



## Theories Applied to Multimedia Network Foreign Language Teaching

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### Abstract

The widespread application of network information and multimedia technology in teaching brings great changes to foreign language teaching environment and teaching objectives. The traditional teacher-centered teaching mode changes into the learner-centered one. Modern teaching theories provide powerful theoretical support for foreign language teaching in the context of multimedia network information. This paper probes into constructivism theory, communicative teaching theory, input and output hypotheses which are applied in multimedia network foreign language teaching and their practical use in teaching.

**Key words:** Multimedia network foreign language teaching; Constructivism theory; Communicative teaching; Input and output hypotheses

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### INTRODUCTION

21st century is the information age which is characterized by the knowledge boom and has been featured and introduced by the coming and wide use of the digital media—computers, computer networks, and multimedia. In the Information Age, the position of English as Lingua Franca becomes widely acknowledged. English is the international language of science and technology and 85%

of all information in world-wide informational storage and retrieval networks is in English, and English has become one of the most important school subjects in China. Therefore, there is no doubt that English is a necessary tool for anyone in the Information Age. The importance of English in the Information Age has posed a new challenge for traditional English teaching, which is characterized by high scores and low performances. In China, both the authorities and English teachers have realized the inefficiency of today's English teaching. Obviously, traditional English teaching cannot meet the needs of the future society. Meanwhile, with the development of Internet, the amount and variety of English on Internet makes it an ideal source of language materials. Besides, these language materials are in various presentations such as textual, visual and aural, which are quite different from textbooks. The widespread application of network information and multimedia technology in teaching brings great changes to foreign language teaching environment and teaching objectives. Foreign language teaching in information age also transforms teaching language knowledge into developing the learner's ability of seeking, receiving and disposing foreign language information. One cannot acquire these abilities from the traditional way of education. The "chalk + blackboard" pattern of traditional teaching is constantly revealing its shortcoming to meet the requirement of the Information Age.

In the context of multimedia network information, the traditional teacher-centered teaching mode changes into the learner-centered one. The goal of foreign language teaching is to develop the learner's cognitive skills, communicative competence and informatic competence. New teaching mode and teaching objectives need theoretical support. In this paper, I concentrate on some important theories applied in multimedia network foreign language teaching and their practical use in teaching.

### 1. CONSTRUCTIVISM THEORY

Constructivists believe that learning is the process of obtaining knowledge, but the language knowledge cannot

be obtained only through the teacher's instruction. In the certain context, the learner obtains the language knowledge through meaning construction with the aid of other people, including the teacher's and learning partner's help (such as cooperation, communication and using necessary information between people).

Multimedia uses not only written texts, but materials in various media, including text, sound and visual material as its relational database. Multimedia technology lets the learner learn a language from real-life material. Multimedia technology is the most effective way to create real situation.

Through a system of windows on the computer screen and the user's control of speed, direction, track, and scripts, learners can get as much lexical, grammatical, and informational help they need; they can browse, explore, trackback on the material, make observations and make decisions on their own, and in general interact with the program by asking the computer for information (via a keyboard) and reacting to that information. The program is learner-driven. Learners can restructure, reorganize, and edit the material as they wish; different learners can explore different aspects of the same material. In the multimedia network foreign language teaching environment, constructivist teaching uses the advanced multimedia technology to create the authentic situation for the learners constructing knowledge. Multimedia situational teaching environment, which has friendly interface and audio-visual image, can stimulate the learners' study interest and study enthusiasm, let the learners construct their own knowledge through solving the real problems.

Constructivist teaching can fully consider the learner's cognitive difference with the combination of multimedia technology. It can control the learning content, guide the different learners to carry out individual study.

Constructivist English teaching and learning focuses not only on the learner's development of language ability but on their life-long learning. Constructivist teaching supports the learner's active and cooperative learning, and develops the students' ability of thinking and problem-solving.

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## 2. COMMUNICATIVE TEACHING THEORY

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Communicative language teaching theory bases on Hyme's communicative competence theory and Halliday's functional language theory. Functional language theory emphasizes in putting focus on the learner, the teaching content taking language function as the syllabus, making choice according to the learner's need, teaching content being authentic and natural language. Communicative competence theory holds to combine teaching with the training of communicative competence, and creates

real foreign language environment and communicative situation in teaching.

Communicative language teaching starts from a theory of language as communication. The goal of language teaching is to develop student's communicative competence. Hymes proposed the term communicative competence to represent the ability to use language in a social context, to observe sociolinguistic norms of appropriateness. Hymes's communicative competence can be seen as the equivalent of Halliday's "meaning Potential".

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## 3. INPUT AND OUTPUT HYPOTHESES

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Input and output hypotheses are very important issues in second language acquisition research. Input and output hypotheses provide the solid basis for multimedia network foreign language teaching.

### 3.1 Input Hypothesis

#### 3.1.1 Sufficient Input

Krashen states that "acquisition" takes place as a result of the learner having understood input that is a little beyond the current level of his competence (i.e. the  $i+1$  level). In our country, it's a common problem that the learners' communicative competence in foreign language is poor. The main reason is that the language input is not sufficient. Most of the teaching materials have been rewritten, the language materials concerning newspaper, magazine, trade, economy, advertisement are rarely seen in the textbook, the input content is insufficient and less interesting. This kind of input prevents the learners in a great degree from using English fluently, decently and correctly in communication, and improving their comprehension ability.

Multimedia network foreign language teaching can improve the condition. The teacher can use the network media, supplement the teaching content taken from the real life and guarantee extensiveness of the teaching content and the popularity of the language.

#### 3.1.2 Comprehensible Input

Krashen holds that input must consist of " $i+1$ ". Krashen (1982, p.21) writes: A necessary condition Thus acquisition takes place when the learner understands language containing " $i+1$ ". This will automatically occur when communication is successful. Krashen talks of the input "casting a net" in order to make certain that it is of an optimal size, providing a built-in review of language forms already acquired and guaranteeing that " $i+1$ " is covered. "Casting a net" requires that the focus is on meaning and not form. Long considers some ways on how input is made comprehensible. One way is by the use of structures and vocabulary which the learner already knows. However, this type of input cannot foster development, because it supplies no new linguistic

material. Another way is by a “here-and-now” orientation, which enables the learner to make use of the linguistic and extra linguistic contexts and his general knowledge to interpret language which he does not actually know. A third way is through the modification of the interactional structure of conversation. Long considers interactional adjustments to be the important ones for SLA and points out that these occur even when there are no formal modifications. A “here-and-now” orientation, together with interactional adjustments, are the main source of comprehensible input. They ensure that communication proceeds, while exposing the learner to new linguistic material.

Incomprehensible language input is only a kind of noise to the beginner; he just wastes his time to listen to the language input which he can't understand at all. The ideal foreign language teaching should provide the learner with foreign language learning environment, so that the learner has more situations and opportunities to use the target language directly. The learner immerses directly. The learner immerses into English environment and carries out meaningful study. Traditional teacher-centered teaching emphasizes the explanation and understanding for the language rules and the repeatedly drills, neglects to let learners use and induce language rules themselves, the class teaching provides the learners with extremely limited comprehensible language. It prevents the students from improving their English application ability. Multimedia network English teaching creates the real situation, provides the learners with more comprehensible language input, it presents audio, video, image, animation, words, the learners are like present on the spot when they do language drills.

### 3.1.3 Interesting and Closely Related Input

If the input language attracts and concerns the learner, the learner acquires the language unconsciously. Interest is the best teacher; the learner's study interest is the formidable power for learning.

Multimedia network technology fully display the multielement function of sound, electricity, image and colour, stimulates the learner's sense organ in many ways, strengthens their senses of seeing and hearing. As the instructor of the multimedia network teaching, the teacher should take the advantage of multimedia network teaching, guide the learner to learn, stimulate his study enthusiasm, encourage him to participate in the activity, let the learner put all his heart into teaching activity.

## 3.2 Output Hypothesis Theory

Swain thinks that negotiation of meaning in language output can promote language acquisition, because it can not only help the learner understand language input, but also create output chance. The result of the negotiation of meaning is that particular types of input and interaction result. In particular it has been hypothesized that negotiation makes input comprehensible. Swain suggests

that output is important: the learner may be “pushed” to use alternative means where there is communication breakdown, in order to express a message precisely, coherently, and appropriately; using the language may force the learner to move from semantic processing which is characteristic of the early stages of SLS to syntactic processing.

In the context of multimedia network English teaching, the learner has more chance to output language in the real situation, and checks the correctness of his language input immediately. When the learner is not understood by the others, the negative input will spur him to change his expression way and correct his input, thus improves his language level.

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## CONCLUSION

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With the rapid development of information and multimedia technology, education is revolutionized. The function of education Changes from teaching knowledge to developing the person's ability to discover, handle, renew and create knowledge. Constructivism theory, communicative teaching theory, input and output hypothesis provide powerful theoretical support for foreign language teaching in the context of multimedia network information. In the context of multimedia network foreign language teaching, the learner's abilities of cognition, communication and information are fully developed. With the combination of modern teaching theories and multimedia network information technology, foreign language teaching undergoes great changes. The traditional teacher-centered teaching mode changes into the learner-centered one. Foreign language teaching in the context of multimedia network information meets the requirement of the Information Age, creates the condition for the learner's autonomous study, stimulates the learner's learning interest and improves teaching effectiveness.

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