

CONSTRUCTIVISM IN TEACHING AND LEARNING PROCESS

Karimova Umida, Akhmedova Dilora & Ergashev Umar

Teacher, the Department of English History and Grammar,
Samarkand State Institute of Foreign Languages
mrs.karimova17@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This article is dedicated to the role of Constructivism in education, particularly in foreign language learning. The traditional methods of teaching English as a second language have drawbacks. In this regard, constructivist ways of teaching may fill the gaps.

Keywords: Constructivist approach, traditional classroom, constructivist classroom, predisposition.

INTRODUCTION, LITERATURE REVIEW AND DISCUSSION

In the constructivist classroom, the focus tends to shift from the teacher to the students. The classroom is no longer a place where the teacher (“expert”) pours knowledge into passive students, who wait like empty vessels to be filled. In the constructivist model, the students are urged to be actively involved in their own process of learning. The teacher functions more as a facilitator who coaches, mediates, prompts and helps students develop and assess their understanding and thereby their learning. And, in the constructivist classroom, both teacher and students think of knowledge not as inert factoids to be memorized, but as a dynamic, ever-changing view of the world we live in and the ability to successfully stretch and explore that view. The chart below compares the traditional classroom to the constructivist classroom. One can see significant difference in basic assumptions about knowledge, students and learning.

Traditional Classroom	Constructivist Classroom
Curriculum begins with the parts of the whole. Emphasizes basic skills.	Curriculum emphasizes big concepts, beginning with the whole and expanding to include the parts.
Strict adherence to fixed curriculum is highly valued.	Pursuit of student’s questions and interests is valued.
Materials are primarily textbooks and workbooks.	Materials include primary sources of material and manipulative materials.
Learning is based on repetition.	Learning is interactive, building on what the students already knows.
Teachers disseminate information to students; students are recipients of knowledge.	Teachers have a dialogue with students, helping students construct their own knowledge.
Teacher’s role is directive, rooted in authority.	Teacher’s role is interactive, rooted in negotiation.
Assessment is through testing, correct answers.	Assessment includes student works, observation and a point of view, as well as tests. Process is as important as product.
Knowledge is seen as inert.	Knowledge is seen as dynamic, ever changing with our experiences.
Students work primarily alone.	Students work primarily in groups. [8]

Traditional teaching approach (lecture method) is very common in education especially at university level. Traditional method ignores the students consequently the mental level of interest of the students. It involves coverage of the context and rote memorization on the part of the students. It did not involve students in creative thinking and participation in the creative part of activities.

The traditional classroom often looks like a one-person show with a largely uninvolved learner. Traditional classes are usually dominated by direct and unilateral instruction. Traditional approach followers assume that there is a fixed body of knowledge that the student must come to know. Students are expected to blindly accept the information they are given without questioning the instructor (Stofflett, 1998). The teacher seeks to transfer thoughts and meanings to the passive student leaving little room for student-initiated questions, independent thought or interaction between students (VAST, 1998). Even the in activities based subjects, although activities are done in a group but do not encourage discussion or exploration of the concepts involved. This tends to overlook the critical thinking and unifying concepts essential to true science literacy and appreciation (Yore, 2001). This teacher-centered method of teaching also assumes that all students have the same level of background knowledge in the subject matter and are able to absorb the material at the same pace (Lord, 1999). [1,83-110]

A constructivist teacher and a constructivist classroom exhibit a number of discernable qualities markedly different from a traditional or direct instruction classroom. A constructivist teacher is able to flexibly and creatively incorporate ongoing experiences in the classroom into the negotiation and construction of lessons with small groups and individuals. The environment is democratic, the activities are interactive and student centered, and the students are empowered by a teacher who operates as a facilitator/consultant.

Constructivist classrooms are structured so that learners are immersed in experiences within which they may engage in meaning-making inquiry, action, imagination, invention, interaction, hypothesizing and personal reflection. Teachers need to recognize how people use their own experiences, prior knowledge and perceptions, as well as their physical and interpersonal environments to construct knowledge and meaning. The goal is to produce a democratic classroom environment that provides meaningful learning experiences for autonomous learners.

This perspective of learning presents an alternative view of what is regarded as knowledge, suggesting that there may be many ways of interpreting or understanding the world. No longer is the teacher seen as an expert, who knows the answers to the questions she or he has constructed, while the students are asked to identify their teacher's constructions rather than to construct their own meanings. In a constructivist classroom, students are encouraged to use prior experiences to help them form and reform interpretations. This may be illustrated by reference to a personal response approach to literature, a constructivist strategy first articulated by Rosenblatt (1938). Rosenblatt (1978) argues for a personal and constructive response to literature whereby students' own experiences and perceptions are brought to the reading task so that in transacting with that text, the realities and interpretations which the students construct are their own.[7,319] A reader response approach to literature rejects the idea that all students should necessarily come to the same interpretation of a selection of literature, that single interpretation being the teacher's or someone else's. A reader response approach allows students to explore variant interpretations, the teacher's own interpretation being only one possible interpretation in the classroom

In a traditional classroom, an invisible and imposing, at times, impenetrable, barrier between student and teacher exists through power and practice. In a constructivist classroom, by contrast, the teacher and the student share responsibility and decision making and demonstrate mutual respect. The democratic and interactive process of a constructivist classroom allows students to be active and autonomous learners. Using constructivist strategies, teachers are more effective. They are able to promote communication and create flexibility so that the needs of all students can be met. The learning relationship in a constructivist classroom is mutually beneficial to both students and teachers.

A Constructivist Classroom is a Student-Centered Classroom. The student-centeredness of a constructivist classroom is clearly apparent in a reader response approach to literature. Recognizing the significance of the unique experiences that each reader brings to the reading of a selection of literature, the teacher in a response-centered approach seeks to explore the transaction between the student and the text to promote or extract a meaningful response (Rosenblatt, 1978). This places the student in a central position in the classroom since exploring this transaction seems unlikely to occur unless the teacher is willing to relinquish the traditional position of sole authority, thereby legitimating the unique experiences that all members of the class bring to the reading rather than just those experiences the teacher brings. The resulting perception and effect in the classroom is evident in students' recognition that the discussion is a legitimate one involving questions to which nobody knows the answer. It isn't a treasure hunting game where they are trying to guess what is in their teacher's head, but a process that creates meaning and knowledge.

From a constructivist perspective, where the student is perceived as meaning-maker, teacher-centered, text-centered and skills-oriented approaches to literature instruction are replaced by more student-centered approaches where processes of understanding are emphasized. In a discussion of language arts instruction based on constructivist theories of language use and language development, Applebee (1993) suggests that rather than treating the subject of English as subject matter to be memorized, a constructivist approach treats it as a body of knowledge, skills, and strategies that must be constructed by the learner out of experiences and interactions within the social context of the classroom. In such a tradition, understanding a work of literature does not mean memorizing someone else's interpretations, but constructing and elaborating upon one's own within the constraints of the text and the conventions of the classroom discourse community. [5, 200]

The traditional method is being used in teaching of English communication skills at BED level in Pakistan despite of knowing its advantages and disadvantages. It is being replaced by constructivist teaching method in teaching of English communication skills at BED which has been proved through various researches to be comparatively for better than that the traditional teaching method. The findings of the study proved that the students of experimental group not only learnt better but the rate of proficiency was also higher than that of control group. Constructivist group indicated a high level of satisfaction, and increased student participation was evident to any observer. Students were more willing to volunteer answers and ask questions of the instructor in order to clarify material, and team discussions resulted in many new points being introduced. The findings of the study proved that constructivist teaching method in teaching of English communication skills at BED is far better as compared to traditional method. From the findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. The mean score of experimental group was almost equal to the mean score of control group on pre-test. Therefore, it is concluded that both the groups were equal before the start of experiment.

2. The mean score of experimental group was significantly different from the mean score of control group. It found that the experimental group performed better than the control group on posttest.

3. The mean score of experimental group in reading portion of English communication skills at BED level was significantly different from the mean score of control group. It can be concluded that the experimental group performed better in reading portion of English communication skills at BED level than the control group on posttest.

4. The mean score of experimental group in grammar portion of English communication skills at BED level on was significantly different from the mean score of control group. The results of experiment and control groups were reversing in pre-test. It can be concluded that the experimental group performed better in grammar portion of English communication skills at BED level than the control group on posttest.

5. The mean score of experimental group in writing portion of English communication skills at BED level was significantly different from the mean score of control group. It can be concluded that the experimental group performed better in writing portion of English communication skills at BED level on the content area of organization of life than the control group on posttest.

A constructivist student-centered approach places more focus on students learning than on teachers teaching. A traditional perspective focuses more on teaching. From a constructivist view, knowing occurs by a process of construction by the knower. Lindfors (1984) advises that how we teach should originate from how students learn.[1,83-110]

REFERENCES

1. Argris, C. (2004). Teaching smart people how to learn. In Harvard business review on developing leaders (pp. 83-110). Boston: Harvard Business School Publishing Corporation.
2. Cooper, S. (2016 a). Metacognitive research. The theories of learning in educational psychology. Retrieved from <http://www.lifecircles-inc.com/Learningtheories/learningmap.html>
3. Cooper, S. (2016 b). Metacognitive research. Roger Schank Script Theory. Retrieved from <http://www.lifecircles-inc.com/>
4. Cooper, S. (2016 bc). Metacognitive research. John Flavell Theory. Retrieved from <http://www.lifecircles-inc.com/>
5. Gagnon, Jr. G. W., &Collay, M. (2001). Designing for learning: Six elements in constructivist classrooms. Thousand Oaks, CA, USA: Corwin Press, Inc.
6. Gul, A. (2016). Constructivism as a new notion in English language education in Turkey (A dissertation submitted to the Kent State University College of Education, Health, and Human Services in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, Kent University).
7. Kaufman, D. (2004). Constructivist issues in language learning and teaching. Annual Review of Applied Linguistics, 24, 303B319. Kearsley, G. (n.d.). Theory in practice database. George Washington University Online. Retrieved from <http://gwis.circ.gwu.edu/~tip/bruner.html>
8. www.wikipedia.org