EXPLORING SOCIO-COGNITIVE ALIGNMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN AN EFL CLASSROOM

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Abstract

Oral participation is the process in which students express and communicate their ideas and thoughts, having opportunities to practice L2 and interact with the teacher and classmates. According to Socio-cognitive theory, alignment plays an important role when learning a L2, which considers learners' mind and body interaction with their peers and their surroundings as essential for learning. Thus, this study aimed to explore the alignment moments between a pre-service teacher and his students in an EFL classroom, as well as, the learning and participation opportunities generated by this alignment. Lesson observations were approached following micro-analysis and multimodal transcriptions. The findings described the semiotic resources such as proxemics, body posture, gazing and intonation that converged during the interaction between the pre-service teacher and students. Learning opportunities generated from the alignment moments such as participation and synchrony were also described. The study suggests benefits and further possibilities for research on alignment under a socio-cognitive approach in the field of teacher-education.

Keywords: Oral participation, Alignment, Socio-Cognitive theory, teacher-education.

Resumen

La participación oral es el proceso en el que los estudiantes expresan y comunican sus ideas y pensamientos, teniendo la oportunidad de practicar la segunda lengua e interactuar con el docente y los compañeros de clase. Según la teoría socio cognitiva, la alineación desempeña un papel importante en el aprendizaje de una segunda lengua, que considera que la interacción de la mente y el cuerpo de los alumnos con sus compañeros y su entorno es esencial para el aprendizaje. Por consiguiente, este estudio tenía como objetivo explorar los momentos de alineación entre un profesor de pregrado y sus estudiantes en un aula de inglés como lengua extranjera, así como las oportunidades de aprendizaje y participación generadas por esta alineación. Las observaciones de las clases se abordaron a través de microanálisis y transcripciones multimodales. Los resultados describieron los recursos semióticos como la proxémica, la postura corporal, la mirada y la entonación que convergieron durante la interacción entre el profesor en formación y los estudiantes. También se describieron las oportunidades de aprendizaje generadas a partir de los momentos de alineación, como la participación y la sincronía. El estudio sugiere beneficios y nuevas posibilidades de investigación sobre la alineación en el marco de un enfoque socio cognitivo en la esfera de la formación docente.

Palabras claves: Participación oral, Alineación, Teoría Socio-cognitiva, formación del profesorado.

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1. Introduction

Learning a second language has become an essential asset for communication in the globalized world. Thereafter, it is important that learners interact with each other and participate in their lessons to develop the communicative skills that are required from second language learners worldwide (Hutchison & Waters, 1987). Aware of the importance of participation in EFL classes, we pursued classroom observations to witness participation moments in an EFL lesson. However, during these observations at a public school in Montería, we became more interested in understanding how participation occurs in this context. Usually students do not get involved in the diverse oral activities the teacher brings to the classroom and they seem to be afraid or unwilling to interact with the teacher or peers (i.e. keeping quiet to teachers' questions).

In order to understand the participation phenomenon in our own classroom as a pre-service teacher, we drew on concepts from social cognitive theory (Atkinson, 2002; cf., Gee, 1992; Watson-Gegeo, 2004) which conceives L2 learning as "engagement and participation in a dynamic and changing mind–body–world continuum." (Atkinson, 2007, pg170). More specifically, we studied the workings of alignments that aided or contributed to interaction and participation in an L2 class. According to Atkinson et.al, 2007, "alignment is the complex means by which human beings effect coordinated interaction and maintain that interaction in dynamically adaptive ways" (p.169). Furthermore, Atkinson contends that alignment takes place not just between human beings, but also between

human beings and their social and physical environments (p.171). Under this socio-cognitive perspective, learning is the default process of continually aligning oneself with one's sociocognitive environment. Therefore, based on SC principles, alignment allows to perceive or witness learning as "it offers trajectories of ecological experience and repertoires of participation, gained in the process of adaptive dynamics." (Atkinson, 2007, p.172). These trajectories of experience were the focus of our study.

We aimed to explore the alignment moments between a pre-service teacher and his students during an EFL lesson, and the learning and participation opportunities generated by this alignment. This study was guided by two research questions: What semiotic resources converge during alignment moments in an EFL lesson? And what learning opportunities are generated through alignment in an EFL lesson?

This study adds to the literature and to the field of English language teaching by exploring and trying to understand how alignment takes place and builds student participation in an EFL class. Previous studies on alignment have focused on alignment in one-to-one sessions (Atkinson, 2007; Atkinson,2018; Londoño, 2019) or the specific element of affiliative behaviors in EFL classrooms (Amador & Adams, 2018). Therefore, analyzing alignment in whole-class interactions is a gap we also addressed. We also attempt to reflect on our own practice as pre-service English teachers to cater for more participation opportunities to our learners.

In chapter 2, the concepts of oral participation, socio-cognitive approach and alignment will be delved into the theoretical framework. Alongside this chapter, different research studies related to the topic of this research will be described in the literature

review. Thereafter, chapter 3 will inform about the type of research, the data collection procedures and data analysis for this study. Moreover, chapter 4 will show the findings obtained for this research in three segments. The remaining part of the paper proceeds as follows: discussions of the implications of the findings, parallel to limitations, suggestions to further research into this area and the conclusion.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1. Conceptual framework

2.1.1. Oral participation

Oral participation is the process in which students communicate their ideas orally about a specific matter to classmates and teachers inside the classroom. Lee (2007), defined it as "participation in class discussions, or oral participation, consisted of students' participation in classroom speech activities without being called on, such as expressing opinions, making recommendations, and asking questions" (p.27). In this study, oral participation is synonymous with students' involvement in oral activities in the classroom by expressing ideas, thoughts, suggestions, and responses to questioning.

Similarly, Houser & Bainbridge, (2015) argue that "engaging in oral participation makes students feel like they are learning more; certainly, students are told over and over that participation is the hallmark of a good student." (p.16). In this line of thought, learners who enroll in oral participation activities in the classroom demonstrate themselves that their learning process is working by expressing ideas about topics worked in class. In the same way, participating in oral activities contributes to students' "hallmark" of outstanding because it is believed that a good learner always gets involved in the activities carried out in the class, expresses their personal opinions, shares personal examples or experiences and participates in class discussions.

Henainia (2011) states that "oral participation in the classroom serves as a vehicle, and as an object about which questions can be raised and answers can be explored." (P.23). In other words, oral participation is a tool for learning because it allows students to clarify doubts, ask for extra information, make questions about any concern related to the topic as well as clarify concepts. Additionally, teachers believe that oral participation is beneficial for students. That is to say, that students who cooperate in oral participation activities in the classroom show how committed they are with their learning process due to their active involvement during the class. Hence, a correlation between recurrence of oral participation and commitment to learning and inquiring is expected.

A skill needs to be put into practice so as to master it. Otherwise, one might lose the ability to use it properly. More specifically, the increase of oral participation contributes not only to overcome the fear of talking in public but to acquire and improve speaking. Bearing this in mind, developing and promoting oral participation in the classroom is fundamental. All in all, to boost speaking, one needs to speak. Thereupon, to promote the frequency of participating orally in the class contributes to students' training for their future career especially to academic and speech skills (Henainia, 2011).

As Lafont (2007) says: "oral participation and the contribution of ideas involve not only information to be disseminated, but diligent practice for presenting the contribution in an easily understood oral manner" (p. 66). Hence, when participating orally, learners need to articulate ideas and opinions, so the audience understands what is being said.

Along these lines, this study will follow the concept of participation as the classroom events in which learners respond to teacher's questions, ask or give information, follow the teacher, and show their work.

2.1.2. Socio-cognitive approach

The Socio-Cognitive approach is a recent theory (Atkinson, 2002) which adopts a non-cognitivist view of learning. Unlike other SLA theories, for this approach learning does not only occur within the learners' mind as they process input, but through the continuous interaction and alignment between the mind, body and world (Atkinson, 2002; 2013).

In addition, Atkinson (2013) contends that the "individual mind and ecosocial world aren't radically separated but rather functionally integrated, and that this functional integration offers one key to understanding SLA." (p.468) In this line, the main tenets that support the SC- claim are interaction, alignment and cognition. Under this approach, cognition is reconceptualized as *adaptive intelligence*. Interaction refers not only to the linguistic but to its human nature. It contends that humans, by nature social beings, need to be in contact with the outside world, and this connection is possible through language, which in turn is created by the interaction among the participants of a context. Therefore, language and social interaction are intrinsically connected (Matsuoka et al, 2004; Atkinson, 2002; 2013).

2.1.3. Alignment

Alignment is a key guiding concept in this study. It is one of the main tenets of the Socio-Cognitive Approach to Second Language Acquisition which contends that learning occurs through subjects' adaptation to their environment (Atkinson, 2002).

Atkinson (2011) defines alignment as the "means" in which the participants of a group interact with each other to exchange tools that give meaning to social actions taking place in their setting. Thereby, they maintain relationships that strengthen interaction by "sharing information and emotions". In addition, alignment is not only understood as the relationship among human beings with others, but it can reveal the interaction that occurs with human beings with the context (space and objects) that surrounds them. In Atkinson's words, mind-body-world alignment.

Moreover, alignment is described as the "coordinated interaction" that a person keeps with the entity, either another person or an object, to maintain adaptability in the environment. In the SLA field, alignment moments between teacher and learner contribute to language learning (Atkinson et al, 2007).

There is a myriad of semiotic resources used among human beings to align their mind and body to the world. Some of these resources include embodied tools like physical orientation, eye gaze, and gesture; verbal tools like intonation and associated tools like books, pens, markers, etc. These elements can be captured through micro-analysis (Erickson, 1992) and a multimodal transcription of the data (Atkinson, ibid). Likewise, this study followed micro-analysis and a multimodal approach to the data.

Stivers (2008) defines alignment as the signaling of comprehension in interaction by the uttering of linguistic figures and modes**.** She separates affiliation from alignment as she asserts that affiliation is the signaling of evaluative stance**.** She further explains affiliation as the cues (smiling, mutual gazing and laughter) that show evaluative posture, attitude or stand. For instance, the listener's attitude and backing towards the interlocutor. In this study, we include affiliation signals within the array of different tools for alignment.

According to Levinson (2006) alignment is achieved through interactional abilities that are expressed in "turn coordination, rhythmic synchrony, projectability, and the tight interlocking of linguistic, facial, gestural, embodied, and material modalities" (P. 474).

Another important concept within alignment is the concept of synchrony, which implies a rhythmic coordination between the emitter and hearer; in synchrony, they are both connected and following everything is said or shown at the time the synergy is conducted. Not only does it consist of linguist matter as questionings, comments or ideas expressed but also of the group of gestures and movements that are coordinated during the interlocution (Levinson, 2006). Synchrony is not only perceived when interacting with another person or entity, it also occurs when aligning one's gestures with what is expressed. This concept is known as co-expressiveness, which encompasses gestures and speech. Thereby, when individuals are talking, besides using their mouth to speak, they are using their body and both match in synchrony giving meaning to the speech (McNeill, 2005). Synchrony as rhythmic coordination and co-expressiveness is another means to tracing alignment in this study.

2.2.   **Literature review**

The review of literature reported in this study is by no means systematic or extensive. However, important concepts and findings in the literature inform the gap this study addressed. For instance, it will report national and international studies related to the constructs considered in it.

Compared to socio-cultural and cognitive-interactionist theories to SLA, studies under the socio-cognitive approach are much fewer. Several of these studies have revealed the role of alignment in L2 learning. For instance, Atkinson, Churchill, Nishino & Okada (2007) sought to explore the role of alignment in SLA tutoring activities of a Japanese student and her aunt. Findings from this research showed that alignment plays an important role when learning a second language, in which associating "human existence and experience" with SLA gives the learner an opportunity to learn from their own relationship with others and the environment. Atkinson et al. (2007) also analyzed these interactions focusing on the symbiotic gestures that allowed tutor and learner's interaction and alignment with their context. The authors assert that symbiotic gesture is only one of the complex set of resources that guide ecosocial alignment and participation in SLA and suggest future research on how embodied and environmental tools configure SLA. Furthermore, Atkinson et al. (2018) analyzed how everyday interaction and modal actions/structure take place in the process of SLA of a Japanese learner, and the way this is related to alignment. The study revealed that social action and environment play an important role in the process of teaching-learning in which they must be aligned to attain learning opportunities in SLA. Both of these studies contended the importance of alignment

to L2 learning in one on one interactions. These studies have all revealed the importance of alignment in SLA for generating learning opportunities by experienced ESL tutors.

In Colombia, Arrubla, Pareja & Londoño (2019) have studied pre-service teachers' awareness of alignment to maximize learning opportunities in one on one tutoring sessions. Results indicate that despite the pre-service tutor's limited teaching experience, socio-cognitive alignment was a pedagogical aid to enhance the tutor-tutee rapport and favor learning. This study shows the awareness of alignment as a useful tool for pre-service teachers. However, no studies have focused on pre-service teachers within whole classroom interactions.

Regarding socio-cognitive studies in whole classrooms, Adams and Amador (2013) described a 10-week ethnographic and video-microanalytic study that examines the daily discourse between three infant participants, six adult participants and four teachers. Despite using a multimodal, micro analysis informed by the socio-cognitive approach, the study did not focus on alignment but affiliation. Findings revealed the affiliative responses that two teachers used in their kindergarten and secondary level class, and how these affiliation moves raised learners' self-confidence and provided learning opportunities. To our knowledge, no studies have yet explored alignment in EFL classrooms, especially during participation moments.

Studies on participation in EFL classrooms also guided this study. Most of these studies have focused on strategies or methods to enhance learners' oral participation. In this line of thoughts, a descriptive and interpretive case study conducted by Ross, Riess, Lasso & Quintero (2012) analyzed the impact of strategies and activities regarding oral

participation in introverted students at a school in Colombia. This study revealed that students' motivation and oral participation improved due to the use of cooperative language learning activities and contextualized materials. Additionally, a case study research was carried out by Perneth (2012) in a public university in Colombia focusing on describing activities used by the teacher to motivate oral participation in beginner-level English students. This research demonstrated that the teacher's methodology influenced students' motivation at oral participation. For instance, students considered that activities which imply collaborative learning and interaction tend to be more attractive and increasing participation. Regarding learners' participation in EFL classrooms, it seems that no studies have focused on exploring this phenomenon from a socio-cognitive approach.

3. Methods

This study intended to explore the alignment moments between a pre-service teacher and his students during an EFL lesson as well as to explore the learning and participation opportunities generated by this alignment. The forthcoming chapter will present the research methods, the context and the participants. Finally, it depicts in detail the data collection procedures implemented to gather the information and the way in which it was analyzed.

3.1. Type of study

The current qualitative study uses an action research design which seeks to explore the alignment moments between a pre-service teacher and his students during an EFL lesson, and the learning and participation opportunities generated by this alignment. Hine (2013) defines action research as "a process of systematic inquiry that seeks to improve social issues affecting the lives of everyday people". Moreover, in the educational field, it is considered as the process of analyzing and evaluating a school's processes and procedures to understand them and boost conditions of the teaching and learning process (Hensen et al., 1996).

On top of that, Obyrne (2016) concludes that following action research is pertinent to have in mind the action research cycle, which considers four steps for its development.

One step is "selecting a focus", in which the researchers have to identify what they want to research by establishing the goal, questions, the problem and designing the procedure. The other step is "collecting data", the moment of gathering all the information required for understanding the issue and developing what the researcher has planned. Thus, researchers are able to apply their strategies, methods and techniques required for analyzing the information that is being gathered. The third step is "analyzing and interpreting data", where researchers have to interpret and analyze the data collected and identify what patterns or trends have been common during the observation. Then, after analyzing data, the next step is "taking action". For this study, action research is a design that allows the pre-service teachers involved to understand how participation occurred in the classroom through alignment moments. Therefore, informing their practice for future classroom planning and decision making.

To conduct this research, a twofold aim is taken into account to answer the following questions:

- What semiotic resources converge during alignment moments in an EFL lesson?

- What learning opportunities are generated through alignment in an EFL lesson?

The first question is intended to describe the semiotic resources that take place during an EFL lesson. In this sense, this study analyzes the moment of participation and interaction that are facilitated by alignment. In addition, to answer the second question is pertinent to report the outcomes achieved by students when alignment was converged.

3.2.   **Context and participants**

3.2.1. Context

This research proposal was conducted at a public institution in Montería, Córdoba (Colombia). It is located in a lower middle-class neighborhood. That school is well-known for being in charge of educating a new generation of teachers, this is why it is divided into four educational levels. These are pre-school, primary school, secondary school, and Programa de Formación Complementaria. The previous one is a technological degree in which students are trained to be teachers of pre and primary schools. Since 2009 the school has been favored by Montería Bilingüe, which comprises enhancing English language learning in public institutions from Montería. Besides, this program strengthens teaching practices by making exchanges between foreigners and teachers of English for them to acquire competencies and experiences that would help them improve their teaching process.

3.2.2. Participants

The participants of this research are 46 students from sixth grade who are in at beginner or a barely A1 level. They are 26 girls and 20 boys. Their English classes are developed in an ordinary classroom without technological resources. The school does not have an English laboratory and students work based on a textbook. Although their teacher brings many activities to carry out the lesson and to have students engage in the class, few students participate orally in the activities. In other terms, they are reluctant to participate due to factors, as expressed by students in an initial focus group, such as shyness, fear of

making mistakes, to get stuck in words or do not know how to pronounce words. Specifically, this study focused on four participants as follows:

Brando is a twenty-three-year-old student who has been studying in the licentiate program of foreign language teaching at University of Córdoba for five years. His exposure to English as a foreign language (EFL) had begun in Grade 7 of secondary school, where he attended English classes for 7 hours each week. At college, Brando EFL instruction intensified to 13 to 20 hours per week, which have been directed to a communicative approach. Not only had this exposure helped him to learn English, but also to teach it. His passion for teaching started when studying in the "Programa de formación complementaria" which is a technologist program to become a teacher of pre and primary school. During this program, he gained experience to understand and face the challenges of education in pre-school and primary school. As already mentioned, his training process continued in the University, where he acquired new tools, strategies and methodologies to improve his English teaching abilities. By the time of this lesson, Brando was recently putting a practicum teacher at a public institution in Montería. He taught English 2 hours per week to three groups of sixth graders.

Luis German is an eleven-year-old student at a secondary school in Montería. His exposure to English as a foreign language began in primary school. Where lessons were book-based, and vocabulary centered. He also represented the school in a bilingual contest in another school of the city. Furthermore, he not only practiced English at school, but also, he did it at home three hours per week. Also, he reported that he worked on a book different from the one provided by school to enhance his English abilities.

Anamaría is an eleven-year old student at a public school in Montería. She has been learning English since she was in primary school, where most of the activities were engaged for 90 minutes per week and with a book-based approach. In secondary school, Anamaría has been exposed to EFL for four hours per week, which means that English lessons have intensified and have taken a Grammar focus. In addition, she only participated when being pointed out. Although she disclosed that she was interested in learning English, she did not practice it outside the classroom.

Juanito is a ten-year-old student at a public school in Montería. He had been learning English when he was in primary school in the same grade Luis and Anamaría went. Moreover, He declared his interest in learning English to his father. Thereafter, his parents enrolled him in an English course at University of Córdoba in February 2020. That is to say that, English lessons per week have intensified to 10 hours per week. This engagement with English at school and the English course has helped him feel free to participate in class. However, he expressed that in difficult topics he waited to participate until feeling confident with the topic.

3.2.3. The EFL lesson

This lesson was delivered on March 3rd, 2020 at Normal Superior de Montería School and oriented by the pre-service teacher Brando José López Carmona in 6th grade. It was a 2 hours' lesson that was intended for students to identify the members of the family, the types that exist, and to describe the one they belong to, as well as understand that there are different types of families that deserve respect. It was carried out on March 3rd, 2020.

It started at 8:15 a.m. in a 47-student's ordinary classroom that was organized in six rows of pupils. The teacher had previously pasted six images of different types of families in the classroom for the first activity. However, the class was introduced by the T greeting students and letting them know that they were going to be recorded. Then, he let students know the procedure of the class by writing it on the board. It was: first, an activity about the teacher describing pictures of families and students identifying them. Second, reading and drawing. Third, writing a description of their own families. Finally, a speaking activity. After that, the teacher highlighted that most of the English skills were going to be put into practice.

Later, the Teacher started to ask questions about two of the images of families that he had pasted on the wall. The questions were about who they were and whether they knew them or not. Then, the teacher began developing activity number one, as it had been established earlier in the procedure. He started to describe the different images in terms of the number of the members and some characteristics of them so as to give students clues for identifying and saying which family he was mentioning. The teacher moved between line number three and number four while conducting this activity. He went to the back of the classroom to say the description and then came back to the board to touch the images and ask students yes or no questions regarding their guesses. During this activity, the teacher also clarified some vocabulary regarding the topic. Students seemed to understand clearly since some of the provided examples in Spanish using them. Furthermore, the teacher corrected some pronunciation mistakes that students had when expressing some ideas.

Thereafter, he did so by repeating their statements and stressing the word that the student pronounced wrongly. The warm-up activity was concluded.

Later on, the teacher moved to the second activity of the class. The one about reading and drawing. It consisted of the teacher providing students with some pieces of paper that contained some description of a particular family. Students were asked to read the paragraph, then, draw what was in there and write the description in the notebook. Before handing in the papers, the teacher made sure that students knew some vocabulary from there. He asked them for the meaning and then provided a short definition for students to get it. He also used body language to make himself understood. Moving on, the teacher commenced to hand in students the papers. He did it from the right side of the classroom to the left one. Once he made sure all pupils had a paper, he caught their attention by raising his hand to give one more time an explanation of the instructions and add some more, about circling the members of the family they found in there. Once more, the teacher explained the new words that were in there. The teacher read one of the situations to present students with an example of what they were expected to do. Then, he established that learners were going to have 20 minutes for working on that. It is pertinent to include that some students stood up from their chairs and requested the teacher for some help or clarification, some others just raised their hands and asked him to go to their seats and clarify something. He monitored their work by walking around and checking what they were doing, asking questions or clarifying doubts.

After that, students worked on the third activity. It was about writing a description of their family based on the example they got in the papers. For this, the teacher described

himself, including his family and members to show pupils a different example, he wrote it on the board. In this case, the explanation was first given to the ones that fulfilled the second activity first. Later, the explanation was conducted to everybody. A student did the activity fast and was able to share it with their classmates by reading it in front of the class. After this, students went out to break.

After the 30-minute break, students came back to the classroom. The class was then organized in a semi-circle. It was time to share what they had written about their families. Some students volunteered; some others were reluctant to participate even when they were called on by the teacher. The teacher moved close to the students that read the descriptions they had on their notebook.

Later, the teacher wrote on the board two situations about a family being discriminated against. For that reason, students had to read them and take out their dictionaries to look up the meaning of new words. Some students called the teacher to ask for an explanation. He chose some words from the situation and asked them what they meant.

During the development of the activity, the teacher showed some letter-size flashcards of families. The teacher asked students how many people were there, who they were, and what member was the one he touched or pointed. After some minutes, the teacher started to socialize the activity. He read the situations from the board and analyzed them with the students, they talked about the new words and the general idea of the situation. Then, a student volunteered to say in front of the class what the situation was about. Later, the teacher also wrote some questions on the board to know what students thought of that

so as to know their perceptions towards respecting the different types of families. Besides, they were told to say it out loud later. Moreover, the teacher monitored their work and moved around the classroom. Finally, the teacher called on some students to participate but they did not do it. Some others volunteered while few of them did it after being asked to do it. While socializing it, it was necessary to ask students for silence since they were too talkative.

To conclude, the teacher gave the students some homework. It was about receiving a piece of paper with four more discrimination patterns families might face. Students had to paste it on the board and write their opinions about them. A date for handing out the homework was set, and students organized the classroom back in lines.

3.3.   Data collection procedures

Observation is the process of watching how living beings interact and behave in the context. In this sense, the observer is going to discover activities that people do in their daily life and figure out situations that take place in the environment (Chaleunvong, 2009; Spradley, 2016). Thereafter, observations were the main tool to identify and understand traits of alignment during class participation.

Adams (2015) contends that "focus groups enable the moderator not only to pursue detailed inquiry into existing opinions but also to obtain reactions to new ideas and conduct group brainstorming, if desired" (p. 492). At the beginning of the study, a focus group interview allowed us to get to know about students learning history and their feelings towards the English class and participation.

3.4.   Data analysis

Observation and ethnographic narratives were conducted at the beginning of the study to observe and take notes about students' natural settings and find out their participation in the classroom. We also did a focus group interview with students to learn a little bit about their learning histories and their views on participation.

We made video and audio recordings of a 50 minutes' lesson class. We did four rounds of observation which consisted of: 1). Individually observing and listening to the video and audio recording several times for identifying segments where student participation was noticeable. 2). Collectively viewing the videos and reaching agreement on the hotspots regarding student's participation. We, then, transcribed the discursive element of these moments. 3). Iteratively viewing the videos to identify more Aha moments enriched with patterns of alignment such as proxemics, face and body gestures, body posture, gazing, and intonation. We embarked on micro-analysis (Erickson, 1992) for transcribing the data at this level of granularity (Kasper & Wagner, 2012), including multimodal elements in the forms of comments and screen captures of each moment. 4). Along with an external coder/interrater, we observed these moments and their transcriptions. With her help, we identified more elements of alignment that we had overlooked. At this point, we pursued transcriptions collectively by exchanging transcripts and adding details while we continued observing these segments in the videos. This collaborative process allowed us to analyze the data, specifically to observe how alignment took place in these specific moments and all the elements that it entailed for participation to occur in this lesson.

Table 1 shows the conventions we followed for transcribing these segments:

Table 1. Conventions

Transcripts Conventions

T	Teacher
S?	Unidentified student
(())	Comments by researchers
[ ]	Mispronounced word
,	Normal pause
(.#)	Seconds pause
::	Sound/phoneme lengthening
XXX	Unintelligible talk
?.	Rising intonation followed by a pause
.	Falling intonation followed by a pause
<u>Yes</u>	Emphasis and stress
YES	Capital letters mark notably high volume

4. Findings

This study aimed at exploring the alignment moments between a pre-service teacher and his students during an EFL lesson as well as to explore the learning and participation opportunities generated by this alignment. Consequently, micro analysis of the video and audio recorded lesson revealed different traits of alignment in four specific moments we will showcase in this section. These traits of alignment converge in different semiotic resources such as linguistic clues, intonation, proxemics, gesturing and gazing. The segments are described in the following sections: alignment within a whole class interaction, class alignment and opportunities for participation through alignment.

4.1. Alignment within a whole class interaction

The following segment of the class occurred during the first 1:54 minutes of the lesson while the teacher introduced some of the different types of family that exist (nuclear, single parent, extended, childless, step family and grandparent family) through picture description. In this segment, the teacher described two family pictures (figure 1).

Figure 1. Families described.

The teacher expected learners to listen to the description in order to identify which family was being described, point it out and/or say its name. The transcript below shows the moment in which Juanito (pseudonym) engaged in the interaction and responded to the teacher's question.

Transcript 1. What family is this?

1   T   I am going to say some descriptions about that family ((slowly moves eight steps to the back of the classroom))

2   Juanito ((moves his body 90 degrees and gazes at the teacher))

3   T   For example, that family ((points to the board)) is composed by two ((raises his left index and middle finger)) members.

4   Juanito ((moves his head 90 degrees and looks at the board))

5   T   One is the husband ((points out with his left index finger))

and the other is the wife ((points out with his left index finger))

6   Juanito ((moves his head 90 degrees to his left and gazes back at the T))

7   T   What is the. What family is that ((points out the board and moves 9 steps towards it))

8   Juanito ((moves his head 90 degrees and looks back at the board))

9   Juanito The family is Dinkleberg ((points to the board))

10   T   Is this? ((touches Flanders' family picture))

11   Juanito No: ((looking at the board))

12   T   This? ((touches Dinkleberg picture))

13   Juanito Yes, yes ((looking at the board and nodding))

14   SS   [Yes

15   T   Yes::

16   T   ((moves back to the back side of the classroom))

17   T   Now, the other family is. ((raises up his left index fingers))

18   T   ((gets to the back side of the classroom))

19   Juanito((turns his head 90 degrees and gazes at the T))

20   T   One family ((still raising his fingers))

21   T   This family has a father ((raises his index right fingers))

22   T   And two sons. ((his right hand still up, and raises the middle right finger))

23   Juanito((gazes at the board))

24   T   ((raises his index finger and looks around the classroom))

25   T   What family? ((points out some Ss))

26   Juanito((points out the board and looks at the T))

        [Flanders

27   T   The flinders' yeah

As shown in the transcript above, the teacher initiated the interaction by announcing that he was going to describe the families in the picture (turn 1) moving straight from the board to the back of the classroom. While doing so, Juanito followed the teacher's actions by changing his body posture and gazing at him (turn 2). Subsequently, the teacher described one of the families by naming its members (turns 3 and 5) while pointing with his fingers and moving closer to the board. Interestingly, Juanito aligned with the teacher's actions by moving his head and trunk to face the board and gaze at him (see figure 2). The teacher then broke the question: *What family is that?* while pointing at the board and expecting students' answers. Once more, Juanito rhythmically followed the teacher's body movement rotating his head (see figure 3) and then answered the question (turn 9). For assessment purposes, the teacher first restated the question (*this*), raising his intonation and touching at the wrong picture (turn 10), to which Juanito replied *no* lengthening the

phoneme to confirm his response. Then, the teacher touched the right picture (Dinkleberg) repeating the question *this?* (turn 12) to which Juanito and other students responded yes, *yes* (turn 13). The teacher confirmed the responses (turn 14) with a lengthened yes.

Figure 2. Juanito´s gazing at the board.   **Figure 3.** Juanito following the T.

Once more, the teacher moved straight to the backside of the classroom (turn 15) at the time he started describing a new family (turns 16, 17). Synchronically, Juanito followed the teacher's movements rotating his head to his left-side and gazing at the teacher (turn 18) while he mentioned the family members (*one father, two sons*) and raising his index and middle fingers respectively (see figure 4). After the description, Juanito gazed back at the board (see figure 5) while the teacher raised his index finger looking around the class asking *What is the family?* with prolonged rising intonation. Interestingly, Juanito overlapped saying *Flanders* while pointing to the board (turn 25).
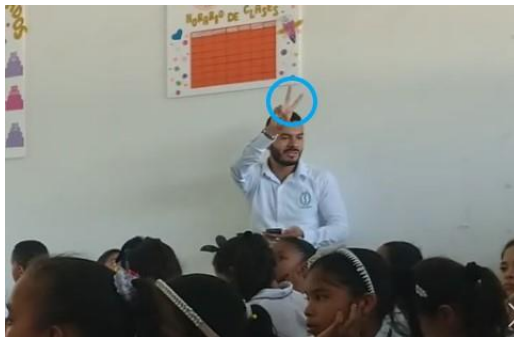
Figure 4. Teacher's description   **Figure 5.** Juanito gazing at the board

The transcript illustrates how different modes converged, generating an alignment that facilitated a learners' participation and created a learning opportunity. As previously described, such an opportunity was not only generated through the teacher's verbal scaffolding, but the gestural and proxemic resources provided by the teacher and the learner's attunement to them. It was very interesting to observe how Juanito was in synchronized coordination with the teacher by constantly changing his body posture and gaze position to engage in the interaction and eventually respond to the teacher's questions.

4.2.   Class alignment

After a 30-minute break, the teacher changed the spatial arrangement of the class having students organize in a semicircle. While the teacher moved along the classroom, he asked students to provide descriptions about their families. The transcript below shows the moment in which Luis (pseudonym) raised his hand and provided this description.

Transcript 2. Interaction between Luis and Brando

1   T: ((moves 6 steps from the board to the center of the classroom.)) ((keeps a board marker in his right hand))

2   T: Who wants to read the description?

3   T: ((raises his left hand pointing with his index finger at the ceiling and looks around the classroom))

4   S?   What

5   T   description about your family.

6   T   ((points out a student who raised a hand at the right side of the classroom))

7   S?   ((does not participate))

8   Luis   ¡Yo! (Me!) ¡Profe! (Teacher!)

9   T   ((turns his body to the left side of the classroom, gazes Luis and points him out))

10   Girls   ((move their bodies 90 degrees and gaze at Luis))

11   Luis   ((raises his hand and puts his hand on his chest, moving them up and down))

12   Luis   My family? My family. ((Moves his eyes up and down.))

13   Ss   ((maintain gaze at Luis))

14   T   ((gazes at Luis and takes his cellphone))

15   Luis   ((puts one of his hands on the chair next to him and the other in front of him.)) I am Luis ((looks at the board and shifts gaze back T))

16   T   ((looks at his cell phone))

17   Boys   ((maintain gaze at Luis))

18   Luis   I am (.3) I am 11 years old. ((Leans forward and shifted his gaze to the board; then, he gazes T))

19   T   ((maintains gaze at Luis))

20   Luis   I [live] with my mother, my father, my sister. ((Counts with the fingers of his right hand while mentioning the members of his family))

21   T   ((maintains gaze at Luis and nods))

The teacher initiated this interaction moving around the classroom asking students to read their descriptions about their families (*who wants to read the descriptio*n?) (turns 1, 3). After the teacher restated the question, (*description about your family*) (turn 5), Luis raised his hand, pointed to himself and volunteered to participate saying: Yo*, Profe* while the teacher and some students (see figure 6) rotated their body and shifted gaze at him (turn 8, 11). Luis started describing his family *(My family? my family*) (turn 12) while the teacher and two girls left-turned their trunk to gaze at him. As Luis continued the verbal description (Turns 15, 20), he rhythmically gestured with his fingers to refer to each member of the family (see figure 7) shifting his gaze from the board and the teacher and vice versa. Interestingly, students and the teacher maintained gaze at Luis during this description. To respond to Luis' response, the teacher nodded.

Figure 6. Ss gazing at Luis.   **Figure 7.** Gesture with fingers.

During this new spatial arrangement, both the teacher and the students seemed to align with Luis' intervention, as opposed to the first episode, in which students did not show such synchrony. As shown in figures (8, 9) it is clear how the students shifted gaze to Luis and maintained it during his description of the family.

Figure 8. Ss maintain gaze at Luis.   **Figure 9.** Ss and T continue gazing at Luis

After Luis' intervention, other students responded to the teacher's call for participation. The transcript below shows Juanito's response to this question.

Transcript 3. Juanitos' participation

1   T   ((looks around and sees another student raising his right hand and with a bag in his left hand))

2   T   ((points the student out and walks close to him))

3   T   Do you want to say your description about your family.

4   Ss   =((gaze at Juanito))

5   T   =((points out the board))

6   Juanito=((looks at the board following the teacher's gestures))

7   T   ((gazes the student))

8   T   =((puts his cellphone close to the student))

9   T   =((puts his right hand into his pocket))

10   Juanito((gazes at T))

11   Juanito((spins his head looking at the ceiling and shakes a bag from his left hand to his right hand, and so on))

12   JuanitoMy family is [conformed for] five per, five [people], are my mom, my dad, my sister, my brother and me.

13   Ss   Shift gaze from Juanito to the board and vice versa

14   T   ((crosses his hand in front of his face))

15   T   ((nods his head))

To initiate this interaction, the teacher asked Juanito, who had raised his hand, if he wanted to participate (*do you want to say, say your description about your family*)(turns 1, 3) pointing to the family picture on the board and gesturing with his fingers while some students rotated their body and shifted their gaze at Juanito (turns 4, 5). Synchronically, Juanito shifted his gaze to the board (turn 6), the teachers gesturing and the movement of his fingers (see figure 10). Subsequently, Juanito described his family (*My family is [conformed for] five per, five [people], are my mom, my dad, my sister, my brother and me*) moving his hand as in chopping motion at the time he mentioned each family member (turns 11, 12) while the teacher and other students maintained their gaze at Juanito (turn

13). As in the previous interaction, the teacher nodded to confirm the student's response (turn 15).

Figure 10. Juanito gazes at the board and Ss gaze at him.

As discussed previously, the new spatial arrangement seemed to have propelled alignment with the whole class. It is interesting to observe in this interaction how students shifted their gaze to Juanito when the teacher asked him if he wanted to participate and then shifted their gaze from Juanito to the board as he described the members of the family.

Also, as in the first episode, the synchrony between the student and the teacher is the result of both verbal and nonverbal semiotic resources. In the first part of the interaction, for example, the teacher provided a verbal question which generated no response from Juanito. It was after the combination of gesturing and gazing that Juanito started to respond.

4.3. Opportunities for participation through alignment

The previous segments showed the convergence of the semiotic resources. However, in this opportunity the attention will be focused on how this convergence helps to generate participation in the class. In this segment of the lesson, the teacher asked students

to read their opinions about some discrimination patterns families usually face. The transcript below shows the moment in which the teacher approached Anamaría (pseudonym) asking her to read her description.

Transcript 4. Anamaría states her opinion.

1   T   ((Turns his body 90 degrees to his left))

2   T   ((Moves six steps from the left to the right side of the classroom))

3   T   Over here. ((points out with a marker toward Anamaría getting closer to her and other three female students))

4   T   What do you think about that situation ((looks at Anamaría's writings in her notebook))

5   Anamaría   ((Gazes at the teacher))

6   T   What do YOU think? ((gazes at Anamaría and points to her notebook))

7   Anamaría   Ah? ((raise her hands))

8   T   What do you think? ((gazes at Anamaria))

9   T   ((Leans his body to his left and the head to his right and looks at Anamaría's notebook))

10   Anamaría ((reads description on her notebook)) Ok, in that [case] that is bad too [much] [because] he is a:: sad is much the dream.

11   T   ((Looks at Anamaría's notebook and places cellphone close to Anamaría and gazing at her))

12   SS   unintelligible talk

13:     T   ((Moves back to the centre of the classroom raises his right hand))

         HEY

14   Anamaría ((gazes at student next to her))

In this manner, the situation to be discussed was one about a woman named Hasbleidy who went to the bank to ask for a loan to go on vacation with her daughter Laura. Unfortunately, the bank does not want to give her any money because they consider that she needs to have a husband for lending the money. To check students' work, the teacher walked toward a group of students on the right side of the classroom (see figure 11) and pointed to Anamaría while saying *over here, What do you think about that situation?* while looking at her notebook (see figure 12). After Anamaría's non-verbal response (gazing at the teacher) and indication of lack of alignment with the instruction, the teacher gazed back at her and repeated the question stressing the pronoun *you,* to which Anamaría responded *ah* with rising intonation. Synchronically, the teacher repeated the question at the time he leaned his body, bent his head and looked at Anamaría's notebook while she started reading. (see figure 13). The teacher maintained a gaze while Anamaria was reading and then moved to the centre of the classroom.

Figure 11. T approaches Ana. **Figure 12.** T asking Ana. **Figure 13.** T leans his body.

It is revealing how proxemics, gazing, and non-human resources (e,g., the marker, the notebook) coexisted and aligned to generate an one on one interaction that allowed Anamaría to participate. As indicated previously, the teacher moved to Anamaría's place for work checking. This purpose, however, did not seem to be understood by Anamaría who gazed at the teacher indicating her lack of understanding after listening to his questions twice. Interestingly, the teacher responded to this non-verbal sign by combining other semiotic resources (e.g., looking at her notebook, maintaining gaze at her), creating a moment of alignment which facilitated Anamaría´s response to the teachers´request. It would have been interesting to see the continuation of this interaction after the completion of the task to observe how the feedback process would unfold.

5. Discussion

The findings of this study described how different semiotic resources converged to provide alignment in different interaction and participation moments in this EFL lesson. These findings confirm previous studies that have also shown how different semiotic resources converge during alignment moments (Atkinson, Churchill, Nishino & Okada, 2007; Churchill, Okada, Nishino & Atkinson, 2011; Adams and Amador, 2013). However, these studies have focused on one to one tutoring sessions, not on whole classroom interactions, which is the case of this study. Under the Socio-Cognitive approach, learning is evidenced through traces of alignment in the mind-body-world continuum (Atkinson, 2007), therefore we also aimed to describe how the convergence of these semiotic resources may cater for learning opportunities in an EFL classroom.

Among the most salient semiotic resources were proxemics, body posture and gazing. Proxemics was constantly used during the lesson. It was interesting to see how the pre-service teacher's constant movement between the front and back of the classroom, and physical approximation to learners seemed to favor participatory opportunities in the classroom. We dare to make such an assertion based on the salient evidence of proxemics in the four moments we previously presented. For instance, in Juanito's and Luis' case, the teacher´s proximity to their seating space allowed them to follow the teacher and be an active participant in the interaction. In the case of Anamaría, the role of proxemics seems to have favored dramatically her participation; as previously shown in the findings, the verbal

and linguistic resources were not enough to allow her to participate. In contrast, it was the teacher's attention through his physical movement towards Anamaría and leaning towards her and her notebook which seems to have guided her to read her opinion on the family discrimination pattern that he had asked about.

Besides proxemics to favor students' participation, the findings suggest that embodied tools like gestures, gazing and body posture catered for alignment moments between the teacher, the participating students and their classmates. During Luis' participation, it was very interesting to capture the other students' alignment with him and his intervention. For instance, most of the students were gazing directly at Luis and other few were not only gazing but also adjusting their posture to better observe him while he willingly volunteered to describe his family. Although this finding can not assert which learning occurred in the other learners, it does evidence that alignment also occurs in whole classrooms, therefore providing an opportunity for further research in teacher-education and SLA fields.

One important claim from the SC approach to the SLA field is that learning opportunities are realized via alignment moments (Uzum 2010; Atkinson, 2011). Although evidence of the student learning is not concluding, we can at least evidence learning opportunities that arose in these alignment moments. For instance, the synchronized coordination (Goodwin, 2001; McNeil, 2005) that was observed through gaze following, body postures, head rotation, finger pointing and counting seemed to have allowed Juanito to follow the teacher's family description, identify its corresponding picture, and verbalize the answer. It is intriguing how Juanito's participation would have unfolded without the convergence of these semiotic resources.

Another important instance for learning opportunities was revealed in Anamaría's segment. The movement of her hands and verbal monosyllables allowed her to show her confusion towards the teacher's question. As previously stated, the teachers' use of proxemics when the teacher approached her and leaned his body to read what she had on her notebook seems to have supported her participation. These findings suggest that learning opportunities in Juanito's and Anamaría's case were strengthened due to the constant coordination and synchrony with the teacher through the combination of different semiotic resources.

The findings also evidenced that the pre-service teacher missed further alignment opportunities with his students. For instance, the teacher interrupted the alignment with Luis by looking at his cellphone. Likewise, he stopped the interaction with Anamaría when he started looking for the noisy students in the classroom. During these moments, the pre-service teacher was unaware of alignment, how it occurs and its influence on learning. For instance, how small gestures like gazing at students while they express themselves facilitates alignment. This evidenced unawareness of alignment might raise suggestions to the field of teacher education which we will cover in the next section.

6. Conclusions

This study revealed different semiotic resources like proxemics, body posture, gestures and gazing that a pre-service teacher used in his EFL lesson. Furthermore, the study discussed how these semiotic resources may have provided learning opportunities in an EFL classroom.

However, it also showed the pre-service teacher unawareness of alignment, which may entail suggestions for teacher educators, pre-service teachers and teacher-education programs such as the possibility to include a sociocognitive perspective in the teaching methods courses, which will allow student-teachers raise awareness of the elements that allow for teacher and student alignment. Moreover, the need to raise pre-service teachers' awareness of their embodied tools and how these can be maximized in their teaching to facilitate more learning opportunities.

These lost moments of alignment seem to have been a byproduct of the pre-service teachers' dual role as instructor and researcher. Despite having a research partner who helped in the data collection process through video recording, Brando was in charge of audio-recording with his cellphone, which in some moments drew his attention away from students. Thus, Brando's role as co-researcher seems to have posed a limitation to his teaching role in this study. Therefore, we suggest student-teachers reconsider their roles in the data collection process.

Another limitation to this research was the video-recording itself. In order to have a broader focus of the occurring interactions, it is necessary to video-record the lesson from at least two different angles. We hope that further research on alignment in EFL whole-classroom interactions take into consideration and prepare for the logistic demands of video-recording.

Although this study considered inter-rater agreement to choose the *aha* moments (Atkinson, 2018) for alignment, time and self-isolation constraints did not allow to get a more iterative analysis that led to a more precise choosing of the events and the details containing it.

Due to the qualitative nature of micro-analysis (Erickson, 1992), this research only covered semiotic resources in the interaction and participation which are few elements of alignment. Therefore, further research on EFL classroom alignment may concentrate in other arenas of alignment such as (a) fluency and speed, (b) accuracy, (c) lexical and grammatical choices, (d) content agreement, (e) negotiation of meaning, and (f) tone of conversation (Uzmu, 2010).

In sum, this study makes a small contribution to the SC approach as it intended to portray alignment in whole-class interaction. Likewise, it adds to the field of teacher-education as it suggests broadening teaching and research perspectives through the ongoing study of alignment under a Socio-Cognitive approach in future research.

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Appendix A

Written informed consent

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Firma: _____

Nombre: _Edwin German Perez_

Cédula N°: _6892774_ de _Montería_

Appendix B.

Focus group questions.

SALUDOS

1) ¿Cuál es tu nombre?

2) ¿Cuántos años tienes?

3) ¿En qué institución estudiaste la básica primaria?

4) Además de en tu colegio, ¿Te has visto expuesto a hablar y aprender inglés fuera de la institución?

5) ¿Prácticas inglés en tu casa?

6) ¿Cuánto tiempo le dedicas al aprendizaje del inglés por día o por semana?

7) ¿Cómo te sientes con las habilidades del inglés (escucha, habla, lectura y escritura)? ¿En cuál/cuáles sientes que tienes un mejor desempeño?

8) Cuando estabas en primaria, ¿Cómo era la metodología del maestro que daba la clase de inglés? ¿Qué materiales utilizaban en las clases?

9) ¿Cómo es tu participación en las clases de inglés? ¿Participas voluntariamente o cuando la docente lo requiere?