group discussion, and peer feedback.

TABLE 4

Social Presence with New Indicators

Elements	Categories	Indicators (Examples)
Social presence	Affective expressions	F2F: Words, voice/facial expressions, and gesture were used. OL: Emoticons were used in the messages
	Open communication	F2F: Ice break time in the first class, lunch meeting, and break time were available. OL: Discussion board as an open lounge was available.
	Group cohesion	F2F: Occasional group discussion and informal luncheon with each group were planned. OL: Thread to a question continued. Different discussion topic was given for each group.

* F2F: Face-to-Face / OL: Online Learning / N/A: Not Available

Discussion Board was used whenever there was a group discussion. Group discussion began in the face-to-face classroom which subsequently led the discussion to be continued to online throughout the week. After the initial discussion in the face-to-face classroom, learners exchanged more opinions in the online classroom after researching the topic in dept. Students were also asked to write an essay based on the information shared in a group discussion. In addition, Teacher's Diary Board played an important

role to inspire learners to write their opinions and draw feedback from each other. In this course, peer editing was integrated into the requirements of the group discussion. For example, after being trained to give feedback to each other's writings, students were responsible for choosing three essays and providing written feedback in terms of grammar, content, and organization.

Lastly, *group cohesion* described as "focused collaborative communication that builds participation and empathy" (Garrison et al., 2000, p. 101) was developed through on/off group discussion activities in which a different topic was given for each group. Each group had to work together and make a commitment to contribute to a quality discussion because this served as the brainstorming stage for essay-writing assignment. Although *group cohesion* was hard to find in the online postings, interview data showed *group cohesion* still existed to some extent. Students used group language, 'we', 'us' or 'our' during the interview. For example, one student said in the first interview, "*We* are not young students so *our* expectations for the course may be different." One student also said, "*We* all thank you for you're a quick response to *our* questions. You are very good to *us*." The usage of using group word indicated that the students considered themselves as members of the same group with a common goal.

3) Cognitive Presence in the English Writing Course

Cognitive presence is directly related to course content and serves course objectives. These graduate students registered for the course to gain specific knowledge of the academic writing skills, that is to say, the content of the course was the core of educational experience and that was what brings about the development of learners' knowledge (Garrison et al., 2000). Content presented in this course was composed of lectures, practice/task exercises from the textbook, writing assignments, one-to-one teacher feedback, peer feedback, group discussion, and tests. Table 5 introduces weekly contents covered in this course. Cognitive presence was implemented through four stages as depicted in Table 6.

TABLE 5

Weekly Contents

Week	Content
1	Planning a course / Self Introductory paragraph writing
2	Ch.1. Paragraph structure / Unit 1. An Approach to Academic Writing
3	Ch. 2. Unity and Coherence / Unit 1. An Approach to Academic Writing
4	Ch. 3. Supporting details: Facts, Quotations
	Unit 2. Writing General-Specific Texts

5	Ch. 4. From Paragraph to Essay / Unit 2. Writing General-Specific Texts
6	Ch. 5. Chronological Order: Process Essays
	Unit 3. Problem, Process, and Solution
7	Ch. 6. Cause/Effect Essays
	Unit 3. Problem, Process, and Solution
8	Midterm Examination
9	Ch. 7. Comparison/Contrast Essays / Unit 4. Data Commentary
10	Extracurricular activities / Unit 4 Data Commentary
11	Ch. 8. Paraphrase and Summary / Unit 5 Writing Summaries
12	Ch. 9. Argumentative Essays
	Unit 6. Writing Critiques / Abstract Writing
13	Ch. 10. Types of Sentences / Unit 7. Constructing a Research Paper I
14	Ch. 11. Using Parallel Structures and Editing
	Unit 8. Constructing a Research Paper II
15	Final Examination (In class writing)

In the first stage, *triggering event*, the instructor tried to raise a sense of puzzlement by picking at the topic students said they needed to improve. Based on the result of needs analysis administered on the first day of class, contents were adjusted to meet the students' interest and specific needs. Assignments were also given to *trigger the event* by trying to motivate the students to think about the problem and analyze it. The range of assignments included everything from completing exercises in the textbook, to writing short sentences, to writing four to five paragraph long essays.

In the stage of *exploration*, students searched for information to gain knowledge and understand the problem (Garrison et al., 2000). Through this process, students interact with content by reflecting on the questions and ideas shared within the community. The participants were engaged in a brainstorming activity in the offline classroom and shared their personal experience related to the topic. This activity was extended to the online classroom by the students putting a summary of the discussion and the related literature on the Discussion Board. Through this stage, students were trained to integrate course content with the ideas derived from their previous experiences and new findings. Students then moved into the *integration* stage in which learners combine and gather all the information to construct a meaningful solution (Garrison & Arbaugh, 2007).

TABLE 6

Cognitive Presence with New Indicators

Elements	Categories	Indicators (examples)
Cognitive presence	Triggering event	F2F: Needs analysis was administered at the first class. Questions and problems posed to stimulate curiosity. OL: Previewed the upcoming week's topic.
	Exploration	F2F: A sample exercise before main writing activity was done. OL: Brainstormed and shared previous experiences related to the given topic or problem.
	Integration	F2F: N/A Individual writing assignment on a weekly basis (e.g., persuasive writing, summarizing, paraphrasing) were given.
	Resolution	F2F: N/A OL: Applied learned lesson to one's own paper (e.g., writing abstract, summary, paraphrasing practice)

* F2F: Face-to-Face / OL: Online Learning / N/A: Not Available

In this stage, students worked on an individual writing task (e.g. persuasive writing, problem-solution writing, and abstract writing) as a way of connecting the learned lesson with a practical application. They were asked to submit three drafts from the first to the last, and between each draft, both the instructor and peer feedback were provided. Students utilized multiple sources to write a comprehensive essay through synthesizing the ideas, creating solutions, and applying them to academic writing.

The final stage of the cognitive presence is *resolution* in which students start to apply learned knowledge to a new issue or problem (Garrison & Arbaugh, 2007). In this stage, students can implement the solution and evaluate the outcomes, and this will lead them to the new start of another triggering event. (Garrison et al., 2001). In the present course work, the objective was to develop academic writing skills so that they could write research papers in English. To meet such needs, the final project was to write a short

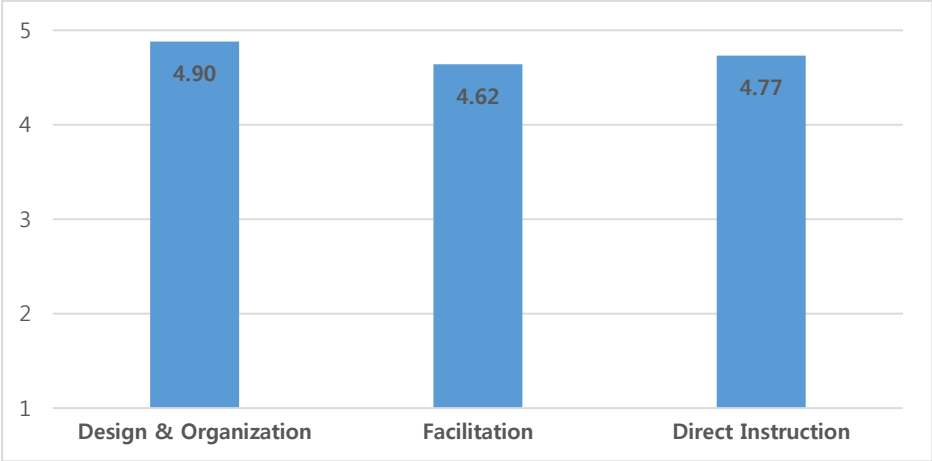
version of the research paper within their specialty, including English abstract. This activity offered them a chance to interact with the content in a more concrete way by constructing a framework for academic writing and having to learn to self-evaluate their work.

2. Students' Perceptions of CoI in a Blended English Writing Course

1) Perceptions of Teaching Presence

Student perception of the CoI model was answered by the Community of Inquiry survey responses and the qualitative data collected from the end of course interview and weekly reflective journal. Figure 2 shows the mean value for each category in the teaching presence from the survey. Majority of the students perceived teaching presence as the most important and effective element in blended learning. Out of the 13 teaching presence indicators, the highest mean rating was in the area of *design* and *organization* (4.9) followed by *direct instruction* (4.77) and *facilitation* (4.62). The item 2 (The instructor clearly communicated important course goals) ranked the highest (5.0) and the item 5 (The instructor was helpful in identifying areas of agreement and disagreement on course topics that helped me to learn) ranked the lowest (4.3).

FIGURE 2
Perception of Teaching Presence



To follow up with the result of the survey, there was an in-depth discussion about the course effectiveness and satisfaction with each participant in terms of three presences.

Congruent with the survey result, all of the students highly agreed on the clear role of instructor in the *design* and *organization* of the course. They said that they were able to understand the guidelines of online instruction easily because the instructor used multiple mediums to communicate such as emails, online boards and chatting.

In the same vein, students were highly satisfied with the instructor's *direct instruction* on their writings. All of them expressed their gratitude for the instructor's prompt written feedback on their writing assignments. The most repeated remark was that the teacher feedback was greatly effective in developing writing skills because it was done individually. Teacher feedback included comments on the assignments as well as one-to-one conferencing after a written feedback session in the online classroom. According to one student, such interaction was described as "doctor's prescription on one's illness." Following excerpts describe how these students found teacher feedback helpful:

> *Interaction with the instructor was more important than any other interactions. For me, writing feedback was most helpful. Whenever I uploaded the assignment, the instructor gave me feedback within less than a day so I was able to check it while I still remember what I wrote.* (I, journal)

> *Teacher feedback helped me to correct my habitual grammatical mistakes. I appreciated when the instructor provided me corrective feedback although I felt embarrassed at first.* (P, interview)

Students felt good about receiving personalized feedback on their essays because they were able to sense that the instructor was thoroughly reading their work and trying to provide constructive feedback as often as possible. Having received one-to-one feedback, they were able to build a closer relationship with the instructor which eased them to transition from the face-to-face classroom to the online classroom. Following excerpts describe this:

> *Thanks for giving us individualized comments on our papers. Since we were all at a different level of writing skills, we benefited most from the personal coaching session. For me, it is my motivation to visit the café more often.* (E, interview)

> *At first, I felt stressed to check the comments on my essay because it was full of marks but I have to admit that it was very helpful to develop my own writing skills. I usually didn't take general comments seriously but I took the personal comments seriously.* (T, interview)

Students also mentioned that they were able to sense the instructor's presence in the online classroom not only through the immediate written feedback but also reading teacher's diary on the Teacher's Diary Board and frequent email messages. Following excerpts explain the importance of teacher's active role for online classroom:

> *I liked reading teacher's diary. Through reading teacher's diary, I learned new English expressions and vocabulary too. It's really helpful when you feel the teacher presence here and there*. (F, journal)

> *I appreciated the teacher involvement* in our on and off line classrooms. *The instructor provided us with useful guidelines to write English paper and always reminded us of the deadlines and upcoming tasks*. (L, interview)

Although majority of the students agreed with the helpfulness of teaching presence, there were some students with different opinions who expressed uncomfortable feelings about the prevalence of teacher presence in the online classroom. One student said, "I couldn't help feeling like I was being watched all the time, because the teacher kept writing comments too frequently"

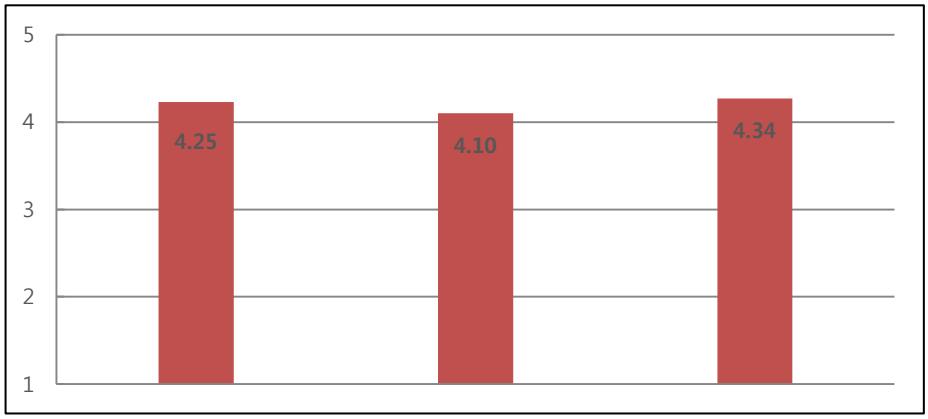
As has been displayed in Figure 2, *facilitation* was evaluated slightly lower than the other two categories. During the interview, students brought up an interesting issue on facilitating discourse in the classroom. They said that throughout the course, the instructor was too focused to encourage the interaction between the instructor and the students that they felt unrested. Moreover, despite teacher's facilitation, they were hesitant to communicate with the instructor because they were uncertain about the needs of online communication.

2) Perceptions of Social Presence

The mean rating of social presence is described in Figure 3. Out of nine social presence indicators, *group cohesion* resulted to have the highest mean rating (4.34) followed by *affective expression* (4.25) and *open communication* (4.10). Both the highest and lowest mean rating were found in the category of *affective expression*. The highest mean score (4.6) was item 16 (Online or web-based communication is an excellent medium for social interaction.) and the lowest mean score (3.9) was item 14 (Getting to know other course participants gave me a sense of belonging in the course). In the category of *open communication* which was rated lower than the other categories, item 19 (I felt comfortable interacting with other course participants) was the lowest (3.9).

FIGURE 3

Mean Rating for Social Presence



As the survey result showed (Figure 3), *group cohesion* was highly rated falling in the range of 'agree' to 'strongly agree'. This reflects a change of students' perceptions on the social presence. In the first interview, majority of the students were not sure of why they should talk to each other online in the first place. One student said, "I think there is not much need to communicate between the students because this is not a conversation class." Another student also explained, "Korean students don't really open themselves unless they get to know each other really well." However, their views changed as they saw the importance of working within a group. One third of the online classroom task was done in group. For example, after the face-to-face lecture, students were given a task which required a group discussion prior to writing essays. For this, *group cohesion* was important to the learners. They were not shy to disagree with other course participants. One student said, "I felt that when someone's opinion was different from others, the group members discussed the matter more actively and we listened to each other better which helped to build unity in the group." At the end of the course interview, one student said, "Social presence was felt to some degree in the course. It helped me to feel that I was not the only one who had difficulties in academic writing.

In terms of *affective expression*, item 14 (Getting to know other course participants gave me a sense of belonging in the course) was rated the lowest (3.9) in social presence. This was quite the contradictory to the answers collected from the first interview. Majority of the students said that once they started to get to know each other better, they were able to communicate more actively in the online classroom. However, at the end of the course, some students said that although they became more familiar to each other than before, they still didn't feel like talking to everyone but only to certain people. They also mentioned that everybody seemed to have a different level of English skills and it

was hard to create coherence in the class. In fact, one student said that he sometimes wanted to stay "invisible" because he didn't want to make a false impression to the classmates. This is also related to item 19 (I felt comfortable interacting with other course participants.) which was rated the lowest (3.9). Students' reflective journal displayed that it was not easy to have a discussion online because it was hard to find the right timing.

> *It was not that good to do discussion in an online setting. I couldn't interact much because I didn't feel like people were reading my opinion seriously.* (R, Journal)

> *I tried to participate more in a discussion but others did not show interest. Maybe they were too busy with other stuff.* (I, Journal)

While the students believed that online or web-based communication was an excellent medium for social interaction, students' ideas on meaningful interaction between peers depended mostly on the quality of peer feedback on their writing task. In further discussion on social presence with the students, most of them mentioned the effect of peer feedback. Interview comments suggested that the students valued highly of peer feedback only when they were truly meaningful. Following comments provided several areas as to how these students considered peer feedback meaningful or not:

> *I think we [Korean students] are pretty good at pointing out the other's mistakes, especially grammar mistakes. I found many mistakes through peer editing and I corrected them before teacher feedback.* (T, interview)

> *Peer feedback was not always helpful. In some cases, we just wrote very superficial comments such as 'good' or 'hard work'. However, it was helpful when we wrote meaningful feedback. Like last week, one student wrote me about my paragraph had too ideas which needs to be broken into two paragraphs. I think it could be helpful when it guides you to a next step about what you can do better.* (D, interview)

There were also other concerns regarding peer feedback. Following quotations point to how some students did not rely on the peer feedback because it was not as productive as the teacher's comments:

> *I think peer feedback was not always true. People try to leave some comments*

on other's essays because it was part of participation grade. I don't think it helps to change my writing ability that much except for grammatical mistakes (F, interview)

I think peer feedback was not always meaningful because it was forcefully done in many cases. It was time consuming to read incomplete essay lengthy then organize your thoughts into English. (J, interview)

I was kind of irritated when I was assigned to read low quality papers. You know, I could learn better from good writings than bad ones. I didn't want to waste my time by correcting basic mistakes so valued teacher feedback only. (S, interview)

In sum, it can be said that the learners selectively showed satisfaction with social presence. They valued only the meaningful interaction like receiving peer feedback on grammar mistakes because it was educative. However, there were limitations to producing effective feedback to each other. This seemed to gear the students to prefer interaction with the instructor more.

3) Perceptions of Cognitive Presence

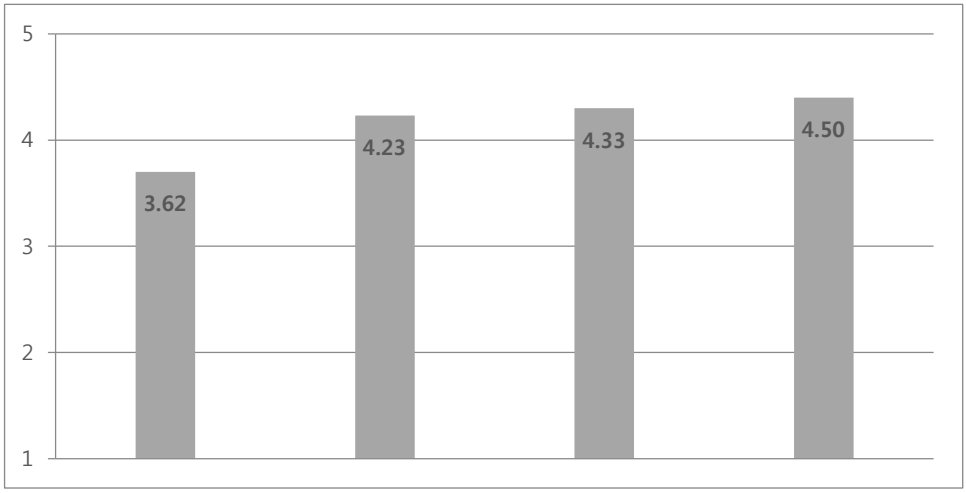
Figure 4 describes the result of how participants rated the value of cognitive presence. Total of 12 cognitive presence indicators were rated. The highest mean value was identified with the category of resolution (4.5) followed by integration (4.33), exploration (4.23) and triggering event (3.62). There were three highest valued items all rated 4.50, which were item 30 (Learning activities helped me construct explanations/solutions), item 33 (I have developed solutions to course problems that can be applied in practice), and item 34 (I can apply the knowledge created in this course to my work or other non-class related activities). The three lowest rated items were item 23 (Problems posed increased my interest in course issues. 3.90), item 24 (Course activities piqued my curiosity 3.70) and item 25 (I felt motivated to explore content related questions) 3.80), all of which were identified within the categories of triggering event.

The discussion on the cognitive presence began with the first phase *triggering event* because it had the lowest points. Students discussed the role of classroom activities and materials used for the course. Although the students acknowledged the usefulness of textbook and classroom activities, they showed less interest and motivation for learning. eight students rated item 24 (Course activities piqued my curiosity) relatively low falling within the ranking of neutral to agree. From reflective journals and interviews of these

four students, it was found that they all agreed on the effectiveness of the course activities but the activities were not interesting enough to stimulate their curiosity.

FIGURE 4

Mean Rating for Cognitive Presence



Furthermore, many of these graduate students said that curiosity was not the purpose of taking this course. They meant to say that they were taking this course as part of their graduation requirements rather than the free choice. Following comments describe the students' honest reasons for taking this course.

> *To be honest with you, I had to register for this course to graduate, not because I was so interested in learning English writing but my advisor asked to learn it.* (A, interview)
>
> *I could not say every writing task we did in the class room was motivating. It was more demanding than I thought so I was busy to meet the requirements. But, I know this will be helpful later when I write academic journal.* (F, interview)

> *English writing class is not my favorite subject. However, I knew that I need to master it if I want to become an international scholar. (M, interview)*

Following the four phases of cognitive presence in the Community of Inquiry model, the interview data details in what area did the students perceive important. First, the students were generally content with the online discussions and brainstorming activity. This was done in the *exploration* phase during which the students took time and effort to

share ideas as a group or individually. It was noted that they were able to explore different perspectives and familiarized with writing techniques. One student said, "When I discussed with my group members how to write a good summary of the existing literature, it actually helped me more than the textbook guide." During the stage of *integration*, students were engaged to apply ideas to practice solving questions in the textbook and writing sample essays on a given topic. Each week, students were asked to write what they have learned and how they have used the knowledge in their assignment.

Most acknowledged comments were about the usefulness of the materials which were related to the three highest items of the survey result, all of which were rated 4.50. They were item 30 (Learning activities helped me construct explanations/solutions), item 33 (I have developed solutions to course problems that can be applied in practice), and item 34 (I can apply the knowledge created in this course to my work or other non-class related activities). Students voiced their opinions about the importance of utilizing various materials for learning in the following excerpts:

> Although *I did not have enough time to review all the materials meticulously, I knew they were gonna be useful and especially in the future when I* have to write English articles. (H, interview)

> I was *thankful for various materials you provided in the cafe. Some of them were difficult to understand but at least I know I can refer to them later. For example, useful English expressions for presenting views in academic paper was very helpful and practical*. (I, interview)

> *What I really liked about this blended class was that we had so much information shared in the online classroom such as sample writings for abstract and how to paraphrase without plagiarizing.* (O, interview)

However, there were also few negative opinions about having too many work activities in the classroom. The participants in this study were careful to say that the blended course was too demanding because a traditional classroom was running parallel in tandem with the online classroom like two courses without fully integrating the two effectively.

V. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study aimed to describe the implementation of the Community of Inquiry (CoI)

model to a blended EFL writing course and explore Korean EFL students' perceptions of the CoI. By looking at the results, following conclusions and insights could be drawn. First, in this study, teaching presence, social presence and cognitive presence were all identified as the useful elements to create meaningful learning as suggested by the CoI model (Garrison & Anderson, 2003). Teaching presence, social presence and cognitive presence were incorporated with the new indicators with examples within each category. This suggests that instructors may adopt the CoI framework to organize, design, implement and to assess their online or blended EFL courses, especially with a focus on meaningful communication. The challenge would be creating a community that shares common interest and inquiry; therefore, it is imperative for instructors to look into their students' information such as their backgrounds, academic needs and previous experiences in online learning.

Second, educational values students placed on teaching, social and cognitive presences revealed that in overall, students perceived CoI important and effective for learning English writing. However, out of the three presences, the findings imply that teaching presence should be most highlighted for Korean EFL students. For example, instructor's personalized and prompt feedback was best perceived by the students. Even in the social presence, the students found peer feedback helpful when the teacher verified their comments. This is similar to the findings of Shea's (2006) study who examined 2,314 students about what influences their feeling of membership and Shea (2006) concluded that teacher presence was highly related to students' feeling of connectedness to their peer groups. Kim and Moore (2005) also reported that students who had more interactions with the instructor showed higher satisfaction with the online course, which is closely related to the students in this study who continually appreciated having more teacher presence.

Moreover, learners in this study perceived that social presence may create a meaningful environment to communicate only when it was helpful for learning such as checking for mechanical errors or spelling mistakes in their essays. The students' interpretation for meaningful communication was mainly for educational value as social learning theorists believe that learning occurs as the learner interacts between the individual and their social context (Bandura, 2001). Although it is clear that each student stated interaction was the key to learning, a question regarding the concept of interaction had been answered differently according to a varied level of expectation for blended learning.

Third, students appreciated the value of cognitive presence for its usefulness of the content, but at the same time, the study findings pinpointed the motivational challenges students faced in cognitive presence. They were not *triggered* enough to study on the subject matter, when they were inundated with a flood of information and activities that

cannot be grasped in a short time. As much as the students valued time flexibility and practicality of the content materials and activities, it was noted that too much demand on learners could demotivate them to interact effectively. Some students remarked on how they were bounded by two different types of responsibilities; technical demands which was to get used to a different way of communication in a different environment with different people and meet all the course requirements, which included assignments, exams, and interactional demands on participations. This challenge can be resolved by carefully developing curriculum and methods that are appropriate for students' capacity.

The core of the CoI framework is to develop a meaningful learning community that encourages deep approaches to learning (Akyol, Garrison, & Ozden, 2009). This study described the implementation of the CoI model to a blended EFL writing course and explored how Korean EFL students perceived teaching, social and cognitive presences in that course. It is noteworthy that the findings suggest that the CoI model could be adopted in designing EFL courses in a blended learning environment and students valued all three presences to create a meaningful educational experience. However, the nature of blended classroom requires rather complicated responsibilities of the instructors and students. Instructors need to play multiple roles as process facilitator, advisor-counselor, assessor, researcher, content facilitator, manager, technologist, and designer as described by Goodyear, Salmon, Spector, and Steeples (2001). Furthermore, students are also obligated to be trained to participate more effectively in an online learning community.

Although this case study offers insights into the Community of Inquiry model in a blended learning environment for EFL learners, the findings are difficult to be generalized due to the small sample size and other factors such as student characteristics and learning strategies. Future studies could not only enlarge samples size but also examine the relationship between academic success and the perception of the CoI. Finally, it is hoped that the findings of this case study will provide useful suggestions for future practitioners in the blended EFL courses in Korea.

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APPENDIX A

Community of Inquiry Survey

5 point Likert-type scale

1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree

Teaching Presence

Design & Organization

1. The instructor clearly communicated important course topics.
2. The instructor clearly communicated important course goals.
3. The instructor provided clear instructions on how to participate in course learning activities.
4. The instructor clearly communicated important due dates/time frames for learning activities.

Facilitation

5. The instructor was helpful in identifying areas of agreement and disagreement on course topics that helped me to learn.
6. The instructor was helpful in guiding the class towards understanding course topics in a way that helped me clarify my thinking.
7. The instructor helped to keep course participants engaged and participating in productive dialogue.
8. The instructor helped keep the course participants on task in a way that helped me to learn.
9. The instructor encouraged course participants to explore new concepts in this course.
10. Instructor actions reinforced the development of a sense of community among course participants.

Direct Instruction

11. The instructor helped to focus discussion on relevant issues in a way that helped me to learn.
12. The instructor provided feedback that helped me understand my strengths and weaknesses.
13. The instructor provided feedback in a timely fashion.

Social Presence

Affective expression

14. Getting to know other course participants gave me a sense of belonging in the course.
15. I was able to form distinct impressions of some course participants.
16. Online or web-based communication is an excellent medium for social interaction.

Open communication

17. I felt comfortable conversing through the online medium.
18. I felt comfortable participating in the course discussions.
19. I felt comfortable interacting with other course participants.

Group cohesion

20. I felt comfortable disagreeing with other course participants while still maintaining a sense of trust.
21. I felt that my point of view was acknowledged by other course participants.
22. Online discussions help me to develop a sense of collaboration.

Cognitive Presence

Triggering event

23. Problems posed increased my interest in course issues.
24. Course activities piqued my curiosity.
25. I felt motivated to explore content related questions.

Exploration

26. I utilized a variety of information sources to explore problems posed in this course.
27. Brainstorming and finding relevant information helped me resolve content related questions.
28. Online discussions were valuable in helping me appreciate different perspectives.

Integration

29. Combining new information helped me answer questions raised in course activities.
30. Learning activities helped me construct explanations/solutions.
31. Reflection on course content and discussions helped me understand fundamental concepts in this class.

Resolution

32. I can describe ways to test and apply the knowledge created in this course.
33. I have developed solutions to course problems that can be applied in practice.
34. I can apply the knowledge created in this course to my work or other non-class related activities.

5 point Likert-type scale

1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree

Examples in: English
Applicable Languages: English
Applicable Levels: Tertiary

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