

Promoting Emotional learning through Cooperative Oral Presentations in Higher Education

*By María Martínez Lirola**

Higher education increasingly seeks to promote students' holistic development by integrating cognitive, social, and emotional dimensions of learning. Within this context, this study presents an exploratory and descriptive account of a didactic proposal based on socio-emotional education and cooperative learning in English as a foreign language (EFL) instruction. The objectives are: (1) to describe the design and implementation of a pedagogical experience integrating cooperative oral presentations and emotional education; (2) to explore students' reflections on emotional competences and prosocial behavior; and (3) to analyse students' perceptions of their participation in this experience. A mixed-methods approach was adopted, combining quantitative data from an anonymous questionnaire and a rubric with qualitative insights from classroom observations. The findings offer a detailed overview of students' reported emotional experiences, perceived skill development, and group dynamics during the preparation of cooperative oral presentations. Rather than establishing effectiveness, the results highlight patterns in how students experience and interpret socio-emotional learning in an EFL context. The study underscores the pedagogical potential of integrating cooperative oral presentations with explicit attention to emotional competences and suggests directions for future research and classroom practice.

Keywords: socio-emotional education (SEE), cooperative learning (CL), emotional competences, English teaching, higher education

Introduction

The fact that education has to prepare students for the present social challenges justifies the convenience of using emotional education, also known as socio-emotional learning (SEL) (CASEL, 2013) and socio-emotional education (SEE)¹ (Cefai et al., 2018) as a pedagogical framework in higher education. Consequently, framing the teaching-learning process in the principles of SEE can contribute to the development of emotional competences so that the optimization and harmonization of personal and social well-being is accomplished. Emotional competences are the set of knowledge, capabilities, skills and attitudes necessary to understand, express and regulate emotional phenomena appropriately (Bisquerra & Pérez-Escoda, 2007).

SEE involves adding social and affective elements to the intellectual aspects of education so that students acquire attitudes for life (UNESCO, 2013). In fact, SEE is aimed at improving students' social and emotional competences such as self-awareness, social awareness, and responsible decision making (CASEL, 2013, 2021a

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¹This will be the term used in this article.

and 2021b). These competences are essential to control emotions in different contexts, including educational (Cordeiro et al., 2021). SEE also contributes to understanding others' emotions, to developing empathy and to promoting positive social relationships, which benefits personal and interpersonal well-being.

The social dimension of SEE is effective if combined with certain methodologies. In this sense, promoting cooperative learning (CL) or project-based learning (PBL) are effective ways of helping students to develop social and emotional competences while they learn because they have to interact with and help each other while they prepare the cooperative tasks (Llorent et al., 2022). The didactic proposal presented in this article is framed on CL due to its potential to promote social interactions (Keramati & Gillies, 2021). CL promotes working in pairs or small groups so that students share resources and join efforts to improve their learning and that of the team members (Johnson & Johnson, 2006; Johnson et al., 2008). Therefore, CL is the methodology chosen in this study to frame oral presentations in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) because it favours social relationships among students and gives them a central role in their learning (Llorent et al., 2022).

A core aspect in CL is the development of different types of competences at the same time that students acquire the content of the subject (Martínez Lirola, 2021). This will have an effect on students' social responsibility and on their development as global citizens who are critical and committed to the social demands at the same time that they are able to manage their emotions. In fact, CL is useful for solving conflicts and for respecting others' opinions, which are essential aspects in effective communication and SEE as crucial aspects of the oral presentations.

This study is justified because education at all levels is mainly based on cognitive aspects, whereas multiple competences and especially the emotional ones are ignored. Consequently, it is essential to use an integral approach by designing activities that enhance the development of emotional competences such as cooperative oral presentations. Thus, the differences between cognitive and emotional aspects are overcome at the same time that emotional education and well-being are developed, which empowers people for life (Bisquerra & Pérez-Escoda, 2007).

The main objectives of this study are: (1) to describe the design and implementation of a pedagogical experience integrating cooperative oral presentations and emotional education; (2) to explore students' reflections on emotional competences and prosocial behavior; and (3) to analyse students' perceptions of their participation in this experience. The main research question guiding this study is the following: how do students perceive and experience the development of emotional competences during cooperative oral presentations in higher education?

Theoretical Framework

This section is divided in two sub-sections: the first one focuses on socio-emotional education. The fact that the development of this framework is connected with social interactions and relationships justifies that the second subsection focuses on cooperative learning, because students use this methodology to prepare the oral presentations.

Socio-emotional Education

Social-emotional education is an educational framework that aims to promote emotional development as a complement to students' cognitive development (Cefai et al., 2018). It should be continuous and permanent so that it can awaken students' intellectual curiosity to explore the importance of emotions and their effect in social situations. SEE follows a practical methodology (e.g., group dynamics, self-reflection, dialogic reason, games, relaxation, breathing) in order to promote the development of emotional competences (Bisquerra & Hernández, 2017). These are understood as a set of knowledge, skills, attitudes, procedures and behaviors that allow understanding, expressing and appropriately regulating emotional phenomena. Emotional competences are essential for effective interactions, as they involve caring for others and developing empathy, following Llorent et al. (2022):

Social and emotional competences are usually accompanied by a key factor in the recognition and understanding of others, such as empathy (Allemand et al., 2015), which is made up of two dimensions (Jolliffe & Farrington, 2006): affective empathy and cognitive empathy. Thus, literacy competence and social and emotional competences are important competences for ensuring desirable social interaction. For this reason, it is necessary to develop these competencies as early as Primary Education (pp. 102-103).

The term emotional intelligence (EI) began to be used in the 1960s, Van Ghent being the author responsible (Mayer et al., 2004). In the 1990s, the psychologists Salovey and Mayer (1990), developed the definition and principles of EI. According to Salovey and Mayer (1997):

EI includes the ability to accurately perceive, value, and express emotion; the ability to access and/or generate feelings when they facilitate thoughts; the ability to understand emotion and emotional knowledge; and the ability to regulate emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth (p. 4).

The book by Howard Gardner, *Frames of Mind* (1983), was influential for Salovey and Mayer's work due to the establishment of the theory of multiple intelligences. In fact, Salovey and Mayer (1990) developed the concept of EI influenced by the research on multiple intelligences. This theory postulates the idea that each person has seven types of intelligence that help establish relationships with the environment. Interpersonal intelligence (relationships that people establish with each other) and intrapersonal intelligence (knowledge of oneself and one's processes) appear among the different types of intelligence; both are clearly connected with SEE. The union of these two types of intelligence results in what is known today as EI.

Finally, in 1995, Goleman published the first edition of his book *Emotional Intelligence*, which was also influential in Mayer and Salovey's work (1997) and contributed to the dissemination of the concept EI. Thus, the research of Salovey and Mayer (1990), Mayer and Salovey (1997), Mayer et al. (2000, 2004, 2016), Gardner (1993) and Sternberg (1990, 2000) is representative of the advances in the reformulation of the concept of emotional intelligence, especially thanks to Gardner's theory of

multiple intelligences (1983). These authors emphasize that understanding emotions contributes to regulating them and to being more balanced in life.

Numerous studies have contributed to emotional education in the last decades (Bar-On, 1997; Bar-On & Parker, 2000; Bar-On et al., 2007; Mayer et al., 2003). Thus, there are various conceptions under the name of EI that allow understanding emotional intelligence in at least three forms: as a cultural movement, as a personality trait and as a mental capacity (Mayer et al., 2000). Bisquerra has contributed to SEE in Spain. The author (2003) understands emotional competences as the “set of knowledge, abilities, skills and attitudes necessary to understand, express and appropriately regulate emotional phenomena” (p. 22).

Bisquerra considers that emotional competences are an essential part of effective and responsible citizenship and that mastering them involves greater chances of success in life (Bisquerra, 2003; 2015; 2018). Furthermore, he highlights that many aspects favoured by emotional competences can be beneficial for students’ lives, such as: “learning processes, interpersonal relationships, problem solving, obtaining and maintaining a job, etc.” (Bisquerra & Pérez, 2007).² According to these authors (2007), emotional competences are divided into five blocks: emotional awareness, emotional regulation, emotional autonomy, social competence, and competences for life and well-being.

SEE has evolved in the last decades not only because emotional education programs have been related to the improvement of social competences such as the ability to perceive, manage or understand emotions (Fernández-Berrocal & Ruiz, 2008), but also because better results are observed in academic performance (Fernández-Berrocal & Extremera, 2009; Osher et al., 2018). In addition, SEE is useful in preventing interpersonal conflicts, thus contributing to creating peaceful educational environments (Muñoz-Prieto, 2017). This is a way of offering integral formation so that students also focus on values that are essential in their lives (Bisquerra, 2015).

The importance of addressing students’ social-emotional development is recognized by policy makers, educators and researchers. Thus, designing activities based on SEE requires teachers to receive some training on this pedagogical framework and to be aware of the importance of emotional intelligence and emotional competences (Costa Rodríguez et al., 2021). In fact, recent studies reinforce the benefits of SEE for teachers. For instance, receiving training on emotional education favours teachers’ motivation and offers them skills to face challenges in and outside the classroom (Masid Blanco & Planelles Almeida, 2025; Mérida-López et al., 2020; Ortiz & Garzón-Duarte, 2025).

Other studies focus on the effect on teachers’ emotional education in the classroom (Extremera et al., 2019) or on its effect to be resilient and have a happy life as teachers (Rodríguez-Donaire et al., 2020). Nevertheless, most teachers do not normally receive training in developing social and emotional skills in their teaching (Lapidot-Lefler, 2022). In fact, the majority of the training programs in emotional competences focus on primary school teachers (Echeverría et al., 2020; Izquierdo et al., 2022; Pérez López & Gómez Hurtado, 2021; Sánchez-Camacho & Grané-Oro, 2022). This is a

²Author’s translation. The original quotation is: “los procesos de aprendizaje, las relaciones interpersonales, la solución de problemas, la consecución y mantenimiento de un puesto de trabajo, etc.” (Bisquerra & Pérez, 2007, p. 69).

missed opportunity, because SEE can benefit the mental health and the academic performance of students at all levels (García-Herrero et al., 2024).

A common critique of curricula that include emotional aspects is that they sacrifice academic learning in favour of emotional learning (Montalvo-García, 2021). In such a climate, it becomes important for the social and emotional curricula to demonstrate their effect on academic performance. For instance, Melani et al. (2020) show that incorporating social emotional learning aspects such as motivation, attitude or anxiety in learning EFL benefits students' interactions.

Cooperative learning

The application of the principles of SEE requires an active methodology that allows students to learn by doing and interacting with their peers (Crous et al, 2024). This will contribute to the development of social and emotional competences. For this reason, cooperative learning has been chosen due to its convenience in working on different competences such as cooperation or communication in oral presentations (Yüce & Curle, 2025). They are crucial in interpersonal relationships, which are essential for life and for the labour market (Martínez Lirola, 2021). The selection of this methodology implies that students and teachers share responsibility, so that egalitarian relationships are strengthened by offering learners the opportunity to manage their learning and take decisions while they learn. These are relevant aspects not only during their learning process but also for their personal life and for their incorporation into the labour market (Johnson & Johnson, 2004; Martínez Lirola, 2021).

Cooperative learning encourages students to work with their classmates in order to achieve a common goal, that is, seeking their own benefit and that of the group (Prieto Navarro, 2007; Saavedra Serrano, 2018). This implies that they become the protagonists of the teaching-learning process and the entire group is responsible for the final work. Consequently, it is necessary to negotiate, to dialogue, to discuss, to distribute tasks, to take decisions and to establish relationships between theory and practice during the learning process. Thus, social competences that are useful both in the subject and in the labour market are developed (Escalona Pardo et al., 2020; Larraz et al. al., 2017). Opting for a cooperative methodology enhances students' interaction and gives them an active role while learning. In this way, the teaching-learning process contributes to preparing committed professionals, a fact that helps students grow as active citizens, because they learn by doing through a cooperative methodology (Johnson et al., 2007; Martínez Lirola, 2021).

Although the studies already mentioned report that CL can enhance students' motivation, engagement and perceptions of enjoyment when compared with more teacher-centred approaches, other research shows that these positive attitudes do not necessarily translate into superior learning gains or achievement outcomes. In fact, there are studies that offer a critical view of CL by highlighting that while supporting the validity of CL and despite it being perceived as fun and engaging, actual learning is not different from traditional learning (Capara & Tarimb, 2015; Chang & Brickman, 2018; Johnson & Johnson, 2014). For instance, Chang and Brickman (2018) focus on the limitations of group work based on students' opinions after working on a cooperative methodology. The findings of these studies suggest that the effectiveness of CL

depends on how it is designed and assessed, as well as on group dynamics and individual accountability, rather than on collaboration per se. In fact, Johnson and Johnson (2014) offer a synthesis of positive, but not uniformly superior, effects of CL in the teaching-learning process.

Following Johnson et al. (1998), the main principles of CL are: positive interdependence thanks to which students share resources and goals; individual responsibility that affects the final result; face-to-face communication that enhances information exchange and mutual help; interpersonal skills that allow conflict solving, assertive communication and decision making, among others; and reflection on work that allows assessing achievements and observing areas for improvement. Kagan (1999) adds equal participation as an aspect that facilitates shy students' participation and simultaneous interaction that favours students being active throughout the learning process (students are active at any time).

Methodology

Context and Participants

This study has been carried out with students enrolled in a mandatory six-credit subject to learn EFL during the first semester of the degree in English Studies at a Spanish university. The objective is that students develop the different skills in English (listening, speaking, reading, writing and interaction), acquire vocabulary and delve into the grammar of C1 level (Council of Europe, 2020). These areas will continue being developed in the second semester in another English language subject.

The subject was taught for four hours a week: the first one was dedicated to academic writing and vocabulary, the second hour focused on grammar. The last two hours were used to work mainly on oral and listening skills; the didactic proposal presented in this article is framed in these skills.

There were 81 people enrolled in the subject in the 2024–2025 academic year (63 women and 18 men), whose ages are between 20 and 23. The students had studied English in high school and in the two previous years of the degree. The majority of students want to become primary or secondary teachers or to do work related to translation in companies.

Instruments

Two instruments have been used to carry out this study. First, an anonymous questionnaire in *Google Forms* was completed by students at the end of the semester. This consists of 9 questions (3 open, 2 dichotomous, 1 multiple choice and 3 that use a Likert scale) paying attention to the emotions, organization and other aspects related to SEE. The design of the questionnaire is based on previous literature on socio-emotional learning (Bar-On, 1997; Bar-On et al., 2007) and it was checked by two experts in language education and SEE to ensure content validity.

The questionnaire measures students' emotional responses to the oral presentations (e.g., joy, anxiety, frustration, empathy), their perceived self-management and emotional

intelligence (e.g., control of emotions, development of emotional literacy and problem-solving skills), and their perceptions of organizational and pedagogical (e.g., group organization, task division, awareness of emotional education, and suggestions for future improvement). Specifically, the multiple choice question (1) and the open-ended questions (3, 4, 9) captured qualitative insights into experienced emotions, justifications for emotional management, group dynamics, and future learning needs. Dichotomous items (2, 8) assessed satisfaction with emotional intelligence management and awareness of emotional education goals, while Likert-scale questions (5, 6, 7) evaluated self-perceived improvements in problem-solving, emotion control, and emotional intelligence on a 1-5 scale.

The qualitative information from the open-ended questions in the questionnaire and from the teacher's notes was analyzed using thematic content analysis. First, all qualitative responses were read several times for familiarization; then, initial codes were generated inductively to capture recurrent ideas related to emotions, organization and perceived learning, for instance specific emotions like "joy" or "frustration" from question 1 or justifications like "group conflicts" from question 3. Codes were collated into broader themes such as positive emotions (joy, empathy), negative emotions (anxiety, anger), organizational challenges (task division, leadership issues from question 4), and future improvement areas (e.g., better emotion regulation from question 9).

The teacher's field notes, taken throughout the semester during classroom sessions and oral presentations, were coded using the same scheme and used to triangulate students' self-reports, for instance, corroborating reported frustrations in questions 3 and 4 with observed group dynamics, or highlighting unreported strengths like spontaneous empathy. This combination of student-generated data and teacher observations strengthens the credibility of the qualitative findings and supports a richer interpretation of the quantitative data.

Students were invited to complete the questionnaire anonymously, and 53 students did so. Regarding ethical considerations, students were informed about the aims of the study, the voluntary nature of their participation, confidentiality, and their right to withdraw at any time without academic consequences. The data obtained were statistically analyzed using Excel software (Microsoft Office), in order to obtain univariate statistical parameters.

Second, a rubric was also completed by the students and the researcher whose results will be discussed in section 4.2 (see Table 1). The rubric is based on different socio-emotional competences proposed by Durlak et al. (2015) that students could apply to the preparation and participation in the oral presentations: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and ability to take responsible decisions. The rubric data were analyzed by calculating the percentage distribution of student responses across a 5-point Likert scale (1=Strongly disagree to 5=Strongly agree) for each socio-emotional competence. Frequencies were computed for the different items in order to observe students' perceptions of the socio-emotional skills under analysis.

Procedure

The teacher asked the students to organize themselves into groups of about four people in order to actively participate in the teaching-learning process. The students were given freedom to organize the groups so that they decided with whom they wanted to work. Each group had to prepare a cooperative oral presentation and debate based on a social topic so that they could delve into global topics. For instance, the teacher referred to the global topics proposed by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and established connections between them and Global Citizenship Education (GCE). This pedagogical framework was chosen because English is a lingua franca, and many students will work abroad, which means that they need to be global citizens. Thus, the teacher proposed that students explore global topics at a local and a global level. Students began presenting their oral presentations in the fourth week of the semester, so that they could have time to organize and apply what they had learned in the first weeks.

In the first three weeks of the semester, the teacher explained the main characteristics of an effective oral presentation using PowerPoint presentations. After that, the teacher shared several videos with different speakers giving a presentation, so that the students could analyze the main positive aspects and points that the speakers could improve on. The teacher also explained how to cite sources following the APA format in presentations. In these weeks, the teacher designed debates based on the SDGs such as gender equality, poverty or education, which were connected with the main aspects of GCE and the SDGs.

The teacher emphasized that the debates that should follow the cooperative presentations should not just consist of asking questions about the topic of the oral presentation. In fact, the debate is a teaching technique that promotes creativity, because it can be organized in different ways. Therefore, the teacher offered the students some techniques to prepare for cooperative debates, including role-play and the preparation of short dramatizations.

Additionally, the teacher explained several cooperative techniques that could be used to prepare successful debates, such as the following: students were numbered 1 and 2 to divide the classroom into two large groups; students with number 1 would be in favour of the topic under discussion, and students with number 2 would be against it. Another technique consisted on asking five students to be volunteers to choose the classmates they wanted to work with. Each group had to think about and discuss the answers to several questions. Once they discussed in small groups, the answers were shared in front of everyone by a group leader chosen by the group. The purpose of these techniques was to promote communication and interaction, and the development of different skills and critical thinking.

The teacher reinforced some aspects that each oral presentation should take into account: 1) it had to be based on a social topic; 2) it had to be cooperative; 3) it had to include bibliographical references; 4) it had to show good time management because each student had to speak for ten minutes. In addition, the teacher reached a consensus with the students on the main aspects to take into account when evaluating the oral presentations. Next, a rubric was prepared considering the following aspects: grammar and syntax (seven points), fluency (seven points), organization and

investigation (five points), body language and interaction with the public (three points) and visual devices and multimodality used in the presentation (three points). The oral presentation was a very important activity in the teaching-learning process, because it was worth 30% of the final grade.

The day before the oral presentation, students had to hand in an outline with the following information through Cloud (the platform offered by the University for interaction between students and teachers): the names of the group members, a list of the main sections of the oral presentation, a section dedicated to vocabulary with at least ten words that had been learned in preparation of the topic, some questions to be discussed in the classroom and the main bibliographical references used to prepare the presentation.

Once the oral presentation was made and students received comments from the teacher, they had to organize a debate based on the same topic as the oral presentation. The purpose of this activity was to help students delve into the topic of study and the intercultural aspects related to it. This activity was very useful in promoting the acquisition of essential social skills in the subject such as communication, leadership and conflict resolution. One of the main objectives of the debate was to give students the opportunity to have control of the classroom, paying attention to the importance of interaction and classroom management.

The debates promoted communication because the students in charge of them had to encourage interaction between their classmates. It was important to encourage all students to express their opinions. In fact, communication is an essential competence in EFL. Therefore, the teaching-learning process was designed to offer students as many opportunities as possible to participate in the debates, so that they could use English in formal and informal contexts with the teacher's help. Therefore, the topic was designed to give students opportunities to express their opinions in front of their classmates and to disagree respectfully. The teacher emphasized that they could learn by listening to students with very different opinions.

Leadership was also promoted because the students who organized the debate had to prepare the questions and resources (some students used videos to highlight a particular aspect or to make connections between the oral presentations and the debates), to manage the time and to ensure that everyone participated while promoting respect for different opinions, among others. Additionally, sometimes there were conflicts because students did not agree. When this happened, the teacher reinforced that differences are enriching and that there is always something to learn from others' opinions. The different social competences mentioned are important for the labour market.

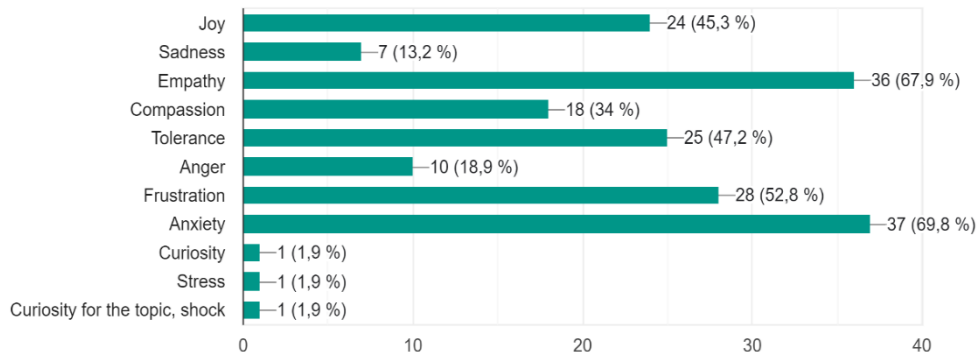
Results

Results of the Questionnaire

This section presents the results of the questionnaire and the rubric that students completed at the end of the semester. Question 1 asked students about the main emotions that they had experienced during the preparation of the oral presentations.

Although there are answers in all the emotions, the ones that predominate are anxiety (69,8%), empathy (67,9%) and tolerance (47,2%).

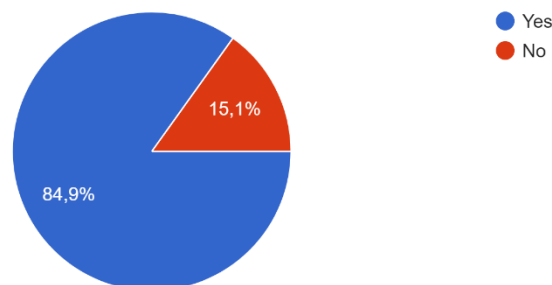
Figure 1. Answers to Question 1



Source: Own creation.

In the second question students were asked if they were happy with the way they had managed emotions/emotional intelligence during the preparation of the oral presentations. The majority (84,9%) offered a positive answer, which contrasts with the 15,1% who offered a negative one. The negative answers show that it is important to refer to emotions in the classroom in an explicit way due to their importance in learning.

Figure 2. Answers to Question 2



Source: Own creation.

When students were asked to justify their answers in question 3, the main reasons mentioned by those who answered no are that the fact that the oral presentations have to be presented in the classroom causes anxiety that is difficult to control at times. Having difficulties finding information or organising it is also mentioned. Finally, students pointed out that having disagreements or misunderstanding among the group members was also a cause of anxiety.

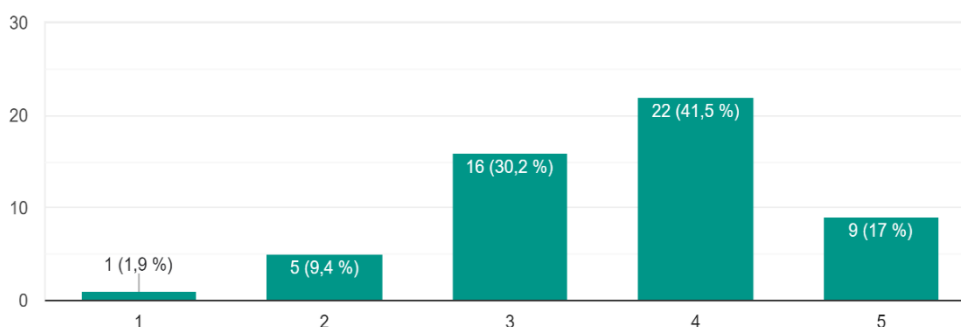
Students who offered positive answers made reference to the positive relationships between group members, to having practiced the oral presentation in advance in order

to feel confident or to having a strong personality. There were also references to the classmates' support in order to feel confident and to the fact of being well prepared and organised. Student also mentioned that their commitment to the topic they had chosen also helped them to be focused and concentrate on the task.

When students were asked about the organization of the presentation in question 4, most mentioned that they started with brainstorming. However, there were students who explained that each student organised her/his ideas at home and they were shared in order to advance in the organization of the presentation. Some of them mentioned that there was no group leader, just clear task division. In other cases, they said that the leader was a student who has had this role in other subjects, somebody who offered herself/himself or the person who proposed the social topic to work on.

Question number 5 asked students if they thought that they had improved their problem-solving skills, which includes solving conflicts in the groups during the preparation of the oral presentations. As Figure 3 shows, the majority of the answers are between 3 and 4 in the Likert scale. Nevertheless, the fact that there are also answers in 5, 2 and even one answer in 1 shows that there are significant differences in the manner that students use these skills.

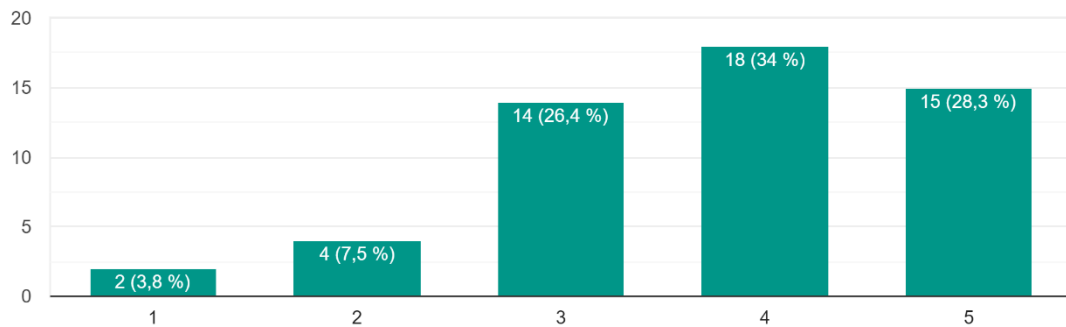
Figure 3. Answers to Question 5



Source: Own creation.

To question 6, more than half of students choose 4 and 5 when they were asked if they managed the control of their emotions during the preparation of the oral presentations. However, the fact that 26,4% of students chose 3 and there are a few answers in 2 and 1 shows that the control of emotions is an area that needs to be developed, so that students can improve their well-being, especially when there are conflicts in the groups.

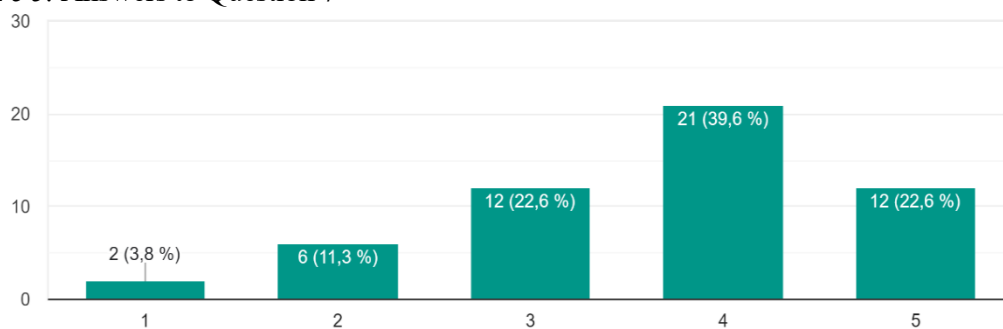
Figure 4. Answers to Question 6



Source: Own creation.

Similarly, in question number 7, more than half of the students chose 4 and 5 when they were asked about the improvement of their emotional intelligence, which includes the development of emotional literacy, during the preparation of the oral presentations. It is also observed that there are answers in 1, 2 and 3, which confirms that this is an area that needs to be developed by many students.

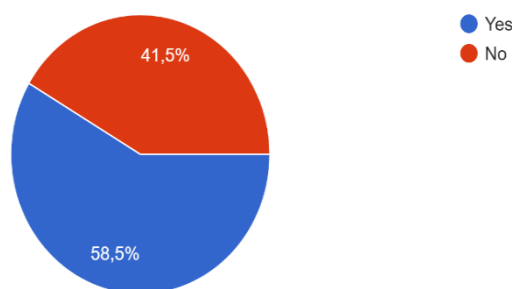
Figure 5. Answers to Question 7



Source: Own creation.

In question 8, students were asked if they were aware of working on emotional education during the preparation of the oral presentations. More than half of students (58,5%) offered a positive answer, in contrast with 41,5%, who answered no. This result shows that, although emotions were present through the preparation of the cooperative oral presentations, many students did not have enough knowledge to establish connections between aspects such as negotiation or conflict solving and emotional education. Thus, it is necessary to provide specific examples of what is involved in this educational framework, so that students can perceive the said connections while they learn.

Figure 5. Answers to Question 8



Source: Own creation.

Finally, in question 9, students were asked how they would like to improve their emotional intelligence in the future. Many students pointed out that they would like to learn more about emotional education and how to control their emotions. They mentioned specific needs; e.g., they need to learn techniques to be more positive, to feel less anxiety, to regulate emotions. Several students mentioned that they needed to continue working on self-awareness and self-management. Some students indicated that working in a cooperative way will help them be aware of their emotions and manage them better due to the importance that is given to interaction and cooperation in this methodology.

The current analysis reveals interconnected patterns across emotional experiences, self-perceived growth, and collaborative processes during oral presentation preparation. Predominant emotions included anxiety (69.8%), closely followed by empathy (67.9%) and tolerance (47.2%) in Question 1, which align with the 15.1% negative responses in Question 2 on emotion management, often justified in Question 3 by classroom presentation stress, information organization challenges, and group disagreements. Despite this, 84.9% reported overall satisfaction with their emotional handling, suggesting resilience factors like positive group relationships, advance practice, and topic commitment (Question 3 positive justifications) buffered anxiety.

Likert-scale responses indicate moderate to strong self-perceived improvements, with majorities selecting 4–5 for emotional control (Question 6), emotional intelligence growth (Question 7), and problem-solving including conflict resolution (Question 5), though variability (e.g., outliers down to 1 in Question 5) highlights individual differences tied to group dynamics described in Question 4 (e.g., brainstorming, task division, or emergent leaders). A key relational insight emerges in Question 8, where 58.5% recognized emotional education in their work versus 41.5% who did not, implying that explicit connections between negotiation and conflict-solving and socio-emotional skills were not universally perceived. Question 9 responses reinforce this, with students requesting targeted training in anxiety regulation, positivity techniques, self-awareness, and self-management.

These findings suggest a relational pathway: high-arousal emotions (anxiety) co-occurred with prosocial ones (empathy/tolerance), fostering moderate skill gains (Likert modes at 4), yet gaps in meta-awareness (Question 8). Positive management (Question 2) correlated qualitatively with preparatory strategies (Question 4) and group protective factors (Question 3), while future needs (Question 9) mirror areas of

relative weakness (26.4% neutral on emotional control in Question 6). This descriptive overview suggests that cooperative oral presentations are emotionally stimulating yet inconsistently effective, calling for inferential analyses (e.g., correlations between anxiety in Question 1 and variability in problem-solving from Question 5) to achieve stronger validation.

The results presented above should be interpreted as descriptive patterns of students' perceptions rather than as evidence of causal relationships. The data reflect how participants reported experiencing emotions, group dynamics, and perceived skill development within this specific pedagogical context. Consequently, the findings provide insight into tendencies and variability among students, without allowing conclusions about the direct impact or effectiveness of the didactic proposal.

Results of the Rubric

This section offers the answers to the rubric that the students completed once the oral presentations were done. As mentioned, it includes crucial socio-emotional skills based on Durlak et al. (2015), as Table 1 shows.

Table 1. Rubric on Socio-emotional Skills

Aspects to measure. Items	1 Strongly disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neutral	4 Agree	5 Strongly agree
1. Self-awareness		5,7%	15,1%	34%	45,3%
2. Self-management	3,8%	5,7%	30,2%	30,2%	30,2%
3. Social awareness	1,9%		18,9%	28,3%	50,9%
4. Relationship skills		1,9%	15,1%	54,7%	28,3%
5. Ability to take responsible decisions			22,6%	39,6%	37,7%

Source: Own creation.

Regarding self-awareness (the ability to understand one's own emotions, personal goals and values), it is significant that more than 75% of the answers are between 4 and 5, which shows that the oral presentations were very effective to help students to be aware of their emotions. In addition, the fact that around of 20% chose 2 and 3 in the scale show that maybe the teacher should have pointed out the importance of observing emotions during the task preparation.

Students' answers in self-management (the ability to regulate affect and calming oneself down) show that most of the answers are in 3, 4 and 5 on the scale, exactly with the same percentage. These results and the fact that there are very few answers in 1 and 2 on the scale confirm that students were able to manage their emotions in the cooperative groups and were able to find solutions to the conflicts that appeared while they prepared the presentations.

Considering social awareness (the ability to understand others and take the perspective of those with different backgrounds and cultures, and to act with empathy and compassion), more than 50% of the answers are 5 on the scale, which shows the effectiveness of framing the oral presentations on social topics. This is also reinforced with the almost 30% of answers in 4. The fact that students had to do research on the

social topic chosen for the oral presentation is an effective way to raise awareness on global issues and their importance for the development of the skills expected in a global citizen.

Regarding relationship skills (the ability to communicate clearly, to negotiate and to seek help, when needed), the fact that more than 80% of the answers are between 4 and 5 on the scale shows that students are very aware of having developed these skills, because the oral presentations were cooperative and the final product was all students' responsibility. It is likely that the few answers in 3 and the answer in 2 were provided by students who had difficulty solving conflicts or disagreements in the groups.

Similarly, the cooperative methodology chosen has an effect on the way students develop the ability to take responsible decisions. The majority of the answers are between 4 and 5 on the scale, which confirms that students are content with the decisions taken in the groups related to the choice of the social topic, the organization of the information, the references selected and other aspects.

The results of the rubric confirm that the oral presentations that students prepared during the semester favour the development of the socio-emotional skills proposed by Durlak et al. (2015). In fact, the said presentations do not only allow students to practise the different skills in English (mainly oral while presenting and written while preparing the presentations), but they are also useful to put into practise the different items presented in Table 1 due to the social and interpersonal nature of the presentations.

The rubric results, structured around Durlak et al.'s (2015) socio-emotional skills framework, demonstrate consistently positive self-perceptions of growth following collaborative oral presentations, with over 75% of responses in the agree/strongly agree range (4–5) across most domains. Low disagreement rates (under 6% in 1–2 for all items) indicate broad perceived efficacy, though neutral responses (15–34%) reveal areas of uncertainty, particularly in self-awareness (20.8% in 2–3) and self-management (34.9% neutral or below). A clear relational hierarchy emerges: interpersonal skills outperformed intrapersonal ones, with social awareness (50.9% at 5) and relationship skills exceeding self-management (30.2% at 5). This pattern aligns with the cooperative nature of presentations since they require negotiation, shared responsibility, and perspective-taking on social topics. These involve relational gains while intrapersonal regulation showed more variability such as the results of self-awareness, self-management or the ability to take decisions show (see Table 1).

Overall, the rubric results illustrate students' self-reported perceptions of their socio-emotional competences in the context of cooperative oral presentations. These findings suggest that students tended to associate the activity with the development of interpersonal and, to a lesser extent, intrapersonal skills. However, as these data are based on self-perception and collected within a single instructional context, they should be understood as indicative of students' experiences rather than as objective measures of competence development.

Discussion

The findings of this study provide an exploratory account of how students perceive and experience socio-emotional learning within cooperative oral presentations. The results suggest that this type of activity creates opportunities for interaction, negotiation, and emotional engagement, which are consistent with key principles of socio-emotional education (Mayer & Salovey, 1997; Salovey & Meyer, 1997). Oral presentations also favour the integration of multiple intelligences (Gardner, 1983) because students can observe similarities and differences between the different types of intelligences, observing how they are more or less developed in each classmate. In fact, the relationships that students have to establish with their classmates to prepare the oral presentation are connected with interpersonal intelligence, which is clearly associated with SEE. Thus, framing the cooperative oral presentations that students had to prepare every week on emotional education has contributed to the development of emotional competences at the same time that students acquire the content and skills of the subject (Cefai et al., 2018). Rather than demonstrating effectiveness, the data illustrate how students interpret these experiences and the meanings they attribute to their emotional and collaborative processes.

From a pedagogical perspective, the didactic proposal presented in this article offers a structured way of integrating socio-emotional education into EFL instruction. The combination of cooperative learning, oral communication, and reflection on social topics appears to facilitate contexts in which students report engaging with both linguistic and emotional dimensions of learning (Muñoz-Prieto, 2017; Osher et al., 2018). These findings align with previous literature (Melani et al., 2020; Montalvo-García, 2021), highlighting the potential of active methodologies to support holistic education, while also reinforcing the need to consider variability in students' experiences.

The didactic proposal described in this study illustrates how socio-emotional and linguistic elements can be integrated within the same learning experience. Students' responses suggest that they perceived connections between emotional competences and their engagement with academic tasks. However, these perceptions should not be interpreted as evidence of improved academic performance, but rather as indications of how students make sense of their learning processes. In fact, the teaching proposal presented has pedagogical value in its design, implementation and classroom applicability.

In agreement with authors such as Costa Rodríguez et al. (2021), Extremera et al. (2019), Mérida-López et al. (2020) and Ortiz and Garzón-Duarte, 2025, we confirm that the role of the teacher has been essential in guiding students when delving into aspects of emotional intelligence/education and emphasizing the importance of combining the acquisition of content, skills and emotional competences so that students' training is holistic. In addition, following Bisquerra (2015, 2018) the teacher has had a central role in establishing connections between emotional competences and responsible citizenship because students have paid attention to the relationships and responsibilities of all group members.

The preparation of cooperative oral presentations has encouraged interaction and the development of different social skills, among which communication and

cooperation predominate due to the practical nature of the subject in general and oral presentations in particular (Martínez Lirola, 2021). In this sense, we agree with authors such as Escalona Pardo et al. (2020) and Larraz et al. (2017) in that the need to negotiate or to take decisions while preparing the oral presentations directly affects the development of social skills that students need for life in general and for the labour market in particular. Thus, students can apply theory to practice, manage their own learning and see relationships between what they learn and social demands. Consequently, students grow as active citizens and develop the capabilities to influence society (Johnson & Johnson, 2004; Martínez Lirola, 2021).

We agree with Prieto Navarro (2007) and Saavedra Serrano (2018) that, thanks to cooperation in groups, learning does not only take place individually because each person who makes up the cooperative group contributes to the learning of their peers. This is an essential aspect in cooperative learning, because the final oral presentation is the result of the sum of the work of all members. Thus, the principles of CL (vid. 2.2) used in the subject have matched the practical aspects of SEE applied in the didactic proposal presented in this article, where group dynamics and self-reflection, among other aspects have played an important role in the development of emotional competences (Bisquerra & Hernández Paniello, 2017).

The results also point to the importance of instructional design in cooperative learning contexts. This study shows that although participants reported high levels of motivation, engagement and enjoyment when working collaboratively, these positive attitudes did not systematically translate into superior learning gains when compared with more traditional, teacher-centred or individual work (Johnson & Johnson, 2014). Students' experiences varied depending on factors such as group dynamics, task organization, and individual participation. This variability highlights that cooperative learning does not lead to uniform outcomes and should be carefully structured to support both interaction and individual accountability. Hence, while students often perceive cooperative tasks as fun and socially rewarding, their actual performance is not necessarily better than under traditional conditions (Capara & Tarimb, 2015; Johnson & Johnson, 2014; Chang & Brickman, 2018). Consequently, the effectiveness of CL depends less on collaboration per se and more on how collaborative tasks are structured and assessed, as well as on the quality of group dynamics and individual accountability. In line with Johnson and Johnson's (2014), this study confirms the positive, but not uniformly superior outcomes for CL. It also suggests that CL should be designed and implemented with caution, ensuring that its motivational advantages are coupled with conditions that genuinely foster deeper learning. In this sense, the present study contributes a descriptive perspective that complements previous research by focusing on students' voices and lived experiences.

Conclusions

Universities are appropriate contexts to provide holistic training that prepares students to face the social challenges of the twenty-first century. In this sense, the development of social and emotional competences will benefit not only students' interpersonal relationships, but also their growth process. In addition, students can

acquire content and develop the core skills of the subject. Consequently, students develop their emotional intelligence at the same time that they reinforce the cognitive aspects of the subject.

This study has presented a descriptive and exploratory analysis of a didactic proposal integrating socio-emotional education and cooperative learning through oral presentations in higher education EFL contexts. The findings provide insight into how students perceive and experience emotional competences, group interaction, and learning processes within this pedagogical framework.

Rather than demonstrating effectiveness, the results highlight recurring patterns in students' reported experiences, such as the coexistence of anxiety and prosocial emotions, the relevance of group dynamics, and differing levels of awareness regarding emotional education. These patterns suggest that cooperative oral presentations can create meaningful contexts for engaging with socio-emotional dimensions of learning, although such engagement is not uniform across all students.

From a pedagogical perspective, the study underscores the value of intentionally designing classroom activities that integrate emotional reflection, cooperation, and communication. The proposal described may serve as a useful reference for educators interested in incorporating socio-emotional education into language teaching, particularly through structured, interactive tasks. In conclusion, this study successfully fulfils its objectives by designing and implementing a cooperative oral presentation proposal integrating socio-emotional education in EFL higher education classes, while promoting reflection on emotional competences and capturing students' largely positive opinions through a questionnaire and a rubric. The results directly address the research question since they focus on students' perceptions and experiences developing emotional competences during cooperative oral presentations.

Overall, this study contributes to the literature by offering a detailed account of students' perceptions and experiences, thereby complementing more outcome-oriented research. Future studies could build on this work by incorporating comparative designs, longitudinal approaches, or validated measurement instruments to further explore the role of socio-emotional education in higher education.

This study presents several methodological limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, the research was conducted with a single group of students within a specific academic context, which limits the generalizability of the results. The sample size and voluntary participation in the questionnaire may also have introduced self-selection bias, as students with stronger opinions or more positive experiences may have been more likely to respond.

Second, the study relies heavily on self-reported data, which reflects students' perceptions rather than objective measures of socio-emotional competence. Such data may be influenced by social desirability, recall bias, or individual differences in self-awareness. In addition, the questionnaire used was not fully validated and the study did not receive Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, which may affect the reliability and consistency of the responses. However, the purpose was merely to know students' opinion about specific aspects of the pedagogical proposal presented in this article. Participation was voluntary, and students' confidentiality was guaranteed. Third, the absence of a control group and the lack of pre- and post-intervention measures prevent any comparison or assessment of change over time. As a result, it is not

possible to determine whether the reported perceptions are specifically associated with the didactic proposal or with other contextual factors., A notable limitation of this study is that the roles of teacher and researcher were combined in the same individual, which may have introduced bias into the observations and interpretation of results. Future studies should incorporate inferential statistical analysis to test for significant differences, relationships, or group variations. Moreover, future studies should focus more specifically on students who struggled while preparing their oral presentations to explore other ways in which CL can be beneficial.

Taken together, these limitations mean that the findings should be interpreted as exploratory and context-specific. They provide insight into students' experiences but do not allow for causal conclusions or claims about effectiveness. Future research should address these limitations by incorporating more robust designs, validated instruments, and multiple contexts.

The application of cooperative learning through oral presentations, as described in this study, illustrates a pedagogical approach that integrates linguistic, social, and emotional dimensions of learning. Students' perceptions suggest that the implementation of the pedagogical proposal can foster interaction, reflection, and engagement with emotional competences, offering a meaningful framework for holistic education in higher education contexts.

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Appendix. Questionnaire

1. What emotions have you experienced during the preparation of the oral presentations?
Joy
Sadness
Empathy
Compassion
Tolerance
Anger
Frustration
Anxiety
Others, please specify
2. Are you happy with the way you have managed your emotions/emotional intelligence during the preparation of the oral presentations?
Yes
No
3. Why? Please, justify your answer.
4. How was the oral presentation organized, how did you decide the topic and the division of tasks? Did you have a leader in the group? If so, how was the leader chosen? Please, specify.
5. Up to what extend do you consider that you have improved your problem-solving skills (this includes solving conflicts in the groups) during the preparation of the oral presentations? (1 is the lowest and 5 is the highest)
1-5
6. Up to what extend do you consider that you have managed the control of your emotions during the preparation of the oral presentations?
1-5
7. Up to what extend do you consider that you have improved your emotional intelligence (this involves that you have developed emotional literacy, i.e., the ability to recognize, understand and manage your emotions) during the preparation of the oral presentations?
1-5
8. Were you aware of working on emotional education during the preparation of the oral presentations?
Yes
No
9. How would you like to improve your emotional intelligence in the future?