



INTEGRATING A COMMUNITY OF INQUIRY (CoI) FOR TEACHING WORLD ENGLISHES IN A BLENDED LEARNING CONTEXT AT AN GIANG UNIVERSITY, VIETNAM

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Abstract:

This article explores the pedagogical integration of the Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework into the "World Englishes" course for English majors at An Giang University (AGU). Besides, utilizing a blended learning design that harmonizes the university's Moodle system with synchronous face-to-face instruction, the article details how the synergy of teaching, social, and cognitive presences fosters a collaborative-constructive environment. Therefore, some general rules for applying the CoI framework to the Moodle-based components will be designed to show the effectiveness of the intergration in enhancing student engagement, critical thinking, and learner autonomy when teaching World Englishes at An Giang University.

Keywords: Community of Inquiry (CoI), World Englishes, Blended learning

1. Introduction

The field of World Englishes explores the diversity, historical development, and localized functions of English variations across the globe. Galloway and Rose (2015) categorize this field into several sessions, including English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) and English as an International Language (EIL). For English majors at An Giang University, the subject is often perceived as highly academic and interdisciplinary, which can make it difficult for students to connect complex theoretical frameworks with practical application. Implementing Inquiry-based learning (IBL) within a Community of Inquiry helps bridge this gap by encouraging students to analyze linguistic phenomena, evaluate prejudices, and make evidence-based pedagogical decisions.

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In addition, the World Englishes course, offered in the final semester at An Giang University, introduces students to the formation and global development of English across regions such as Europe, America, Africa, Asia, and Australia. It helps learners understand key differences between Standard English and Global English while engaging with major linguistic debates. The course also develops effective cross-cultural communication skills, critical thinking, and collaborative abilities for professional contexts. However, instructors and students alike often face a persistent "*theory-practice gap*": the subject matter is highly academic and interdisciplinary, involving complex concepts such as linguistic authority, the "Inner Circle" model, and English as a Lingua Franca (ELF). Traditional teacher-centered methods frequently fail to engage students deeply enough to navigate these conceptual complexities or to develop the critical thinking required for the field. Characterized by high academic complexity and cross-disciplinary themes, the course often presents a significant challenge for students attempting to bridge abstract linguistic theories with global reality. Garrison, alongside his colleagues Anderson and Archer (2000), defines the Community of Inquiry (CoI) as a comprehensive conceptual framework designed to capture educational dynamics and guide the study of learning effectiveness, specifically within online and blended higher education. Accordingly, the course is designed in alignment with the Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework to support improvements in teaching and learning. Enhancing educational quality in the digital era requires coordinated efforts between instructors and institutions to establish and sustain effective communities of inquiry. Therefore, by restructuring the course to prioritize purposeful interaction and structured inquiry, the CoI framework provides a robust theoretical foundation encourages students to transition from passive recipients to active inquirers of language ownership and global variations.

2. Research Content

2.1 Theoretical Background

2.1.1 The Community of Inquiry (CoI) Framework

The globalization of English has fundamentally altered its status from a monocentric colonial legacy to a diverse, multi-centric lingua franca used by millions worldwide. To prepare students for this linguistic diversity, An Giang University (AGU) has integrated the "World Englishes" course into its English major curriculum.

Lipman (1991) conceptualizes education as an inquiry-driven process, emphasizing that a Community of Inquiry (CoI) represents one of the most effective approaches for fostering critical thinking as well as higher-order cognitive processes associated with creativity. From this perspective, learning is not merely the acquisition of knowledge but an active, collaborative, and reflective endeavor. In line with this view, the Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework offers a distinctive foundation for guiding the practical implementation of blended learning in higher education. It is grounded in the assumption that meaningful learning emerges through a collaborative and

constructivist experience, where individual understanding is shaped through interaction within a learning community—thereby linking cognitive autonomy with social engagement.

Combining the work of Nguyễn Thị Thắng (2025) and D. Randy Garrison (2000), the Community of Inquiry (CoI) is considered as a unique theoretical framework that guides the practical application of blended learning in higher education. It posits that deep and meaningful learning is a collaborative-constructive experience formed through the synergy of three core elements: teaching presence, social presence, and cognitive presence.

- **Teaching Presence:** This is the core binding factor in the model, involving instructional design, facilitation of discussion, and direct instruction. It focuses on encouraging students to take control of their own learning experience rather than merely transmitting knowledge.
- **Social Presence:** This element creates an environment of trust, openness, and group identity. In a community of inquiry, students listen to each other with respect, build upon each other's ideas, and support one another in drawing inferences.
- **Cognitive Presence:** Defined as the process of discovery, construction, and reflection, this presence allows learners to confirm knowledge through inquiry within the learning community.

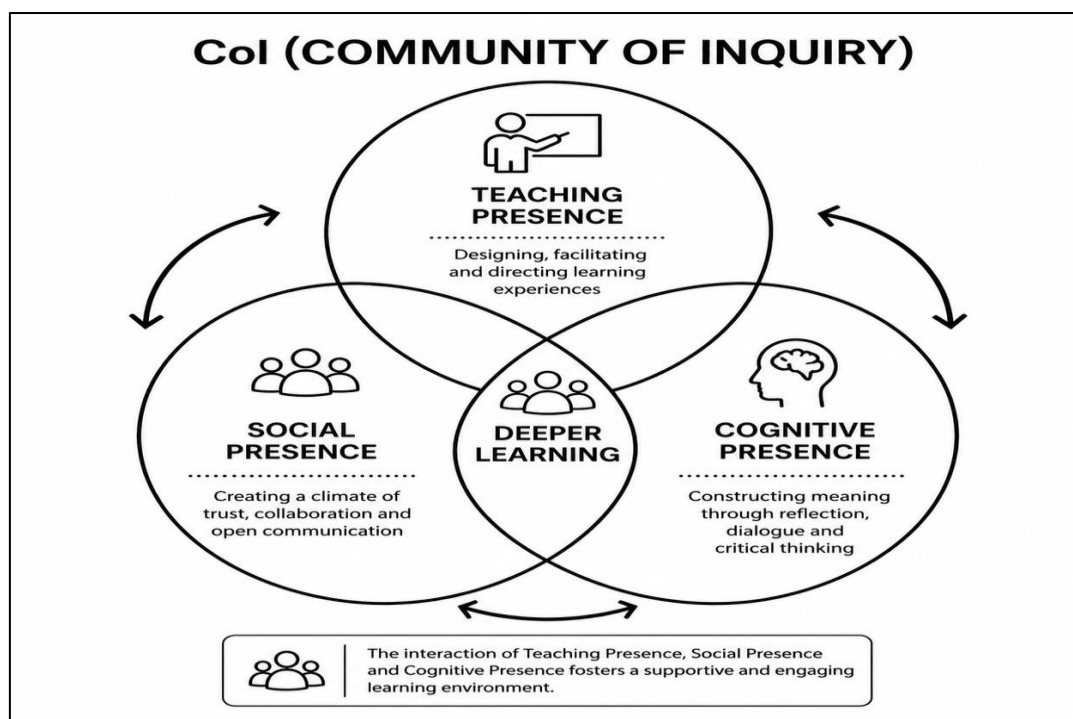


Figure 1: The Community of Inquiry (CoI) Framework

To address these challenges, it is proposed the systematic integration of the Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework. CoI which was originally theorized and written

by Garrison, Anderson, and Archer (2000) is a collaborative-constructive model based on the premise that deep and meaningful learning occurs through the intentional intersection of three core elements: teaching presence (instructional design and facilitation), social presence (establishing a climate of trust), and cognitive presence (the cycle of reflection and inquiry).

In a blended learning context, this model utilizes technology—specifically the university's Moodle system—not merely as a content repository, but as a space for sustained discourse and investigation. Teaching presence provides the necessary structure; social presence creates a safe climate where students feel empowered to challenge standard language ideologies; and cognitive presence drives the inquiry cycle from initial triggering events to the resolution of complex linguistic problems. Within this community, students are encouraged to *"listen to each other with respect, build on each other's ideas, and challenge one another to give reasons for unsupported opinions"*. This article details the strategies used to integrate CoI into the World Englishes curriculum at AGU and evaluates its impact on transforming the classroom into a dynamic space for personal and collective knowledge construction.

2.1.2 Blended Learning in Higher Education

Blended learning describes an educational program that strategically integrates face-to-face classroom interaction with technology-mediated activities to improve learning outcomes. According to Krause (2007), it involves the effective integration of different transmission modes and teaching models through a systematic use of technology. Within the CoI framework, the blended environment allows for shared responsibility, where roles and responsibilities for the three presences are distributed among all members of the community. At An Giang University, this model connects asynchronous activities on Moodle with synchronous classroom sessions to foster a cohesive learning community.

The principles for applying CoI in Blended Higher Education are organized around the three categories of teaching presence: design, facilitation, and direction. These update the "Seven Principles for Good Practice" (Chickering and Gamson, 1987) to maximize the potential of emerging information technologies. The updated principles include the preparation for the creation of open, trusted communication, critical discussion and feedback. They can create a sense of community and consensus, and create flexible inquiry (purposeful inquiry). Moreover, they maintain respect and responsibility, sustain inquiry that leads to solutions as well as ensure that assessment is consistent with the defined process and outcomes.

2.1.3 Inquiry-Based Learning (IBL)

Parsaiyan & Gholami (2023) stated that Inquiry-Based Learning (IBL) is a learner-centered pedagogical approach that emphasizes developing critical thinking, learner autonomy, and teamwork skills. Research indicates that IBL provides significant opportunities for creativity and self-expression, although students may initially face challenges when shifting from traditional teacher-centered methods. Effective IBL

implementation often follows a structured cycle, such as the 5E model (Engage – Explore – Explain – Elaborate – Evaluate), to move students through phases of engagement, exploration, and evaluation. In this model, students act as "*active inquirers*" while the instructor serves as a facilitator.

A primary benefit of Inquiry-Based Learning (IBL) is its capacity to significantly boost critical thinking and creativity by prompting students to engage in sophisticated questioning and exploration—skills that are indispensable for navigating the academic and interdisciplinary complexities of World Englishes (Qablan et al., 2024; Setiyaningsih et al., 2024). This pedagogical approach empowers students to transition from passive recipients to active inquirers, allowing them to construct their own frameworks of knowledge regarding global linguistic variations and their diverse cultural settings. Furthermore, when IBL is intentionally integrated with technology (such as the Moodle-based blended learning environment at An Giang University), it facilitates creative problem-solving and practical applications, which better prepares students to investigate and understand the multifaceted global landscape of the English language

2.2 General Rules for Applying CoI in Moodle (Preparation & Reflection)

The guiding role requires teachers to provide a clear roadmap, helping learners better orient themselves in independent learning when integrating technology in blended learning today, so based on these combinations, many activities on Moodle (preparation and reflection) are linked to the Engage, Explore, and Evaluate phases, while classroom activities focus on Explain and Elaborate through expert presentations, discussions, debates, and authority challenges are applied in teaching World Englishes.

Table 1 serves as the basis for tracking the implementation of the intervention in each chapter and comparing it with the learning objectives and products described in the main content of the topic. As a result, the designed table with the general rules for applying the CoI framework to the Moodle-based components (Preparation and Reflection) of the "World Englishes" course focuses specifically on the Engage, Explore, and Evaluate phases, which are strategically linked to asynchronous Moodle activities to facilitate deep learning.

Table 1: General Rules for Applying CoI in Moodle

| 5E Phase (Moodle Only) | Core CoI Presence Application | General Rule for Implementation | Key Moodle Activity Indicators |
|------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ENGAGE (Preparation) | Cognitive Presence: Triggering Event | Rule: Use "Triggering Events" to identify a linguistic problem or issue that generates curiosity | Watching a "triggering" video (e.g., Jay Walker's "English Mania"), participating in a provocative survey about "native-speakerism", playing games, or doing some kinds of tests |
| | Social Presence: Setting the Climate | Rule: Encourage students to project their personal | Posting initial reactions to language myths or identifying |

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|--------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | | characteristics by sharing initial beliefs on forums. | personal "standard English" biases on the forum. |
| EXPLORE (Preparation) | Cognitive Presence: Exploration | Rule: Facilitate independent searching for information and analysis of multiple linguistic perspectives. | Individually researching "First and Second Dispersal" materials or analyzing Haugen's 4-stage standardization model from reading files. |
| | Teaching Presence: Instructional Design | Rule: Clearly organize reading materials and provide guided questions to scaffold student inquiry. | Accessing curated instructional materials and responding to structured guided questions (200-300 words). |
| EVALUATE (Reflection) | Cognitive Presence: Resolution | Rule: Prompt learners to apply newly constructed knowledge to confirm shifts in perception or resolve dilemmas. | Writing Reflective Journals (200-300 words) on perception shifts regarding English ownership or the legitimacy of L2 varieties. |
| | Teaching Presence: Assessment & Feedback | Rule: Ensure assessment is congruent with intended outcomes; use peer feedback to build community. | Completing Moodle Post-tests to measure learning gains (LG) and engaging in structured peer-assessment rubrics. |

In teaching World Englishes, teaching presence is considered as architect because in this Moodle-specific context, it focuses on the macro-level structure (design and organization). By placing Engage and Explore on Moodle, the instructor ensures students arrive at the face-to-face class with a baseline of "Cognitive Presence" already established. In addition, social presence is considered as enabler because students often feel "language insecurity" when discussing World Englishes; the rule for Moodle is to create a "safe" asynchronous space (Social Presence). This allows students to develop Social Perceptions of their peers' ideas before high-stakes face-to-face debates. Finally, in the cognitive presence cycle, the Moodle activities serve as the "bookends" of the Practical Inquiry cycle, for they initiate the inquiry (Engage/Explore) and conclude it through reflection (Evaluate).

3. Conclusion

The implementation of the Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework in the "World Englishes" course at An Giang University represents a significant shift from traditional teacher-centered instruction toward a collaborative-constructive learning experience. By synergizing teaching, social, and cognitive presences within a blended learning environment, the course successfully addresses the "theory-practice gap" often associated with this highly academic and interdisciplinary subject.

The general rules for applying the CoI framework to the Moodle-based components in the "World Englishes" course in this article suggest that the intentional design of the course—harmonizing asynchronous Moodle activities with synchronous face-to-face discourse—empowers students to transition from passive recipients of

knowledge to active inquirers. Through the inquiry cycle, students not only master complex linguistic concepts such as English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) and linguistic ownership but also develop the critical thinking and learner autonomy essential for their future careers as language practitioners.

Furthermore, the role of the instructor at An Giang University evolves from a mere transmitter of knowledge to a facilitator and architect of a purposeful learning community. This shift requires a pedagogical commitment to creating safe, trusting environments where students feel empowered to challenge standard language ideologies and build upon one another's ideas.

In conclusion, the CoI framework provides a robust roadmap for modernizing higher education in the Vietnamese regional context. By fostering a sustainable community of inquiry, the "World Englishes" course at AGU serves as a model for how technology and active pedagogy can be integrated to prepare English majors for the linguistic complexities of a globalized world. Future efforts should focus on scaling this model to other academic-heavy courses, ensuring that the pedagogical benefits of learner-centered instruction are sustained across the university's curriculum.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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