

# **College English Teaching and Learning through Online Learning Community: Principles and Practices**

WEI Li

Liaoning Police Academy, Dalian, China

---

**Abstract:-** Intersexuality, as the philosophical foundation of college English teaching and learning under the network environment, facilitates integration of educational technology and foreign language teaching. On the basis of this philosophical idea, the author advances three principles to follow in college English teaching and learning through online learning community: mutual respect and equal dialogue for every community member, all-round interaction and collaboration, intercultural teaching approach. The principle of all-round interaction pattern is illustrated from three perspectives in detail. In the process of college English teaching and learning, learning assistants and other student members perform these three principles actively and effectively. Great benefits have been obtained by every community member through online teaching and learning practice in such aspects as the renewal of the teaching and learning concept, the diversity of teaching approaches, innovations of technological application, and widespread use of multi-sided interaction and community cooperation.

**Keywords:-** College English teaching, Online Learning Community, Principle, Practice, Intersexuality, Interculturality.

---

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

College English teachers have to fully recognize the importance and significance of deepening College English. As the symbol of modern language teaching, CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning) has led college English teaching into the new development phase. The recognition that foreign language teaching has exceptionally close relationship with educational technology application has become a consensus. The renewal of educational concept interacts with the development of educational technology, taking on the new trend of integration. [1] In recent years, there has been an apparent education change in our college English teaching circle. Many a discussion about educational theories of multimedia and multimodal application in English teaching forcefully prompt the integrated research and exploration in educational technology and English course, which turns to be the focal point of foreign language research. Online learning community is the integrated product of information technology and language teaching, and meanwhile, the network platform to realize seamless language learning mechanism. The article chiefly discusses the principles that the teachers and learners should follow on network learning, illustrating the author's personal practice in fulfilling these basic principles in her online learning community. Through the detailed interpretation of principle and practice we can have a clear roadmap to pursue the appropriate approach to improve online learning.

## **II. COLLEGE ENGLISH TEACHING AND LEARNING PRINCIPLES UNDER GUIDANCE OF INTERSEXUALITY PHILOSOPHY**

### **A. The Theoretical Foundation of College English Teaching and Learning Principles**

The theory of intersexuality, deriving from biological research, mainly refers to the relation or connection in general sense with the research focus on interwoven and interdependent perspective. This newly-booming philosophical theory opposes the paradigm of the dichotomy of subjectivity and objectivity, sustaining the coexistence and equality between subjects and objects, and the dynamic process as well including their dialogues, integration and gradual generation. [2] Intermediality and interculturality, as two derivatives of this philosophy, represent correlativity among different modern media and dialogical relationship between two subjects in cultures or their texts. The above-mentioned theories just provide the foreign language teachers abundant theoretical foundation to conduct multimedia classroom teaching and seamlessly cross-cultural online teaching and learning. College English teachers can take advantage of various teaching media to fulfil teaching tasks in each English class, conducting teacher-to-student, student-to-student, and student-to-media interactions, which is conducive to realize the concept of intermediality ultimately. In addition, college English teachers also depend on infinite functions of computer and internet, helping the students to develop their intercultural capabilities through multiple interactions among

community members from different national, ethnic and cultural backgrounds, promoting cultural understanding and evoking emotional empathy.

**B. The Principle of Mutual Respect and Equal Dialogue for Every Community Member**

As a matter of fact, education is not monologue, but dialogue; education isn't the teacher's monodrama, but a living drama played by teacher and all the students; the real education is the dialogue education. [3] Online learning community, as the counterpart of the actual community, is a brand-new living and learning space where a group of people with the same aspiration and interest interact with each other and learn from each other via network communication. [4] As a result, online learning community depending on the information and network technology can provide an equal interactive platform for teachers and learners with convenient condition to carry out dialogue instruction. However, we have to bear in mind that all of these dialogue instructions have to adhere to the principle of mutual respect and equal dialogue among community members, for it's the very cornerstone to conduct dialogue education in the real sense.

**C. The Principle of All-round Interaction and Collaboration**

The real purpose of intersexuality philosophy is to carry out all-round interactions among different subjects. These interactions not only reflect the subjects' initiative and creativity in the process of active interaction, but also emphasize the subjects' individuality and diversity. Teachers and students should possess the common grounds of equality, understanding, trusting, empathy, and cooperation to establish the positive and healthy relationship and create harmonious, friendly, and energetic learning atmosphere. Here, the main point is to change the teachers' traditional concept in their manipulating roles in teaching process. They have to recognize and respect the students' roles as the same subjects as the teachers, and they also have to explore and adjust their multiple roles in English teaching, such as directors, learning guides, learning assistants, learning pals, and encouragers. Today, the open class, the democratic class, the multiple subjects, the colourful teaching activities have become the fundamental concepts for English teachers to design their English class. According to the latest research, collegiality (or sharing of power) and team work are two elements constructing the teachers' cultural values. In the process of modern teaching, the first task for the teacher is how to bring his and his students' subjective roles into full play, how to share voice rights, knowledge and experience with other learning subjects rather than apply new types of media. The second one is to confirm the learning values of interaction and collaboration without excluding the possibility of learners' mastering new knowledge on their own. This is just the good fruit produced from positive interaction which promotes individual cognition and creative thinking. The principle of interaction reflects not only the teacher's education concept and teaching approaches changed with times, but also the students' learning concept and strategies adjusted to the modern teaching environment.

**D. The Principle of Intercultural Teaching Approach**

Under the mega background of world economic globalization, multicultural predominance, linguistic variety, and cross-cultural communication, the teaching principle of foreign language is bound to reflect the feature of internalization and multicultural integration. The principle of intercultural teaching approach is the modern approach adapted to the current situation and the challenge of foreign language teaching. In the course of college English teaching, this principle should be implemented in the establishment of English teaching concept and the practice of English teaching class, and meanwhile, English teachers should take advantage of multimediality and multimodality to promote intercultural communication and mutual understanding. With the popular use of information technology, teachers and students tend to be influenced by the world and domestic affairs and cultural clashes, so intercultural knowledge and communication capabilities become necessarily cultural and linguistic elements to empower the qualities of the college students. Interculturality is the inborn factor of college English teaching, which represents not only the major part of the foreign language teaching objectives and curriculum establishment for English teachers, but also the main section of learning contents and communication patterns for English learners.

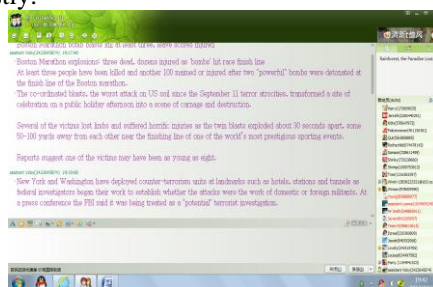
### **III. PRACTICES OF COLLEGE ENGLISH TEACHING AND LEARNING PRINCIPLES THROUGH ONLINE LEARNING COMMUNITY**

**A. The Practice of Mutual Respect and Equal Dialogue for Every Community Member**

The author and her colleagues established two learning communities: the first one is Online Learning Assistants Community, and the second one is Growing-up English QQ Group for learning assistants and students. At present, there are 12 and 92 community members in each of these two communities. The first virtual learning community offers an interactive platform for learning assistants to fulfil their missions of academic assistance and emotional support. [5] Its major function is to construct four learning environments in terms of technology, resources, service and social network. In order to achieve its professionally directing levels, this online learning assistants' community should create collaborative cultural atmosphere, enhancing community members' artistic appreciation. These learning assistants respect others' technological advantages, learning from others' creative ideas, sharing with others in bountiful resources, and of course, providing an

educational and interactive platform. Mutual respect is the essence of this community's existence and progress, and it is this very quality that contributes to a successful operation of Growing-up learning community.

Growing-up English QQ Group is the derivative product of the leaning assistants' community, which is characteristic of mutual respect and equal dialogue. Today, there are 92 community members taking part in regular English activities with anonymous English names, like Figure 1 presents us. The usages of anonymous English names can provide the community members with the sense of equal respect. Every member can call others English names openly and directly without using such titles as Teacher Wang or Mr. Sun. Although the group leader (Vicky) adds the title "Assistant" to 7 learning assistants to help students interact with teachers conveniently, the students can also communicate with them in their anonymous English names, such as Hi! Vicky! Or could you illustrate your point of view, Loomis? In addition, these anonymous names can reduce stereotyped impressions, and even some prejudice deriving from students' former academic failures. Every community member is equally excellent in the eyes of learning assistants, and they can be treated and assessed equally and justly.



**Fig. 1:** 36 community members are taking part in English activities in Growing-up English QQ Group on April 16, 2013, with two learning assistants and 34 students.

The dialogue between two community members regardless of their positions is open, direct, and equal. The cooperative dialogue teaching with a wide range of teachers and students participating into activities is not a temporary teaching aimed at solving one problem, but a whole process throughout online teaching and learning. The comprehensive design of dialogue teaching, its organization and practice, the students' initiative and leaning activity, all of these details will exert decisive influence on an integrated dialogue teaching process. [6]

#### B. The Practice of All-round Interaction and Collaboration

Interaction and collaboration is the vital component of modern education concept. In the process of college English teaching and learning in our online learning community, teachers activate all of interactive elements including learning subjects, IT technology, multimedia equipment, text resources, data base, and network platform to take part in teaching activities. The highlight of CALL is multi-sided interactions without being merely confined into teacher-to-student interaction in the traditional English class. Table 1 presents us the detailed all-round interaction pattern of English teaching and learning through online learning community. Figures 2, 3, 4 reflect the real records of interactions happened in online learning community.

**Table 1:** All-round interaction pattern of college English teaching and learning through online community

Interactive subjects	Interactive approaches	Interactive effects
Teacher-to-IT technology and equipment (computer, Internet, and other multimedia equipment)	Technological interaction: mastery of IT technology; usage of engine exploration; selection of network materials.	Help teachers explore and find the latest English news or relevant learning materials to supplement their teaching plans; to design and make the appealing multimedia teaching software.
Teacher-to-student	Online instant interaction; off line delayed interaction; one-to-one interaction; one-to-group interaction; professional interaction; non-professional interaction.	Help teachers offer timely and detailed guidance in English learning through online or offline assistance; to give the student individualized and professional direction; to broaden the students' horizon through non-professional interaction.
Student-to-resources (text, data base, video or audio materials)	Self-study through IT technology and network assistance.	Help students obtain information and knowledge through network; to develop the skill of self-study and self-improvement.
Student-to-student	Group-study through group members' assistance and	Help students learn English through teamwork and group cooperation; to master

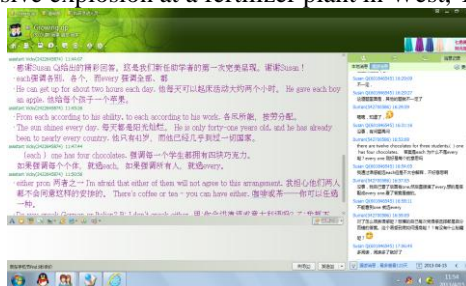
network technological support	the skill of group-study.
-------------------------------	---------------------------



**Fig. 2:** Learning assistant Vicky (the group leader) are teaching the text Some Photos Make History through presenting impressive network photos taken in Vietnam War.



**Fig. 3:** Learning assistants are sharing the latest news reported by AP, a massive explosion at a fertilizer plant in West, Texas.



**Fig. 4:** A student Susan Qi is explaining the differences of each, every, and either to Duman, a minority student from Xinjiang.

**C. The Practice of Intercultural Teaching Approach**

The English teacher, functioning as the cultural bridge, has the inescapable duty to transmit the best of the Eastern and Western cultures. The integration of multicultural education into English class is the best combination. [7] The author as the English teacher of 5 peoples including the Han nationality (72 percent of the total students), the Uygur nationality (10 percent), the Mongolian nationality (5 percent), and the Kazak nationality (3 percent) attaches much importance to intercultural or multicultural education in her English class. She introduces theoretical foundation as the first English class, putting forward 4 basic principles in English class to follow: to respect all the students, and every student is encouraged to participate into the class activities equally; to respect all the students' languages (though English is the main language in use), and they can use their native tongues if necessary; to promote multiethnic cultural exchange and understanding through regular cultural introduction and interaction; to enhance the students' cross-cultural communication competence by intentional teaching and training in and after English class. In order to present her students abundant multicultural knowledge, she specifically made a lot of cultural ppt's entitled The Cultural Journey Series, Figure 5 and 6 are some of them which display unique characteristics of minority culture in Xinjiang and Indian culture in North America.



**Fig. 5:** Xinjiang cultural ppt: the young people of Kazak nationality are

performing one of their traditional sports Guniang Zhui (the girls are pursuing the boys).



**Fig. 6:** American native cultural ppt: an Indian funeral procession to commemorate an Indian warrior killed in Iraq on January 7, 2006.

#### IV. CONCLUSIONS

The essence of the reform and improvement of college English teaching lies in English teachers' reforming awareness and technological levels. Their initiative and potentiality should be activated and brought into full play. In the preparatory and teaching process, English teachers have to take advantage of multimodal and multimedia approaches, following the principle of respecting every community member's creativity and contribution, advocating group-study and teamwork spirits, and promoting multi-sided interaction and collaboration to construct harmonious and cooperative English learning cyberspace with the feature of multicultural education. The theories of intersexuality, multimodality, and interculturality promote and quicken the new turn of Chinese foreign language reform.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The author wishes to thank the experts and judges of the Education Department of Liaoning Province for their support of The Foreign Language Reform Project of Liaoning Higher Education Academy of Liaoning Province (2012) No. WYYB12089: On the Cloud and Mobile Self-study Pattern of Policing English.

#### REFERENCES

- [1]. Guo Wanquan, Yang Yonglin. Foreign Language Teaching Research Review under Virtual Environment. Journal of Liberation Army's Foreign Language Institute, 2002 (3).
- [2]. Zheng Depin. On Intersexuality and Interculturality. Journal of Guangdong Broadcasting and Television University, 2008 (4):73.
- [3]. WEI Li. Online Learning Community with Open Dialogue Interaction: Strategies and Application. Journal of Language Teaching and Research, May 2013, Volume 4, Number 3:618-623.
- [4]. WEI Li. Learning Assistants' Functions and Effects: All-round Tutoring in Online Learning Community. International Journal of Engineering Research And Development, 2013, Volume 6, Issue 7:1-5.
- [5]. WEI Li. Learning Assistants' Functions and Effects: All-round Tutoring in Online Learning Community. International Journal of Engineering Research And Development, 2013, Volume 6, Issue 7:1-5.
- [6]. WEI Li. Online Learning Community with Open Dialogue Interaction: Strategies and Application. Journal of Language Teaching and Research, May 2013, Volume 4, Number 3:618-623.
- [7]. WEI Li. Integration of Multicultural Education into English Teaching and Learning: A Case study in Liaoning Police Academy. Theory and Practice in Language Studies, April 2013, Number 4:612-619.