

Cooperative and Hybrid Systems for College English Learning under Network Ubiquitous Environment and Traditional Classroom: Construction and Practice

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Abstract: *The paper aims at constructing the cooperative and hybrid systems for college English teaching and learning under network and traditional classroom environments. It is a comprehensive and integrated system involving cooperative learning environment system, network cooperative learning system, and classroom cooperative learning system. In each system, there are detailed arrangement in function, task, and interactive pattern. After one year teaching practice, the cooperative and hybrid systems achieved expected effects: enhancement of English learning aspirations and academic records; improvement of language acquisition and language skills; development of cooperative spirits and self-confidence.*

Keywords: *Cooperative and Hybrid Systems, College English learning, Cooperative Learning Environment System, Network Cooperative Learning System, Classroom Cooperative Learning System.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Cooperative Learning is one of the most widely-adopted teaching forms, possessing the following elements: the fundamental form is heterogeneous cooperative learning group; the system employs interaction among teaching dynamic elements; the assessment standard is the group achievements; teaching activities aim at accomplishing teaching goals together. [1] According to Encyclopedia of Science Education, cooperative learning can be used across a wide range of settings ranging from classroom to lecture, laboratory sessions, and online classes. There are five essential elements of cooperative learning: positive interdependence, face-to-face interaction, individual accountability, social skills and group self-evaluation. [2] Cooperative learning, compared with independent learning, tends to achieve success more easily, building more positive student-to-student relationship. It is a kind of goal-directed activity, stressing interdependence and cooperative interaction. Many concrete teaching strategies are applied, which include selection of the topic, proper division of learning group, carrying out diverse cooperative learning activities, and submission of learning results and assessment of learners' performance.

The information learning environment requires that we should rely on information technology and modern equipment to improve our teaching technology, providing students with more knowledge input and sensory stimuli, and meanwhile, adopting hybrid and diverse English teaching model assisted by computer and internet. Cooperative learning system under network ubiquitous environment has become the focus of applied research, but we have to be aware of the pros and cons of this new system, stressing the combination of new system and the traditional one. The paper aims to design a proper combined system for cooperative learning system under network environment and traditional classroom, offering an efficient and effective teaching strategy to enhance students' English learning aspirations and techniques.

2. COLLEGE ENGLISH COOPERATIVE LEARNING DIFFERENCES UNDER NETWORK ENVIRONMENT AND TRADITIONAL CLASSROOM

2.1. Cooperative Learning Characteristics under Two Learning Environments

Under network environment, cooperative learning refers to the cooperative and interdependent learning pattern in form of learning group, aiming at common learning objectives with the network tool. Cooperative learning can reduce time and space limitation, providing the convenience, the

abundant critical thinking time for structural online discussion, and the fine processing of points of views from different learners. Moreover, this learning pattern is conducive to the development of learners' analytical, deductive, evaluated, reflective, and knowledge innovative abilities. For those reticent learners, cooperative learning pattern can mobilize their participating enthusiasm and realize democratic participation in teaching activities. Meanwhile, cooperative learning under network environment possess the advantages of openness, wide range and interaction. College English learning can be happened anytime and anyplace. Teacher-to-students and student-to-student interaction can be carried out by means of information technology. The cooperative learning group members utilize the form of spoken language or verbal description to improve the degrees of their language understanding in order to promote the mutual learning and common progress. When the online learners are discussing different topics, they tend to use various expressive means to propose their points of views, and to record their voices to make other listeners repeat listening to them, which is the requirement for the learners from short-term understanding to long-term acquisition.

On the other hand, cooperative learning in the traditional classroom means that the students carry out group activities in the classroom within the set time to accomplish a common assignment or goal. Every group member should undertake specific tasks, being responsible for their tasks, and fulfill the common target through sincere cooperation. In this traditional learning environment, students can have face-to-face communication with each other, using their gestures, expressions and other body languages to make their expressions more correct and vivid, easy to be understood by their peers. The learning group members can better their affective factors through long-range cooperation, and as a result, realize the ultimate goal of common progress.

2.2. Disadvantages of Cooperative English Learning under Two Learning Environments

The main disadvantage from network cooperative English learning derives from the network particularity that insufficient direct interaction results in overdependence on network medium. Those verbal, audio or video communications between teacher and students often increase the physical and emotional distance. In addition, if there's no instant response or encouragement from teachers, the students will become puzzled. Once they are at a loss in network curriculum, it's easier for them to feel isolated. [3] While, the direct face-to-face discussion and emotional communication can be realized through cooperative learning in classroom, but the communication is short of width and depth in discussing contents. The students communicate with teachers and partners according to their prepared and limited materials without prompt information input and expansion while discussing the topics, which vastly reduces communicative quality of cooperative learning. As a result, there are various problems and disadvantages appeared under these two learning environments, so we have to combine these two teaching patterns and establish a cooperative and hybrid system for college English learning, giving full play to their potentials.

3. CONSTRUCTION OF COOPERATIVE AND HYBRID LEARNING SYSTEMS FOR COLLEGE ENGLISH UNDER NETWORK AND CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT

3.1. Theoretical Foundation for Cooperative and Hybrid Learning Systems

The cooperative and hybrid systems for college English learning mainly derive from three theoretical frameworks. Constructivism believes that human cognition is a process of experience, discovery and creation, and in this process, teacher should pay more attention to set up such learning environment as problem-solving, group-study, and multilateral interaction. Krashen proposed that the best methods are those that supply "comprehensible input" in low anxiety situations, containing messages that students really want to hear. These methods do not force early production in the second language, but allow students to produce when they are "ready", recognizing that improvement comes from supplying communicative and comprehensible input, and not from forcing or correcting production. [4] According to Krashen's input hypothesis, Swain put forward output hypothesis which argues that the act of producing language (speaking or writing) constitutes, under certain circumstances, part of the process of second language learning. The process involved in producing language can be quite different from those in comprehending language and so must be considered separate from them. [5] She also upholds that the function of comprehensible output is the supply of testing real language communication and context retrieval, which is the prerequisite of SLA. [6] At the same time, she emphasizes that comprehensible input is only one part of language learning, and language output is another very important part in language learning. Teachers should offer students abundant chances to practice language they've learnt in classroom.

3.2. Construction and Experiment of Cooperative and Hybrid Learning Systems

In accordance with the above theoretical frameworks, the author constructs the cooperative and hybrid learning system for college English under two learning environments. This system includes three parts; they are the network cooperative learning system, the classroom cooperative learning system, and the hybrid learning system as well. In each system, there are various platforms, tasks and functions to realize cooperative learning and common development.

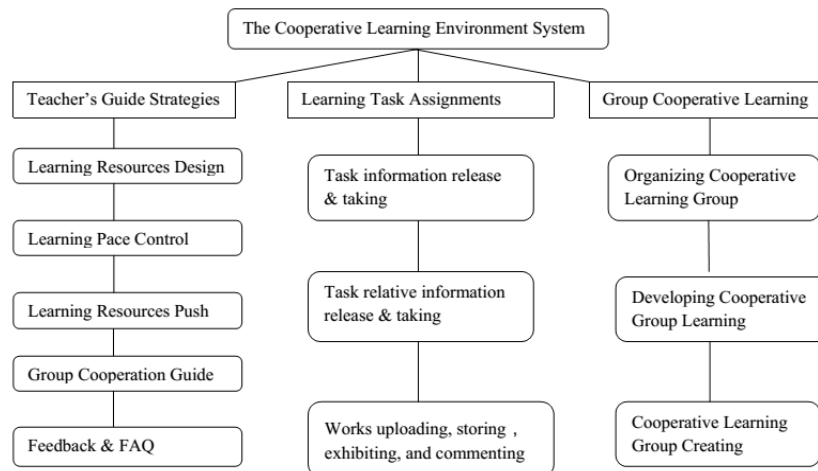


Fig1. Core Design of Cooperative Learning Environment System

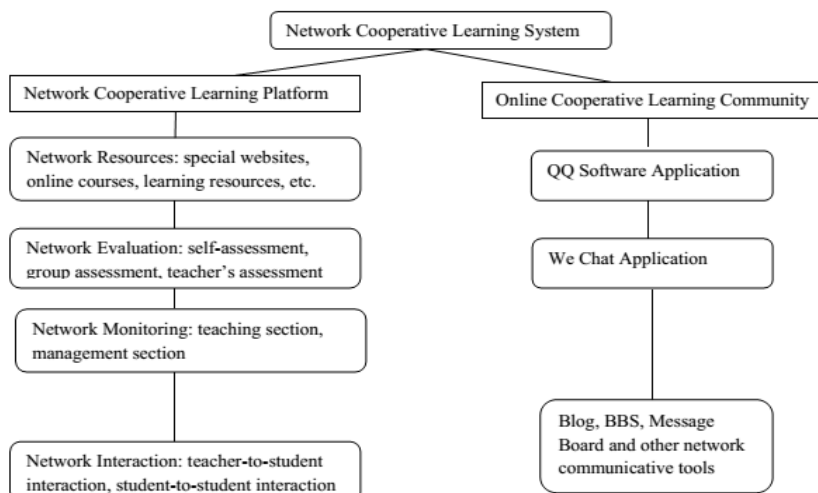


Fig2. Design of Network Cooperative Learning System

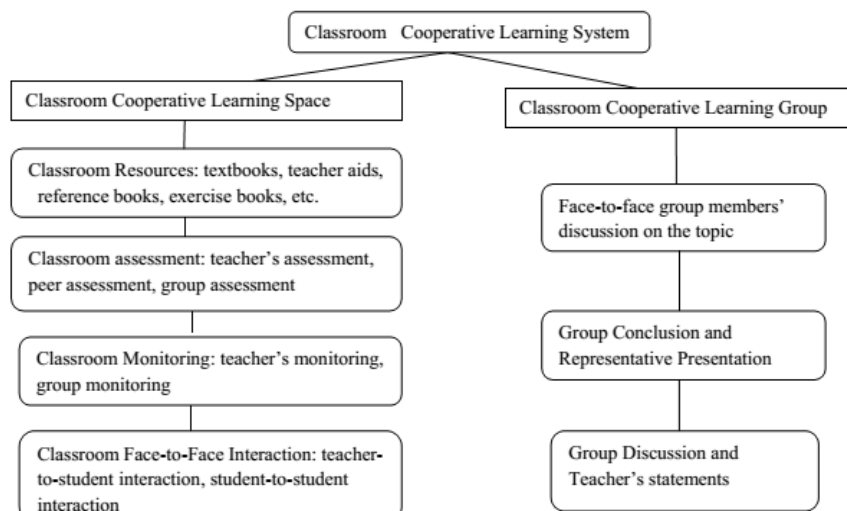


Fig3. Design of Classroom Cooperative Learning System

Three cooperative learning systems constitute hybrid learning systems; they are Cooperative Learning Environment System, Network Cooperative Learning System, and Classroom Cooperative Learning System. The purpose of setting up cooperative learning environment is to carry out college English teaching more effectively. Cooperative Learning Environment System takes guidance, task, and cooperation as the design core. Teacher's guide function focuses on users of teacher including learning resources design, teaching pace control, learning resources push, phased missions guide, group cooperation direction, and feedback and FAQ. Task function covers users of teacher and learners including task information release and taking, task relative information push and taking, works uploading, storing, exhibiting and commenting. Cooperation function involves users of learners and teacher including setting up cooperative learning group, conducting group cooperative learning, and group creating. Network Cooperative Learning System mainly supports four systematic database; they are network resources, network monitoring, network evaluation, and network interaction. Network resources integrate information resources, designing special college English and police English websites, network courses and other learning resources. These information and resources provide the students with abundant language input which help them get prepared for online discussion output. Network monitoring is composed by teaching and management sections to design structural network courses and manage group learning cooperation. Network interaction includes Teaching Forum, Chat Room, Network VOD, QQ Group, Message Board, and Virtual Community. Network evaluation adopts self-evaluation, peer evaluation and teacher evaluation, making scientific evaluation form cognitive abilities, emotional experiences, and learning skills. Classroom Cooperative Learning System is made up of class resources, class evaluation, class monitoring, and class interaction. Class resources, compared with network mass resources, are very limited, including textbooks, reference books, and other extracurricular learning materials. Class monitoring is accomplished by teacher's field monitoring on group activities and also by group members' mutual restriction.

4. TEACHING PRACTICE AND FEEDBACKS OF COOPERATIVE AND HYBRID LEARNING SYSTEMS FOR COLLEGE ENGLISH UNDER NETWORK AND CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT

4.1. Teaching Practice of Cooperative and Hybrid Learning Systems

The research team of EGP and ESP has conducted teaching practice of cooperative and hybrid learning systems since 2011, and gained many valuable experiences. First of all, they construct network cooperative learning environment by means of building college English network course and Virtual Policing in English network course.



Fig4. The homepage of VPIE (Virtual Policing in English) Network Training Platform



Fig5. The homepage of Cross-cultural communication and professional English training platform for the policeman

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Secondly, they conduct network interaction through online learning community: Growing up QQ Group, Sharing & Improving QQ Group, English Family We Chat Group.



Fig6. Growing up online learning community: Xu Hong's composition and teacher's evaluation stored in QQ group message log on the right, and Huang Jiannan's music sharing on the left

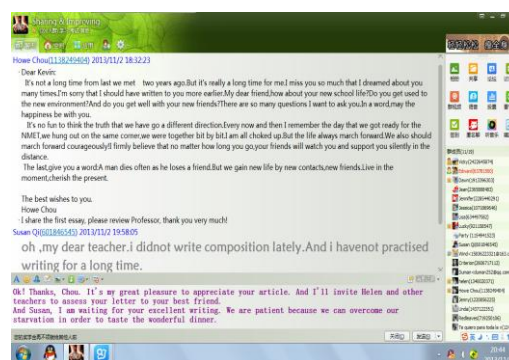


Fig7. A student member Howe Chou is uploading his writing for assessment to Sharing & Improving

Thirdly, they carry out cooperative learning in English classroom. Students are divided into 10 groups to fulfill pre-class, in-class tasks in the classroom. They tend to learn in small study group with 2 students or 4 students, discussing and cooperating together.



Fig8. In-class 2-student-learning-group is discussing Policing English translations in Class 2 Grade 2012 of Criminal Technology Department



Fig9. In-class 4-student-learning-group is discussing 10 pre-class questions in Class 2 Grade 2013 of Criminal Technology Department

4.2. Teaching Effects and Feedbacks of Cooperative and Hybrid Learning Systems

The research takes 160 students majoring in Criminal and Technology in Grade 2012 and 2013 as the subjects for teaching experiment. After one year of teaching practice, most of the students' English learning interests and academic records are greatly improved. The research team fulfilled a questionnaire to check the effectiveness and validity of these learning systems. The questionnaire table is presented in Table 1.

Table1. Learning feedbacks questionnaire about three cooperative learning systems

Three Learning system	Questions	Helpful %	In general%	Helpless%
CLES	Is CLES helpful in enhancing your English learning interests and effects?	81%	15%	4%
	Is cooperative learning group helpful in improving your performance?	76.5%	21%	2.5%
	Is learning task assignments helpful in attain your learning goals?	75%	19.4%	5.6%
NCLS	Is NCLS' platform helpful in sharing learning resources and scientific evaluation?	77.8%	15.4%	6.8%
	Is online learning community helpful in cooperative English learning?	85.6%	13.3%	1.1%
CCLS	Is CCLS helpful in improving classroom English teaching effects?	73.8%	12.6%	13.6%
	Is in-class learning group helpful in widening your field of vision and deepening your critical thinking?	82.1%	16.4%	1.5%

5. CONCLUSION

It is proved that cooperative and hybrid systems for college English learning under network and classroom environments are mutually complementary, being conducive to students' progress and improvement. It is beneficial to overcome students' isolation and lack of self-confidence. The students can employ network to conduct cooperative learning, looking for information online to make their topics for discussion in face-to-face classroom with breadth and depth. The students support each other and offer encouragement, which helps reduce alienating sense, but increase self-confidence and courage to express their points of views online and in classroom. It is also beneficial to enhance abilities to acquire language, and to improve comprehensive language skills. The students adopt the cooperative learning system under network ubiquitous environment to obtain mass language input and realize instant and effective language output which produces the positive effects for language acquisition. It is suggested that we English teachers should construct cooperative learning environments and hybrid systems contributing to students' language acquisition, and comprehensive development of creativity, cooperative spirits, IQ and EQ.

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