

Using Instagram to investigate the role of social presence in intermediate level language classes

Fabrizio Fornara, Florida State U
Lara Lomicka Anderson, The U of SC
David Hattem, United Nations



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PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

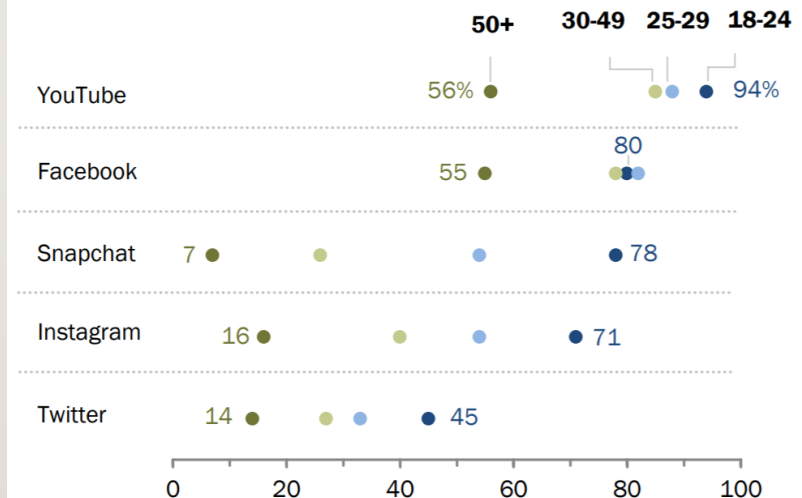
- To investigate the **pedagogical value of Instagram** for the development of students' social presence in the language classroom.
- Specifically, this study examines the **development of social presence** in Instagram posts and looks at how students establish a **community of inquiry** (Col) (Rourke et al., 1999).

SOCIAL MEDIA USE

- Instagram is the third most used social media platform among U.S. adults (35%), after YouTube (73%) and Facebook (68%).
- Young adults are especially heavy users of Snapchat (78%) and Instagram (71%) (Pew Research Center, March 2018)

Social platforms like Snapchat and Instagram are especially popular among those ages 18 to 24

% of U.S. adults in each age group who say they use ...



Source: Survey conducted Jan. 3-10, 2018.
"Social Media Use in 2018"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

WHY INSTAGRAM?

- **95m** photos per day
- **300m** daily stories
- **500m** active users
- **40+b** photos shared

Aslman, 2018



INSTAGRAM & LANGUAGE TEACHING

According to the literature, Instagram can...

- Raise lexical proficiency and cultural competence (Munday & Bosque, 2016)
- Build community, autonomous learning and language skills, motivation (Munday & Bosque, 2016; Al-Ali, 2014; Fornara, 2018)
- Increase informal vocabulary and cultural learning via #hashtags (Zhou, 2016; Fornara, 2018)
- Contribute to creativity and innovation with memes (Purnama, 2017)
- Aid comprehension through images in written posts (Whidden, 2016)
- Impact students' level of confidence to participate and communicate (Manson & Rahim, 2017)

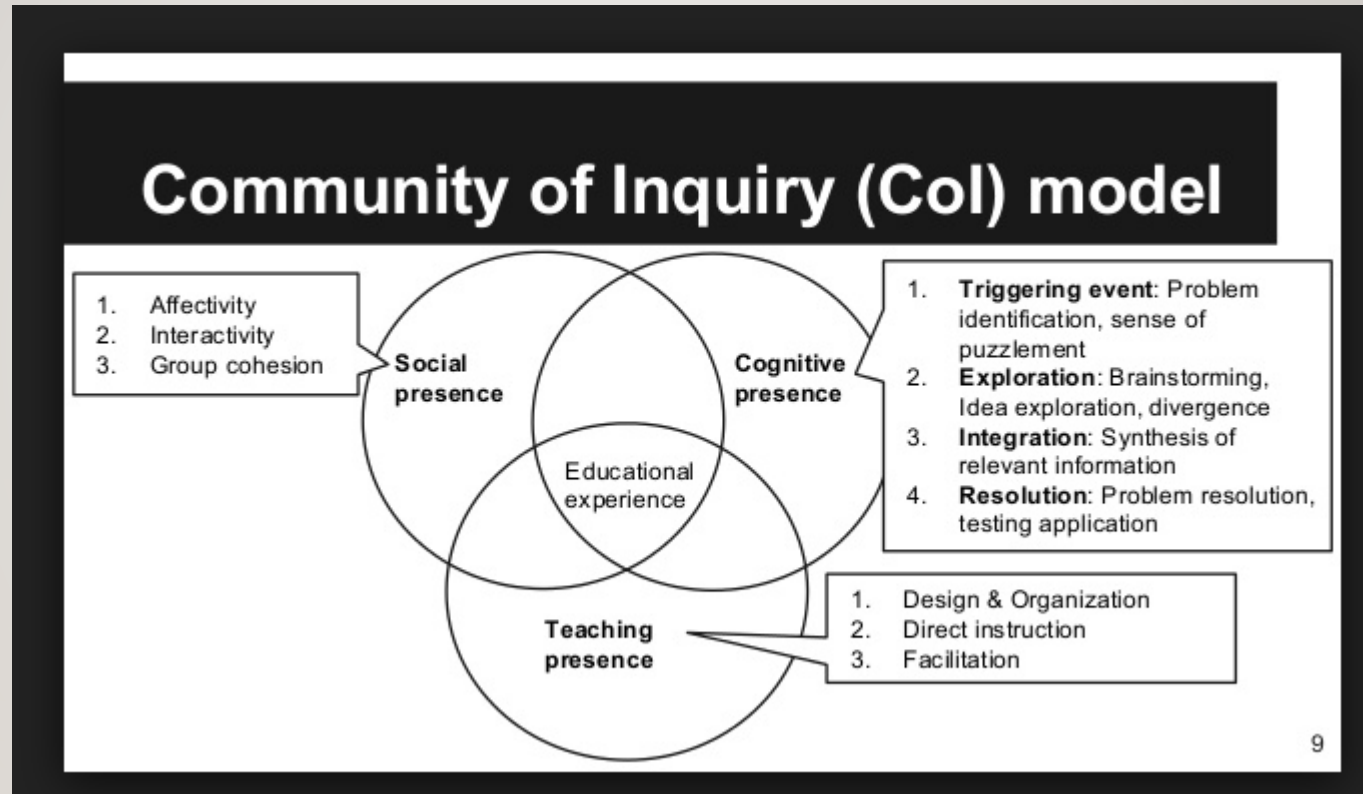


INSTAGRAM & LANGUAGE TEACHING

- Challenges of transcribing and representing multimodal data (visual and textual) (Helm & Dooly, 2017)
- More substantial participation (Al-Ali, 2014)
- Requiring / reinforcing participation
- Lack of substantial research on Instagram



SOCIAL PRESENCE



Category	coding #	Indicators	Definition	Rourke et al. (1999) example
Affective	1	Expressions of Emotion	Conventional expressions of emotion, or unconventional repetitious emoticons	"I just can't stand it when..!!" "ANYBODY OUT THERE??"
	2	Use of Humor	Teasing, cajoling, irony, understatements, sarcasm	The banana crop in Edmonton is looking good this year
	3	Self-disclosure	Presents details of life outside of class or expresses vulnerability	"Where I work, this is what we do..", "I just don't understand the question."
Interactive	4	Continuing a thread	Using reply feature of a software, rather than starting new thread	Software dependent, e.g., "Subject:RE" or "Branch from"
	5	Quoting from others' messages	Using software features to quote others' entire message or cutting and pasting selections of other's messages	Software dependent, e.g., "Martha writes:" or text prefaced by a less-than symbol <.
	6	Referring explicitly to others' messages	Direct reference to contents of others' posts	"In your message, you talked about Moore's distinction.."
	7	Asking questions	Student asks questions of other students or moderator	"Anyone else had experience with WEBCT?"
	8	Complimenting, expressing appreciation	Complimenting others or contents of others' messages	"I really like your interpretation of the reading"
	9	Expressing agreement	Expressing agreement with others or content of others' messages	"I was thinking the same thing." You hit the nail on the head"
Cohesive	10	Vocatives	Addressing or referring to participants by name	I think John made a good point." John, what do you think?"
	11	Addresses or refers to the group using inclusive pronouns	Address the group as we, us or our	"Our textbook refer to..." "I think we are off track"
	12	Phatic, Salutations	Communication that serves a purely social function; greetings, closures	"Hi all", "That's it for now" "Beautiful weather here today"

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- How does using a social media platform like Instagram contribute to the establishment of social presence in language courses?

→ What categories and indicators of **social presence** are **most common** in Instagram posts?

→ What categories and indicators of **social presence** are **least common** in Instagram posts?



METHOD



STUDY DESIGN AND PARTICIPANTS

- Exploratory **mixed-method** study
- Convenience, non-probability sample
- Two third-level language courses in **two different contexts** (Fall 2017):
 - French: 18 students, hashtag #lang2017
 - Italian: 21 students, hashtag #ita2220

INSTAGRAM TASK

- Students used Instagram during 6 weeks to
 - **Reply to a series of questions** prompted by the instructor
 - Posts (picture + caption), 3 times per week
 - **Engage in interaction** with their classmates
 - Comments, 2 times per week
- **Assessment: 10 points per week**
 - Posts (6 pt.) and comments (2 pt.) spaced consistently (2 pt.)

INSTAGRAM TASK: QUESTIONS

Question	Italian	French
What do you like to do for fun? What don't you like to do? Why?	Cosa fai nel tempo libero? Cosa non ti piace fare? Perché?	Qu'est-ce que tu aimes faire pour t'amuser? Qu'est-ce que tu n'aimes pas faire?
What is your biggest passion? Why?	Qual è la tua passione più grande? Perché?	Quelle est ta plus grande passion? Pourquoi?
What is your favorite place in your city/town? Why? What would you like to change in your college/university? Why?	Qual è il tuo posto preferito di Tallahassee? Perché? Cosa vorresti cambiare di FSU? Perché?	Quel est ton endroit favori dans ta ville et pourquoi ? Qu'est-ce que tu aimes changer dans ton université et pourquoi?



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QUAL È IL TUO
POSTO PREFERITO
DI TALLAHASSEE?
PERCHÉ?

ImageQuote



Liked by [redacted] and [redacted]



fabrizio.fornara



Liked by [redacted] and 10 others

fabrizio.fornara Una delle mie passioni è ascoltare musica dal vivo #ita2220

[View all 4 comments](#)





4 likes

Je suis fâchée quand il fait trop chaud comme aujourd'hui, mais je suis content que les Gamecocks ont gagné!
#lang2017



mi arrabbio quando FSU perde una partita di football americano! soprattutto quando è contro una squadra che è male.
#ita2220

sì quest'anno è stata deludente



Si! Mi fa arrabbiare!



Add a comment...





10 likes

gmonet200 Mon endroit préféré à Greenville est Falls Park, parce que il est très beau et tranquille. #lang2017

v... Moi aussi! J'adore les canards et les oies. Est-ce que vous allez à des festivals au parc?

maxfroncz200 J'aime beaucoup l'automne !



1 like

... Nel mio tempo libero mi piace giocare a videogiochi, andare in palestra e leggere. Mi piace leggere circa gli scrittori e le loro vite. Il mio scrittore preferito è il dottor Hunter S. Thompson. Mi piace perché è molto originale nel suo lavoro. Questa è una foto di lui. #ita2220

... Mi piace il film su Thompson, Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas.

... @...y_ È pazzo. Vegas è fantastico. Dovresti leggere "The Curse of Lono" un altro divertente viaggio in Hawaii.



DATA COLLECTION

- Voluntary **pre-activity survey**
 - French, N=17; Italian, N=21
- Transcripts of **Instagram posts and comments**
 - French, N=18; Italian, N=21
- Voluntary **post-activity survey**
 - French, N=18; Italian, N=21

DATA ANALYSIS

- **Content analysis** of the transcripts of Instagram posts and comments: Social presence density measurement tool (Rourke et al., 1999).
 - Unit of analysis → Caption or comment as a unique thematic unit.
 - Aggregate interrater reliability → .953
- Pre- and post-activity surveys: **Descriptive statistics** and **content analysis**.

RESULTS



RESEARCH QUESTIONS

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SOCIAL PRESENCE DENSITY: FRENCH

Aggregate social presence density	Category	Category density	No.	Indicators	Indicator density
16.30	Affective	36.23	1	Expressions of Emotion	20.25
			2	Use of Humor	2.53
			3	Self-disclosure	85.92
	Interactive	11.68	4	Continuing a thread	44.46
			5	Quoting from others' messages	0
			6	Referring explicitly to others' messages / Self-correction	0.16
			7	Asking questions	12.34
			8	Complimenting, expressing appreciation	1.42
			9	Expressing agreement	11.71
	Cohesive	5.59	10	Vocatives	8.86
			11	Addresses or refers to the group using inclusive pronouns	1.11
			12	Phatic, Salutations	6.80

SOCIAL PRESENCE DENSITY: ITALIAN

Aggregate social presence density	Category	Category density	No.	Indicators	Indicator density
16.67	Affective	36.50	1	Expressions of Emotion	25.44
			2	Use of Humor	2.34
			3	Self-disclosure	81.73
	Interactive	13.08	4	Continuing a thread	45.32
			5	Quoting from others' messages	0
			6	Referring explicitly to others' messages / Self-correction	0.15 0.15
			7	Asking questions	8.92
			8	Complimenting, expressing appreciation	10.67
			9	Expressing agreement	13.30
	Cohesive	4.00	10	Vocatives	7.89
			11	Addresses or refers to the group using inclusive pronouns	0.15
			12	Phatic, Salutations	3.95

SOCIAL PRESENCE DENSITY: COMPARISON

	French	Italian
Aggregate social presence density	16.30	16.67
Category density:		
Affective	36.23	36.50
Interactive	11.68	13.08
Cohesive	5.59	4.00

COMPARISON POSTS/COMMENTS: FRENCH

No.	Indicators	Soc.pres. density: Posts (N=351)	Comments (N=281)	Difference
1	Expressions of Emotion	15.95	25.62	+9.67
2	Use of Humor	1.99	3.20	+1.21
3	Self-disclosure	97.15	71.87	-25.28
4	Continuing a thread	0	100.00	+100.00
5	Quoting from others' messages	0	0	0
6	Referring explicitly to others' messages / Self-correction	0	0.36	+0.36
7	Asking questions	2.28	24.91	+22.63
8	Complimenting, expressing appreciation	0	3.20	+3.20
9	Expressing agreement	0	26.33	+26.33
10	Vocatives	1.14	18.51	+17.37
11	Addresses or refers to the group using inclusive pronouns	0.57	1.78	+1.21
12	Phatic, Salutations	4.84	9.25	+4.41

COMPARISON POSTS/COMMENTS: ITALIAN

No.	Indicators	Soc.pres. density: Posts (N=374)	Comments (N=310)	Difference
1	Expressions of Emotion	21.12	30.64	+9.52
2	Use of Humor	1.87	2.90	+1.03
3	Self-disclosure	96.79	63.55	-33.24
4	Continuing a thread	0	100.00	+100.00
5	Quoting from others' messages	0	0	0
6	Referring explicitly to others' messages / Self-correction	0.27 0	0 0.32	-0.27 +0.32
7	Asking questions	4.01	14.84	+10.83
8	Complimenting, expressing appreciation	0	23.55	+23.55
9	Expressing agreement	0	29.35	+29.35
10	Vocatives	0.27	17.09	+16.82
11	Addresses or refers to the group using inclusive pronouns	0.27	0	-0.27
12	Phatic, Salutations	0.53	8.06	+7.53

SELF-REPORTED PRE/POST SURVEY DATA



(PRE) INSTAGRAM USAGE HABITS

	French (N=17)	Italian (N=21)
I already have an Instagram account	15	20
I use Instagram every day	6	14
most days	5	1
I use Instagram multiple times a day	8	14
once or twice a day	3	1
I used Instagram for academic purposes	5	3
I used a smartphone for academic purposes	15	15

(PRE) INSTAGRAM USAGE HABITS (CONT.)

	French	Italian
On Instagram, I usually...	(N=17)	(N=21)
post pictures and images	14	16
post videos	2	5
post comments	8	14
post stories	3	3
browse my feed	12	20
browse hashtags	2	6

(POST) INSTAGRAM USAGE HABITS

	French (N=18)	Italian (N=21)
How often did you go to Instagram for the activity?		
Every day	2	2
Almost every day	6	8
A few days a week	10	8
Once a week	0	2
Almost never or never	0	1
Usually, how often in a day did you go to Instagram?		
Three or more times	6	8
Twice	4	2
Once	8	8

(POST) INSTAGRAM USAGE HABITS (CONT.)

	French (N=18)	Italian (N=21)
I read the captions of almost every post.	2	3
I read the captions of many posts.	10	3
I read the captions only of the posts that struck my attention.	5	11
I looked only at the images and videos.	1	2
I responded or commented on the posts.	5	9

STUDENTS' REACTIONS

What did you **like the most** about the activity?

- It was easy to do since Instagram is such an **integral part** of everyone's life.
- I enjoyed being able to **use Italian** in a setting other than the classroom or for homework.
- I liked having **topics** that we would not normally talk about in French.
- I liked how it was **personal** and that we got to know each other. I liked **reading my classmates' posts**.
- **I do not believe that our class would have bonded as much as we did** if it was not for this activity.



STUDENTS' REACTIONS

What did you **like the least** about the activity?

- I did not have an Instagram account and **did not feel comfortable** making it just for this class.
- I found it **hard to consider Instagram** as part of **school activity**.
- I found it **difficult** to remember to **post every day**.
- It was **hard thinking of something to say** to other classmates.



DISCUSSION



INSTAGRAM FOR SOCIAL PRESENCE

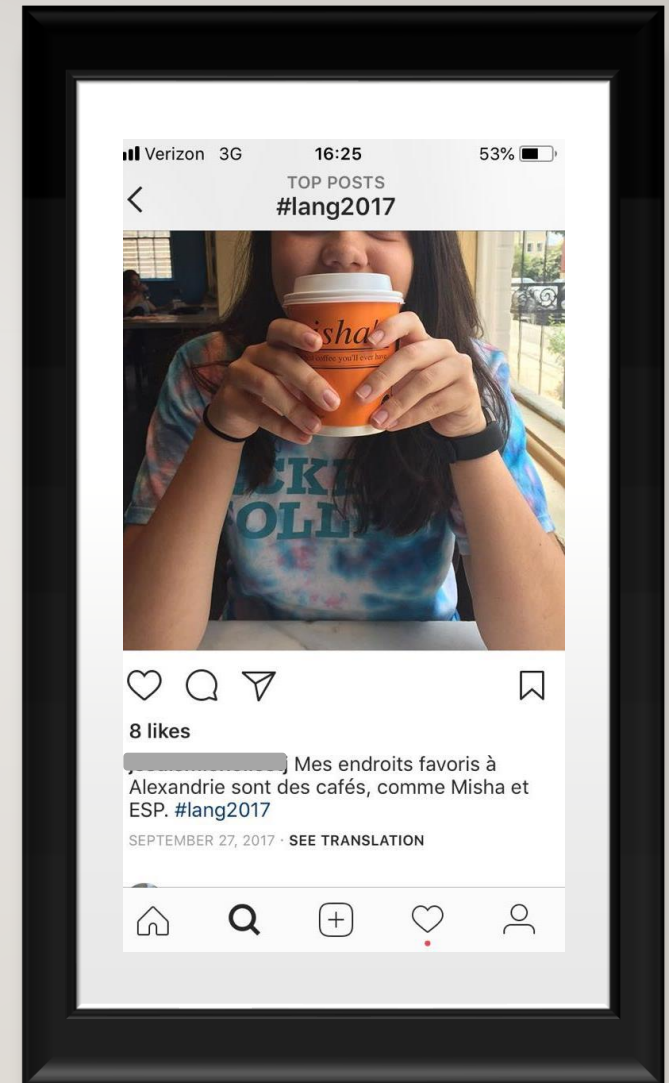
- Students **did build social presence**; strong sense of social presence can lead to the development of Col.
- Results in both language groups were **extremely similar**, they seem to depend more on the **tool** than on the language and the context.
- Most and least common categories:
 - **Affective** (self-disclosure, expressions of emotion)
 - **Cohesive** (use of inclusive pronouns, vocatives)
- Consistent with the **general use of Instagram** as a tool for self-expression, self-identity, and, to a lesser extent, community building.

STUDENT POSTS AND COMMENTS

- **Differences** between posts and comments:
 - Posts: Almost exclusively **affective** (disclosure, emotion)
 - Comments: More **interactive** and **cohesive**
 - Students used the comments to **interact**, especially by asking questions and expressing appreciation and agreement.
 - **Vocatives** surfaced almost exclusively in comments.
 - Emotion was slightly higher in comments, common to reactions perhaps.

SELF-REPORTED DATA FROM SURVEY

- Students' Instagram **usage** for academic purposes is **consistent** with their social usage (browsing feed, posting images, few comments, many likes) but less frequent (every day vs. few days/week).
- Students looked at/read most of the posts (and liked them); comments not as much → Engagement with the task.
- Students **enjoyed** using the language for self-expression and community building.
- Some students **were not comfortable** using Instagram for academic purposes.



LIMITATIONS

- The **social presence density measurement tool** (Rourke et al., 1999) has not yet been used with Instagram; need for **modifications** in future work.
- **Instructor direct involvement** may have contributed to success of the project.
- A different set of **questions** linked to the skills and content covered in class may produce different results.
- Not every student may have regular **access** to a smartphone and internet connection.

CONCLUSIONS

- Students self-reported that they **enjoyed** the project.
- The context promoted some degree of **social presence**, especially **affective** → leads to engagement, trust, support.
- **Interaction** between students was continually present, both within and out of the classroom.
- As semester progressed, students became more engaged in talking with each other and sharing opinions, comments, and information → formation of **strong virtual community** that extended into classroom.
- Social media tools help us to **better engage** our always **connected** students → **positive learning outcomes**.

FUTURE RESEARCH

- Further **explore Instagram in language settings** in **more formal** educational settings → little, substantial research to date.
- Research on student **engagement, motivation, confidence, and learning outcomes** for Instagram in language teaching and learning.
- Research on **mobile learning and Instagram**, since Instagram has features only accessible from devices.

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Thank you!

Fabrizio Fornara, ffornara@fsu.edu

Lara Lomicka Anderson,
lomicka@sc.edu

David Hattem, hattem@un.org

PDF of Presentation available by request (email us!)

