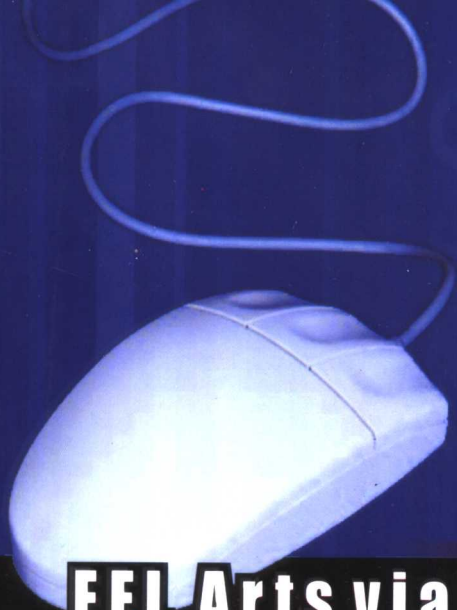




EFL Arts via the Internet

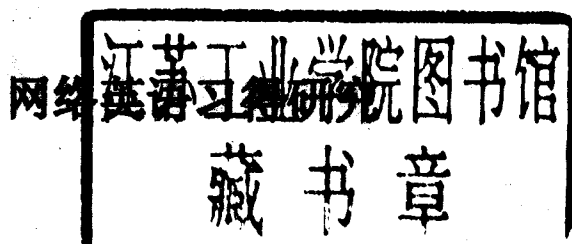
网络英语习得研究

Yuan Xue-fen

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武汉出版社

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Preface

After years of the traditional board and harmful chalk laboring and then suddenly being thrown into the magical vast reservoir of the World Wide Web, the author of this book feels a great impetus to change her teaching technology and model to get adjusted to the coming new era of teaching revolution and to get relaxed from the toil. Based on this humble idea, the researcher of this project has even started studying the new models for the instructing and learning of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in China since 1999 when most Chinese college students were crazy about QQ chatting.

How a web base and information system can be created to serve college English teaching and learning in order to enhance student performance is still in the formative stage in most universities in China. Many experiments are in progress and effective practices are only beginning to be recognized. The notion (concept) of establishing a knowledge base is to create an organizational memory of best practices and a means of gathering, sharing, and refining organizational expertise about resources and capabilities that have been observed to be most effective in improving student performance. In a sense, focusing on this organizational knowledge and on the sharing and refining of that knowledge among the practitioners of education is essential to further promote teaching as a truly professional activity. Information technology provides a medium in which to store, share, and retrieve data and information as never before, and therefore offers the possibility of using that

data and information to understand the causes and effects of student performance in our English language teaching.

This book consists of 12 parts, roughly studying two aspects: theories of teaching and learning and practices of teaching and learning via the Internet. The related theories from Chapter One to Chapter 5 are arranged on their popularity among the professors in classes the researcher has observed in eleven courses on the American campus of University of Wisconsin-Platteville, as it is really hard to tell which prevails which. The contents of Web-class practice chapters from 6 to 12 are arranged in the theory-to-practice order and also in the easy-to-difficult level.

In this book, the author has probed into the educational media technology and theories that have brought impact on the language teaching and learning. The modern media technology is rich and has facilitated people's life and changed people's life and work styles. To master this technology is highly necessary for every teacher of English. The constructivism theory is a philosophy of learning founded on the premise that, by reflecting on our experiences, we construct our own understanding of the world we live in. Each of us generates our own "rules" and "mental models," which we use to make sense of our experiences. Learning, therefore, is simply the process of adjusting our mental models to accommodate new experiences. The ASSURE model is generated from constructivism. New curriculum design is necessary and the mastery of web tools is indispensable for teachers and students. Then the generally accepted teaching and learning activities such as project design, interactivity, collaborative learning are touched on. In chapter five, fourteen models for English language

teaching and learning are described in detail. Chapter six to chapter twelve include lots of information about Web sites that can be used by teachers to teach English and students to learn listening, speaking, reading, writing, vocabulary, structure and culture online. Many online activities are designed for teachers to engage the students in language performance.

Doing a project via the Internet is painstaking and time consuming. The blinking screen makes the eyes dry and the brain dizzy. Anyway, if the book appears to be beneficial for English learners and instructors, its author would feel very consoled.

Here I'd like to sincerely thank my educational media technology instructor John Nkemnji whose greatest patience with his students has set a shining example for me to be patient with this tedious project construction and my school curriculum instructor Tom Lo Guidice from whom I have benefited a lot in methods of doing research work.

I would also like to thank the Science and Research Section of South-central University for Nationalities that has funded my project so that it can be finished in time.

Finally I would like to thank my dear husband Xia Wowu and my son Xia Yi for their enduring love, their undying support, their life-affirming joy and their great expectation from me.

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Chapter 1 Media Instructing and Learning Theories

To be a teacher in the right sense is to be a learner. I am not a teacher, only a fellow student.

—Soren Kierkegaard

Since the 1950s, media and technology for learning have tremendously influenced education. Technology permeates all aspects of our lives and evolves at a pace that is at once terrifying and exciting. The Internet attracts millions of users a month. In the recent decade, the computer has penetrated into the teaching and learning settings. Such tools offer powerful possibilities for improving the learning process. The teacher, however, will make the difference in the integration of media into this process. For students growing up in a techno-society, digital technology is part of the natural landscape. Students use the Internet to “manage their personal finances, check the scores of their favorite team, chat online, go to a virtual birthday party... and their parting expression is ‘email me’” (Tapscott 1999).

1.1 Media and Methods

A medium (pl. media) is a channel of communication. It refers to anything that carries information between a source and a receiver (Heinich). Media for teaching include non-projected media such as photographs, diagrams, displays, models; projected media such as slides, filmstrips, overhead transparencies, and computer projection; audio media such as cassettes and compact discs; motion media such as video; computer-mediated instruction; computer-based multimedia and hypermedia; computer networks including the Internet; and media such as radio and television used for distance learning. Internet has now rolled all these media into one.

Methods are the procedures of instruction that are selected to help learners achieve the objectives or to internalize the content or message. Traditionally, instructional methods have been described as "presentation forms" such as lectures and discussions. Now, there are a great variety of methods: presentation (in which a source tells, dramatizes, or otherwise disseminates information to learners), demonstration (in which the learners view a real or lifelike example of the skill or procedure to be learned), discussion (which involves the exchange of ideas and feelings among students or among students and teacher), drill-and-practice (in which the learner is led through a series of practice exercises designed to increase fluency in a new skill or to refresh an existing one), tutorial (which means that

a tutor—in the form a person, computer, or special printed materials—presents the content, poses a question or problem, requests a learner response, analyze the response, supplies appropriate feedback, and provides practice until the learner demonstrates a predetermined level of competence), cooperative learning groups (students learn from each other when they work on projects as a team), gaming (it provides a joyful environment in which the learners follow prescribed rules as they strive to attain a challenging goal), simulation (which involves the learner confronting a scaled-down version of a real-life situation), discovery (which uses an inductive, or inquiry, approach to learning and presents problems to be solved through trial and error), problem solving (which involves placing students in the active role of being confronted with an ill-structured problem situated in the real world).

1.2 Constructivism Theory

Constructivism is a philosophy of learning founded on the premise that, by reflecting on people's experiences, they construct their own understanding of the world they live in. Each of them generates their own "rules" and "mental models," which they use to make sense of their experiences. Learning, therefore, is simply the process of adjusting people's mental models to accommodate new experiences.

There are several guiding principles of constructivism:

Learning is a search for meaning. Therefore, learning must start with the issues around which students are actively trying to construct meaning. Meaning requires understanding wholes as well as parts. And parts must be understood in the context of wholes. Therefore, the learning process focuses on primary concepts, not isolated facts.

In order to teach well, we must understand the mental models that students use to perceive the world and the assumptions they make to support those models.

The purpose of learning is for an individual to construct his or her own meaning, not just memorize the "right" answers and regurgitate someone else's meaning. Since education is inherently interdisciplinary, the only valuable way to measure learning is to make the assessment part of the learning process, ensuring it provides students with information on the quality of their learning.

How does constructivism impact learning?

Curriculum

Constructivism calls for the elimination of a standardized curriculum. Instead, it promotes using curricula customized to the students' prior knowledge. Also, it emphasizes hands-on problem solving.

Instruction

Under the theory of constructivism, educators focus on making connections between facts and fostering new understanding in students. Instructors tailor their teaching strategies to student responses and encourage students to

analyze, interpret, and predict information. Teachers also rely heavily on open-ended questions and promote extensive dialogue among students.

Assessment

Constructivism calls for the elimination of grades and standardized testing. Instead, assessment becomes part of the learning process so that students play a larger role in judging their own progress.

1.3 Instructing and Learning Reshaping

Teaching is the arrangement of information and environment to facilitate learning. Environment does not simply mean where teaching takes place. It also means the methods, media, and equipment needed to convey information and guide the learner's study. Teaching online is unlike any other educational experience. Faculty and students have to rely solely on the written word. There is no body language or eye contact to depend on as in the onsite classroom. Teaching online is also quite unique. Because online instructors are dealing only with the written word, sometimes it is difficult for them to judge the students.

The roles of the teacher and the learner are clearly changing because of the influence of media and technology in the classroom. No longer are the teacher and the textbook the sources of all knowledge. The teacher becomes the director of the knowledge-access process. As the guide for

learning, she/he examines media and technology in the context of the instruction and its potential impact on the outcome for students.

According to Ken W. White, teachers online should manage to do four things: control talk, be humorous, use special language such as ☺ and employ an “andragogical” approach that is adult-centered and in which the teacher expects students to bring a wealth of information and experience to a class. Just as Ken W. White states, “working adults should be self-directed but they also value the exchange of **ideas and meaningful relations**”.

Teachers, especially English teachers, should also be able to establish online proficiency assessment if they want to help students gain the basic proficiency in English that the students will need to be successful in their undergraduate study and, later, as a college graduate or in their professional life. Moreover, teachers should be able to choose the best software, use video and audio supplements, and manage e-mails. The teachers’ syllabus must contain effective elements such as course description and overview; instructor biographical sketch; instructor contact information; schedule of readings and assignments; review of class policies including attendance, grading, participation, tone in the classroom, late assignments, exams, academic dishonesty; request for student biographical sketches; system information, formatting, and note and file management (Marilyn Fullmer-Umari, 2000).

Learning is the development of new knowledge, skills, or attitudes as an individual interacts with information and the environment. Learning takes place all the time. The online learning is proceeded and facilitated through the computer-assisted Internet. Students no longer just use the traditionally notebooks or take the paper quizzes and examinations. And the use of electronic resources, including telecommunication projects and multimedia productions, has resulted in positive effects on student attitudes and student motivation (Borgman, Hirsh, Walter, and Gallagher 1995; Mendrino 1994).

In online learning, students should reach the common goals set for them: 1) communication competence which is essential to professional practice and growth especially in reading and writing though the area of speaking skills remains a weakness of the online medium; 2) critical thinking which requires students to acquire, analyze, synthesize and evaluate information as well as examine issues rationally, logically, and coherently; 3) professional identity in which students are concerned about improving the knowledge, skills, and values of the profession (White,2000). In order to reach these goals, students should have cooperative learning. Two or three students at a computer terminal learn more as they carry on discussions while working through the assigned problem.

As Robert Heinich states, computer assistance can alleviate some of the logistical obstacles to using cooperative