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Far Apart, Yet Close Together: Cooperative Learning in Online Education

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Abstract

Online education can play a crucial role in increasing access to educational opportunities and promoting lifelong learning. The Covid-19 pandemic has done even more to raise awareness of the importance of online education. The pandemic has been a Category 5 disruptor of education systems. This article was written to help teachers at all levels of education facilitate cooperation among their students as a key element of online education. While many teachers believe in the benefits of student-student cooperation, and theory and research support this view, many teachers worry that distance learning is already difficult enough without adding the complications of cooperative learning, no matter how beneficial it might be. The article begins by discussing some of the obstacles teachers may encounter as they seek to integrate cooperative learning as part of online education. The main part of the article presents nine lesson plans for language education via cooperative learning in online education settings. While the content of the lessons focuses on language learning, the lessons can be employed in a wide variety of content areas. The article concludes with general suggestions on overcoming the previously mentioned obstacles.

Keywords: Online education, cooperative learning, remote learning, lesson plans, cooperative skills, ICT skills.

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1. INTRODUCTION

We are now in the early decades of the third millennium A.D. At the beginning of the second millennium, communication took a great leap forward when printing technology began to be invented. Although writing had been around since about 3000 B.C., until the 11th century A.D., the ways that people learned from each other had been mostly bounded by time and space, i.e., people usually had to be in the same place at the same time with someone in order to learn from and with them (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009).

Technology has continued to expand our learning opportunities. Learning from and with others can now happen at almost any place and time. Yes, learning from books and with people with whom we share the same time and place remain excellent options. However, the focus of the present article lies in how to maximize the educational potential of technologies more recent than the printing press. In particular, our focus is the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT).

Among the reasons for adopting ICT in education is that ICT very much fits the ways of life of many people of the world, at least those fortunate enough not to live in poverty. For example, with ICT, people are no longer largely dependent for information on established sources that dispense information in a top-down, vertical flow, e.g., instead of the traditional news media or tree ware encyclopedias, such as newspapers or *Encyclopedia Britannica*, people can now receive information in a less vertical, more horizontal way, such as from other people's social media, websites, wikis, etc. In music, rather than being dependent on the vertical distribution of what music to hear on the radio or tv shows, such as a list of Top 40 songs compiled by an authority, people can make their own playlists. Similarly, watching a movie or a tv show is a vertical experience. People watch what someone else already created for them, and the viewers have no input into how the movie or show ends. In contrast, video games provide a more horizontal experience, as the players have input into how the story ends (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009).

Should students have the same, greatly expanded, horizontal opportunities to shape their educational experience? Of course, to take advantage of these opportunities, students need various skills, such as ICT skills and collaboration skills, as well as various habits of mind, including curiosity, flexibility, self-reliance, and willingness to collaborate. Indeed, new technology does not guarantee more horizontal education, but ICT does make change easier. After all, horizontal education has always happened, although seldom as the norm in the days of formal education.

1.1 The Goal of the Paper

This paper asks the question of whether it is feasible to use cooperative learning as a significant part of the online education curriculum, also known as remote learning. By cooperative learning, we refer to students learning together, usually in groups of 2-4 members, to help everyone learn and enjoy learning. Cooperative learning can go by multiple other names, including collaborative learning. By modern online education, we refer to students learning a formal curriculum outside a standard classroom using ICT to link to their teachers and potentially others. Online education has become increasingly popular, either by necessity or by preference. Many schools and universities encourage teachers to include peer interaction, via cooperative learning

and related means, as indeed a large body of research and theory promotes the potential benefits of student-student interaction.

The goal of this paper is to convince teachers that it may often be both beneficial and possible to include cooperative learning activities in their students' online learning. To achieve this goal, we plan to present and explain a series of broadly generic lesson plans designed for language education. Before doing that, let us first examine some of the obstacles teachers face as we seek to infuse cooperative learning into online education.

2. OBSTACLES

We are listing obstacles before lesson plans because we want to acknowledge the difficulties. It is easy to write a paper with nice-sounding ideas; however, it is much more difficult to implement those ideas with real students in a wide variety of real-life teaching situations. After the lesson plans, we present some general ideas for overcoming the obstacles listed below, but the most general suggestions are to be patient with our students and ourselves, to explain what we are doing and why we are doing it, and to start with small steps.

The first obstacle when facilitating cooperative learning in online education starts before we even think about what will happen to children who are part of the education system because some children receive no formal education of any type: face-to-face or distance. According to UNESCO (2020), 258 million children and youth do not attend school. Second, even if children do attend school, they face the issues of nutrition and clean water. Without these basics, learning becomes very difficult. Usually, the same problems, that mean students cannot attend school, make it difficult for them to obtain the nutrition and clean water needed to learn effectively (World Health Organization, 2020).

Education obstacles specific to online education include the lack of access to ICT devices, internet access, and sufficient bandwidth. These problems can affect students even in relatively wealthy countries, such as the U.S. ('Homework gap', 2019). The public schools in Singapore, another relatively wealthy country, introduced occasional e-learning several years ago, yet infrastructure problems remain, such as a small but still important minority of students with (1) no internet-ready devices or not enough for all the students in a family, (2) no or insufficient internet access, (3) no conducive place in the home to study, and (4) for younger students, difficulty arranging for someone to monitor them. Some of the measures Singapore has taken to overcome these obstacles are: (1) schools loaning devices, (2) allowing some students to come to school to use the internet there and providing some hard-copy materials and assignments, and (3) educating families about how to foster a conducive and safe environment for distance learning, including taking breaks, eating healthily, knowing how to seek help from teachers and fellow students, and being open to discussing distance learning experiences (Teng, 2020).

Other potential obstacles to cooperative learning via ICT in online education include:

1. Privacy issues, e.g., should students give peers their contact information.
2. Hacking of online portals (Paul, 2020).

3. ICT unfortunately provides new ways for students to bully peers and ways to put the bullying on an international stage.
4. Not all ICT software allows teachers access to the communication that takes place among students, such as the conversation occurring in breakout rooms.
5. Easier for students to be ignored in their remote class, in part because in remote learning, class size can grow far beyond even the size of a class held in a lecture hall, and even in a class of 35, if all students are studying from their own homes, in some software, only those who speak are picked up by the camera (Stephen Hall, personal communication).
6. Varied levels of digital literacy among students as well as teachers. A recent report pointed out that one of the reasons online learning did not work well was that many students were digital consumers, but not yet digital learners (Hobbs & Hawkins, 2020). This applies to both teachers and students.
7. Limitations of the technology, e.g., small screens (such as phone screens), short battery life, poor picture quality, and small memory size.
8. Managing students' and teachers' workloads and time spent on online learning and teaching.
9. Varied expectations and opinions on what constitute good online collaboration and online learning.
10. Copyright issues, e.g., when learners use or modify others' work without proper permission or attribution.

We conclude this section on obstacles with a short report from a friend of ours who, because of Covid-19, has switched to distance learning in his teaching of secondary school science at an international school that charges USD28,000 per year, i.e., not for poor children, "We have chosen to go with simple lessons that students can complete mostly independently. So, no, we use almost no cooperative learning." Thus, even without the financial and technological obstacles mentioned above – plus, our friend and his colleagues know about cooperative learning – cooperative learning may not be used.

3. PRACTICAL LESSON PLANS FOR INFUSING COOPERATIVE LEARNING IN MODERN ONLINE LEARNING

The next and largest part of the paper presents and explains lesson plans that combine cooperative learning and online learning. Each lesson begins with some notes about cooperative learning. As with all lesson plans, teachers should experiment with modifications to fit their contexts.

3.1 Lesson 1 – Journal Writing

3.1.1 Background

Journal Writing (also known by other names, such as diary writing and reflective journal writing) is a long-standing feature of student-centered learning, as it allows students to share with peers and teachers in a communicative way. In addition, frequent journal writing can also improve students' writing skills. They become more fluent and accurate in their writing and experience less anxiety. Journals fit easily with online

learning, as discussion boards – another variation on journal writing - have long been a standard element of online courses. Thus, many ICT tools exist for facilitating journal writing. In using journals to interact with peers, students can see benefits of collaboration, because peers give them an audience for their writing, an audience who responds and who often want to read more.

3.1.2 Objectives

Students will learn:

(a) to see second language writing as an opportunity to communicate instead of only a task on which to be graded for correctness; and
(b) how to give feedback that encourages more writing.

3.1.3 Focus

The learning activities will give students the chance to develop and practice these skills:

- Cooperative skills: asking questions to encourage partners to elaborate.
- ICT skills: using the 'Comment' and 'Reply' functions to give and respond to feedback.

3.1.4 Materials

Students will need access to these materials:

(a) A journal entry written by the teacher.
(b) Suggestions for Your Journal Entries (bit.ly/Lesson1_Handout1).
(c) Suggestions for Feedback on Peers' and Teacher's Journal Entries (bit.ly/Lesson1_Handout2).

3.1.5 Technology requirement

Students will need access to technologies that allow them to:

(1) send video files to all students (asynchronous distribution) or show videos to the entire class at the same time (synchronous distribution); and
(2) communicate with other students via chat app, such as *Line*, *WhatsApp,* and *Telegram*, or a course management system, such as *Moodle, Google Classroom,* and *Blackboard*.

3.1.6 Steps

The stages of teaching and learning activities are as follows.

1. The teacher goes over "Suggestions for Your Journal Entries."
2. The teacher shows their own journal entry and points out how it has the features highlighted in the handout. [Tech note: *asynchronously, in the form of a short video sent to students or synchronously during videoconference*]
3. Students work alone to write their own journal entries.

4. The teacher goes over "Suggestions for Feedback on Peers' and Teacher's Journal." [Tech note: *asynchronously, in the form of a short video sent to students or synchronously during videoconference*]
5. The class uses that handout to give feedback on the teacher's journal entry. [Tech note: *use text chat apps or course management system*]
6. Students give feedback on one or more of their peer's journal entries, and then return the journal entries to the original author. [Tech note: *use text chat apps or course management system*]

3.2 Lesson 2 – Reading Comprehension

3.2.1 Background

We especially like this lesson because it introduces a key element of student-centered learning: students play a role in assessment (i.e., they assess their own learning and that of their peers). In this case, with teacher guidance, students write questions for peers to answer and then judge the quality of their peers' responses. Students need to interact with each other because, otherwise, who is going to ask them questions, and who is going to answer their questions? Dixon et al. (2020), as well as Johnson et al. (2007), highlighted that cooperative learning works best when task design encourages students to interact.

3.2.2 Objectives

Students will learn to answer and construct both information location questions and thinking questions.

3.2.3 Focus

The learning activities will give students the chance to develop and practice these skills:

- Cooperative skills: answering with reasons.
- ICT skills: making a meme (using apps that allow annotations on documents or pictures, e.g., *iFunny*, *Mematic*, and *Picsart*).

3.2.4 Materials

Students will need access to these materials:

(a) A reading text at students' independent reading level.
(b) A collection of question starters for the various types of questions in Bloom's Taxonomy (bit.ly/Lesson2_Handout).
(c) Instructions on how to make a meme (https://www.wikihow.com/Make-a-Meme).

3.2.5 Technology requirement

Students will need access to a chat app such as *WeChat*, *Line*, or *WhatsApp,* that allows them to chat with other students.

3.2.6 Steps

The stages of teaching and learning activities are:

1. Mini-lesson by teacher on pre-reading related to the text students are going to read.
2. Students read the text, which is accompanied by six information location questions (questions in which the answers are right in the text; all students need to do is to locate the information).
3. Mini-lesson by teacher on how to answer information location questions, giving the locations of the answers.
4. In pairs, one member works alone to answer the odd-numbered questions, and the other does the even-numbered questions. They need to be ready to explain their answers, pointing out where in the text they found the answer.
5. Students use a chat app to check answers with their partner and then with the other pair in their foursome.
6. Mini-lesson by the teacher on how to write one of the higher-order types of questions in Bloom's Taxonomy, e.g., Application Questions.
7. Mini-lesson by the teacher on how to do the cooperative learning technique: Exchange-a-Question.
   (a) each member of each twosome works alone to write one or two higher-order questions of the type explained by the teacher,
   (b) students write answers to their own questions,
   (c) students exchange their questions, but not their answers with their partner, and answer each other's questions,
   (d) the twosome members discuss their answers among themselves and with the other pair.
8. Mini-lesson by teacher on how to make a meme.
9. Students each make their own meme to celebrate their foursome. They share their four memes with other groups.

3.3 Lesson 3 – Listening Comprehension

3.3.1 Background

It is natural to think that cooperative learning means students are always working together. However, in many cooperative learning activities, students sometimes work alone. Working alone promotes what the cooperative learning literature calls individual accountability, i.e., students are encouraged to do their fair share in the group, and no one member can dominate. Another reason for students working alone – before and/or after working with peers – stems from the too often overlooked fact that the key determinant of success in cooperative learning lies not in what the group does but in what each group member learns (Jacobs & Ivone, 2020).

3.3.2 Objectives

Students will improve their listening skills.

3.3.3 Focus

The learning activities will give students the chance to develop and practice these skills:

- Cooperative skills: asking for help.
- ICT skills: learning how and when to play and replay sound files and adjust audio speed.

3.3.4 Materials

Students will need access to these materials:

(a) A text to which students will listen.
(b) Recording of the text at normal (or slightly lower) speaking speed.

3.3.5 Technology requirement

Students will need access to technologies that allow them to:

(1) conduct a video conference using platforms such as *Zoom*, *Google Meet*, etc.; or
(2) voice chat with applications such as *WhatsApp*, *Line*, and *Telegram*.

3.3.6 Steps

The stages of teaching and learning activities are:

1. The class discusses a topic, such as "how to be a smart, green shopper."
2. The class forms groups of four divided into pairs.
3. The teacher reads aloud the short text using *Zoom* or a similar videoconference platform and helps students to understand the text. [Tech note: *for asynchronous learning, the teacher can send the recording to students along with the text, and students can play the recording for themselves.*]
4. The teacher reads aloud the text a second time [Tech Note: *for asynchronous learning, the students play the recording for themselves a second time*.]; this time, students take notes. The reading is too fast to allow students an opportunity to write down every word.
5. Each student works alone to reconstruct – in full sentences, not point form - the text to which they listened. The goal is to reconstruct the meaning of the text, not to produce an exact copy of the original text.
6. Students consult their one partner, using breakout rooms in *Zoom* or via *WhatsApp*, *Telegram*, *Line*, or *WeChat*, and try to agree on a reconstruction of the text to which they listened.
7. The teacher shows the text using the screen share function (or students look at the text that the teacher sent). Students discuss as they compare their reconstruction of the text with the original text – highlighting similarities between the original text and their reconstruction. To reiterate, the focus of this discussion is on the meaning of the reconstruction, not on whether it matches the original text word for word.
8. The teacher, if possible, listens to these conversations and adds general points on such matters as grammar, cohesion, punctuation, and text characteristics (e.g., the

information on the Recount Text Type in Lesson 6), as well as emphasizing examples of good interaction between group members.

3.3.7 Technology options

For the activity, use a simple recording app, or *Anchor*, or *VoiceThread* for students to create their own audio recordings. For creating short videos, mobile apps such as *FlipGrid* can be used.

3.4 Lesson 4 – Conversation

3.4.1 Background

One point to mention about this lesson is that instead of information coming from the textbook or the teacher, it comes from students. In fact, each student is the world's top expert of their own life. This possession of expertise can make students feel respected and valued, as groupmates cannot ignore them if the groupmates are to complete the task set for them.

3.4.2 Objectives

Students will practice speaking clearly.

3.4.3 Focus

The learning activities will give students the chance to develop and practice these skills:

- Cooperative skills: learning strategies for conversation repair.
- ICT skills: creating an online post.

3.4.4 Materials

Students will need access to Examples of Conversation Repair Strategies handout (bit.ly/Lesson4_Handout).

3.4.5 Technology requirement

Students will need access to technologies that allow them to:

(1) share sticky notes and comments, such as *Padlet*,
(2) conduct voice and text chat, such as *WhatsApp, Line, Telegram, WeChat*, etc.,
(3) send emails, such as *Gmail* or *Outlook*.

3.4.6 Steps

The stages of teaching and learning activities are:

1. The class builds their vocabulary by reading a text or having a discussion about their lives, such as about their families, hobbies, friends, and favorite foods. [Tech note: *use text chat apps or course management system*]

2. The class brainstorms interview questions. [Tech note: *asynchronous, use sticky note apps such as Padlet; synchronously, use online polling apps, e.g. Mentimeter, Poll Everywhere, etc.*]
3. Students use a chat app to take turns to interview their partners in pairs, using conversation repair strategies.
4. Students, learning in groups of four, use email to send a report to the other pair in their foursome about the person whom they interviewed. The person who was interviewed checks the report for accuracy and adds additional information.

3.4.7 Technology options

Online polling apps, such as *Mentimeter* and *Poll Everywhere* can be used as alternative apps for brainstorming.

3.5 Lesson 5 – Textbook Grammar Activities

3.5.1 Background

In this lesson, we try to make three key points for our fellow teachers: (a) almost any lesson can easily be made into a cooperative learning experience; (b) a cooperative learning lesson can be created quickly, as any lesson that already exists in a workbook/textbook can be converted into a cooperative learning lesson; (c) although many grammar activities are not immediately communicative, as they often consist of decontextualized sentences, by asking students to explain their work to partners, cooperative learning can promote communication, as well as higher order thinking.

3.5.2 Objectives

Students will practice applying grammar rules.

3.5.3 Focus

The learning activities will give students the chance to develop and practice these skills:

- Cooperative skills: asking for and giving explanations.
- ICT skills: praising and thanking using emoticons and emojis.

3.5.4 Materials

Students will need access to any grammar activity.

3.5.5 Technology requirement

Students will need access to technologies that allow them to:
(1) do voice or text chat, such as *WeChat, Line, Telegram*, and *WhatsApp*; or
(2) send email to each other, such as *Gmail* or *Outlook*.

3.5.6 Steps

The stages of teaching and learning activities are:

1. The teacher explains a grammar point.
2. Students work in pairs to do a grammar exercise involving that and other grammar points, e.g., Student A does all the odd-numbered items in the exercise, and Student B does all the even-numbered items.
3. When the students have each finished their designated items, they give and explain their answers to their partner. If they forget to explain, their partner asks for explanations.
4. Each pair checks their answers and explanations with another pair. If disagreements arise, students consult the teacher, online resources, or the answer key (with explanations) provided by the teacher.

3.5.7 Technology option

For a more interactive synchronous discussion, the breakout room option in video conferencing platforms such as *Zoom* can be used.

3.6 Lesson 6 – Feedback on Writing

3.6.1 Background

Cooperation makes a difference, not just in education, but in so many other areas of life. As the saying goes, "Two heads are better than one." For instance, one person we know had written a short marketing text, which he sent to the other seven people at his small company. Each of them sent feedback. Perhaps surprisingly, each person's feedback was different, yet useful. We hope this lesson prepares students to seek and provide feedback in many areas and at many times of their lives.

3.6.2 Objectives

Students will learn:

(a) how to give and receive feedback, and
(b) how to use ICT for feedback on writing.

3.6.3 Focus

The learning activities will give students the chance to develop and practice these skills:

- Cooperative skills: praising others with reasons.
- ICT skills: using word processing files, e.g., *Word, Pages, Google Docs, etc*.

3.6.4 Materials

Students will need access to these materials:

(a) Handout: Features of recount text (bit.ly/Lesson6_Handout1) – optional.
(b) Handout: A sample annotated recount text (bit.ly/Lesson6_Handout2).

(c) Handout: Sample recount text for use in teaching editing and proofreading (bit.ly/Lesson6_Handout3).

3.6.5 Technology requirement

Students will need access to technologies that allow them to:
(1) video conference using online platform, such as *Zoom* or *Skype*;
(2) send emails, such as *Gmail* or *Outlook*; and
(3) revise, review, and track changes collaboratively using word processing software, such as *MS Word*, or *Google Docs*.

3.6.6 Steps

The stages of teaching and learning activities are:
1. Mini-lesson by teacher on the features of a recount text, using the sample (if your class would like to do another type of writing, that is fine).
2. Students form groups of two and each student does the first draft of a short text, and emails the draft via the attached file to their partner and the teacher.
3. Mini-lesson by teacher on how to use the Track Changes and Comments functions in *MS Word* [*Check YouTube video tutorials such as https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dp6HVb29uf0*], using the sample (which is unedited) and then later developing the annotated sample (which the teacher and the class have edited).
4. Students use Track Changes and Comments to give feedback on their partner's draft. The teacher is available for consultation. Plus, the teacher can randomly view students' drafts and stop the class to share good examples.
5. Students return their partner's edited draft. After their draft has been returned to them with editing by peers and perhaps the teacher, students rewrite.

3.6.7 Technology option

To help students check grammar accuracy, apps such as *Grammarly* can be used.

3.7 Lesson 7 – Split Listening

3.7.1 Background

Information gap activities are excellent for encouraging language learners to talk (Dixon et al., 2020; Doughty & Pica, 1986; Goh, 2002). They can talk about anything and use information from any sources, e.g., learners can listen to different recordings and then share the information they have gathered with other learners who do not have that same information. Split Listening activities can be conducted with learners of any proficiency level by adjusting the level of difficulty of the aural text, e.g., vocabulary, text length, and speakers' speech rates. Split Listening can also be used to talk about any topic. When written texts are available, learners can turn it into a Split Reading activity.

3.7.2 Objectives

Students will listen for main ideas and details.

3.7.3 Focus

The learning activities will give students the chance to develop and practice these skills:

- Cooperative skills: asking for and giving factual information.
- ICT skills: sharing information using voice chat apps, e.g. *WhatsApp*, *Skype*, etc.

3.7.4 Materials

Students will need access to these materials:

(a) Short recordings on mp3 format about people's occupations (or any other relevant topics) [*Recordings can be found in such places as http://elllo.org/*]. The number of recordings should be divisible by the number of group members, e.g., for pair work, the number of recordings should be 2, 4, 6, so on and so forth. Label the recordings A, B, C, D depending on the number of group members (groups should usually be no larger than four members).
(b) Handout: A worksheet containing a table for students to write information collected from the recordings and from other students (bit.ly/Lesson6_Handout).

3.7.5 Technology requirement

Students will need access to technologies that allow them to:

(1) chat, such as *WhatsApp, WeChat, Line*, etc.,
(2) send emails, such as *Gmail* and *Outlook*; and
(3) share files, links, and notes on online virtual walls, such as *Padlet*.

3.7.6 Steps

The stages of teaching and learning activities are:

1. Students form pairs or small groups of 3-4. Each student has a letter: A, B, C, or D.
2. The teacher distributes the handout over chat apps or emails to all students. Students will write their answers on the handout electronically, or they can download and print the worksheet to be filled manually.
3. The teacher sends audio recordings to students through chat apps. Students A will receive recordings A; students B will receive recordings B.
4. Students listen to their own recording and fill in the worksheet based on the information they get from their recording (individual activity).
5. Students are paired or grouped (Pair/Group 1). Student A shares information over chat apps with Student B (C and D) and vice versa. They fill in their own table using the information given by their pair/group members.
6. In pairs/groups (Pair/Group 1), they draw conclusions and decide on the occupations of the five speakers.
7. Each pair/group sends their answers to an online virtual wall, such as *Padlet* (https://padlet.com/), so that everyone has access to the answers.

8. All students have a chance to listen to all of the recordings once again to check their answers.
9. Guided by the teacher, the class check and discuss their answers.

3.8 Lesson 8 – Extensive Reading/Listening

3.8.1 Background

Language learners rarely read and listen in the target language just for fun. Extensive Reading/Listening (ER/EL) gives them opportunities for reading and listening for enjoyment and doing exciting, fun follow-up activities (Renandya & Jacobs, 2016). One follow-up activity that is surely going to get our students excited is turning a story they read or listen to into a movie. They do not need to make something as complicated as a movie scenario. They will give their movie a title and a plot, pick the cast to appear in it, and design illustrations for a poster (note: too often, when art is involved, the group member who is best at art does all the artwork. This is not optimal. Instead, perhaps that student can serve as an art teacher for their groupmates).

3.8.2 Objectives

Students will collaboratively create a movie poster from a short story.

3.8.3 Focus

The learning activities will give students the chance to develop and practice these skills:

- Cooperative skills: agreeing and disagreeing with others.
- ICT skills: using online whiteboard/blackboard, e.g. *Google Jamboard* (https://jamboard.google.com/), *Draft.io* (https://draft.io/), *or AWW board* (https://awwapp.com/).

3.8.4 Materials

Students will need access to these materials:

(a) A set of short stories in their written or spoken form. Visit these websites for interesting stories:
https://reader.letsreadasia.org/
www.literacycloud.org
https://storyweaver.org.in/
https://etc.usf.edu/lit2go/
https://learnenglishteens.britishcouncil.org/topics/fairy-tales/term
https://www.storyberries.com/
https://www.storynory.com/
https://www.bbc.co.uk/learningenglish/features/drama/

(b) Handout: A list of prompt questions to help students prepare their posters (bit.ly/Lesson8_Handout).

3.8.5 Technology requirement

Students will need access to technologies that allow them to:
(1) do text chat, such as *WhatsApp, WeChat, Line*, etc.,
(2) draw collaboratively on online whiteboard, such as *Miro, Google Jamboard, Charlala*, etc.,
(3) create mind maps using online apps, such as *Mindmeister* or *MindNode*, and
(4) share files and post comments using a course management system, such as *Edmodo, Moodle, Blackboard, Google Classroom*, etc.

3.8.6 Steps

The stages of teaching and learning activities are:
1. In heterogeneous groups of three to four, students decide on one story to read/listen to (the stories can be from the websites listed in the Materials or from other sources).
2. Students read/listen to the story their group selected. Students can ask partners or the teacher for help with understanding the story.
3. The teacher sends the handout with prompt questions to students over chat apps. Students work alone to give their own answers to the questions.
4. The group members discuss their answers to the questions on chat apps. They can agree and disagree with each other.
5. Based on their discussion, each group creates a poster using a collaborative online whiteboard/blackboard. [Tech note: *synchronous, use online apps, e.g., that allow learners to draw in real-time collaboratively; or use other programs/apps that allow one student to draw, and the other members can inform the illustrator of what to include in the poster draft*]
6. The groups download their poster and send it to the class' course management system or chat group for others to give comments and suggestions, including positive feedback. Comments and suggestions can involve such areas as cast and title of the movie, or the artwork in the poster.
7. Groups finalize their poster using any programs or apps of the students' choice. [Tech note: *use common presentation software, such as PowerPoint, or picture editing apps on students' smartphones; tech-savvy students can use more sophisticated apps such as Piktochart or Canva*]

3.9 Lesson 9 – Project Work

3.9.1 Background

Projects are a great way to put students at the center of their own learning. However, managing projects can be difficult for students and teachers. The Group Investigation method (Sharan & Sharan, 1992) can be a useful guide. Please also note that projects usually end with each group, one at a time, presenting to the entire class. This is not a very efficient use of time, as only one person is speaking at a time. Furthermore, the other groups often do not pay much attention to the presenters; the other groups are either busy preparing for their own presentation, or they are relaxing after they finish presenting. After all, each student is only one member of a large

audience; they are not likely to be called on. This situation may be exacerbated in online education contexts. As a result of students' lack of attention to the presentations, the teacher often ends up being the only one giving feedback on the presentations. Therefore, please note how this lesson uses a different form of presenting.

3.9.2 Objectives

Students will learn to do lively presentations.

3.9.3 Focus

The learning activities will give students the chance to develop and practice these skills:

- Cooperative skills: building and monitoring a roster.
- ICT skills: sharing screens.

3.9.4 Materials

Students will need to have access to a Sample Roster (bit.ly/Lesson9_Handout).

3.9.5 Technology requirement

Students will need access to technologies that allow them to:

(1) video conference (for the teacher to use with the class and for groups to use within their group and among groups), such as *Zoom, Skype*, or *Google Meet*,
(2) work collaborative online using apps, such as *Google Docs* or *Google Sheets*,
(3) create a roster using software such as *MS Excel*, and
(4) send emails to each other using *Gmail* or *Outlook*.

3.9.6 Steps

The stages of teaching and learning activities are:

1. The class brainstorms project topics, rubrics, and deadlines.
2. In groups of four, students begin working on their projects. Each group member takes on tasks to contribute toward the presentation the group is preparing. Each task has a deadline. The tasks, who is doing them, and the due dates are recorded in a roster done via *Excel*.
3. Group members check-in regularly with the group to monitor their progress and to plan the next steps.
4. Groups are paired up and take turns to present to that other group, not to the entire class. Each group member has a speaking part in the presentation.
5. This presenting to another group happens twice. After each presentation, the groups improve their presentation. After the second round of presenting and improving, the presentation is submitted to the teacher for grading.

4. IDEAS FOR OVERCOMING OBSTACLES

We hope that the lesson plans in the previous section of this article have convinced you that it may be practical to combine cooperative learning with modern online education. However, we realize that obstacles remain. The next two sections of this paper address these.

4.1 Ways to Assist Teachers

Obstacles to the use of cooperative learning in online education arise not just with students and their homes, but also with teachers and their schools. Schools may also lack hardware, software, and internet infrastructure, and teachers may lack knowledge about ICT tools and how to employ them for distance learning. For instance, Rehn et al. (2018) found that most teachers had spent little or no time learning how to transfer their pedagogic skills from face-to-face to online learning contexts. The online skills for which teachers lacked preparation were developing relationships among students and fostering interaction. Ways to assist teachers:

(a) include online teaching strategies for student-student interaction in pre-service and in-service programs,
(b) begin cooperative-learning infused online education on an occasional basis, as Singapore has done, instead of waiting for a crisis when schools and institutions of higher learning are closed,
(c) use of Lesson Study and related methods for teacher research and reflection,
(d) provide mentors for teachers, including peer mentors, student mentors, and school staff,
(e) acquire what teachers judge to be the most user-friendly software and hardware,
(f) let teachers and students also use ICT for fun activities, such as a talent show or quiz game, and
(g) provide Professional Development training for in-service teachers for improving ICT literacy as well as pedagogical skills of teaching in the online and blended learning context.

Blending furnishes another way for empowering students to cooperate successfully with peers via distance. In this case, blending does not refer to blended learning where students sometimes study at school and sometimes at home. Instead, blending can take such forms as blending:

(a) materials for which an electronic device is needed with hard-copy materials or the hard-copy materials can serve as a back-up should problems arise with the electronic devices,
(b) activities that require large amounts of bandwidth, such as using *Zoom*, with activities that need less bandwidth, such as messaging with a partner via SMS or *WhatsApp*,
(c) materials provided by the teacher/school and materials created by students, such as journal entries, surveys of family members and friends, and stories (fiction and non-fiction) written by students, and
(d) activities that require synchronous communication with activities for which asynchronous communication is fine or even better.

4.2 Have a Backup Plan

With so many variables involved in online cooperative learning, it is possible, even likely, that something with hardware, software, broadband, illnesses, etc., will go wrong now and then. Thus, teachers facilitating in-class learning need backup plans; so too are backup plans needed for online cooperative learning. Here are a few ideas:

(a) In some cases, schools use a radio or tv to broadcast lessons to students.
(b) Students have hard copy materials to work with. These could be teaching materials or general materials, such as books, magazines, etc. for extensive reading.
(c) Students download the same kinds of materials onto the hard drive of their devices.
(d) Students know where to search online for learning materials. Examples include Story Weaver (https://storyweaver.org.in/), Literacy Cloud (https://literacycloud.org/), and Let's Read Asia (https://reader.letsreadasia.org/) (of course, any such list will need regular updating, a task on which students may be able to help.)

5. CONCLUSION

Ongoing advances in ICT offer many potential benefits for education. However, to realize those benefits, advances in technology need to be accompanied by advances in pedagogy, in particular, the movement toward student-centered learning, a pedagogy that places students where they belong: at the center of the education experience (MacArthur et al. 1991). Cooperative learning fits at the heart of student-centered learning, as students learn from and with their peers, as well as with their teachers. This article has provided examples of how online education, aided by ICT, can be further enhanced by being combined with student-centered pedagogies, such as cooperative learning. The authors of this article hope to have encouraged teachers to overcome, rather than being overcome by, the real obstacles they, their students and other stakeholders face as they infuse cooperative learning into ICT-enabled online education.

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