

CONSTRUCTIVISM AS A KEY APPROACH FOR DESIGNING EFL METHODOLOGY SESSIONS

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New tendencies in Ukrainian system of education displayed in in the Concept for the Development of Pedagogical Education and suggested by the key ideas of the New Ukrainian School reform [5; 6] require the implementation of the new model of pedagogical education based on contemporary learner-centered approaches. Among them is constructivist approach which is used for designing EFL Methodology sessions.

This abstract is targeted at the study of the key features of the constructivist approach. According to Elliott et al. (2000), constructivist approach considers people's active construction of their own knowledge relying on their own experience [4, c. 256]. Having done literature review on the issue under the investigation we concluded that constructivist theory is not new in education. It was introduced by Jean Piaget and Joan Dewey, though the constructivist models of teaching are specifically attributed to the works of Maria Montessori, which were further developed by David A. Kolb and Ronald Fry. It was Kolb and Fry who developed a methodology for experiential learning that involves concrete experience, observation and reflection, forming abstract concepts, and testing in new situations. Among the educators, philosophers, psychologists, and sociologists who have added new perspectives to constructivist learning theory and practice are Lev Vygotsky, Jerome Bruner, and David Ausubel [3].

More detailed analysis of the constructivist approach concerns the principles it is based on and its key features. The principles of constructivism are presented in *Table 1*.

Table 1

The Principles of Constructivism

Principle	Comments
Knowledge is constructed, rather	Constructivism's central idea is that human learning is constructed, that learners build new knowledge upon the

than innate, or passively absorbed	foundation of previous learning.
Learning is an active process	The second notion is that learning is an active rather than a passive process. Learners construct meaning only through active engagement with the world (such as experiments or real-world problem solving). Information may be passively received, but understanding cannot be, for it must come from making meaningful connections between prior knowledge, new knowledge, and the processes involved in learning.
All knowledge is socially constructed	Learning is a social activity – it is something we do together, in interaction with each other, rather than an abstract concept. Thus, all teaching and learning is a matter of sharing and negotiating socially constituted knowledge.
All knowledge is personal	Each individual learner has a distinctive point of view, based on existing knowledge and values. This means that same lesson, teaching or activity may result in different learning by each pupil, as their subjective interpretations differ.
Learning exists in mind	The constructivist theory posits that knowledge can only exist within the human mind, and that it does not have to match any real world reality. Learners will be constantly trying to develop their own individual mental model of the real world from their perceptions of that world. As they perceive each new experience, learners will continually update their own mental models to reflect the new information, and will, therefore, construct their own interpretation of reality.
Learning is an active process	The second notion is that learning is an active rather than a passive process. Learners construct meaning only through active engagement with the world (such as experiments or real-world problem solving). Information may be passively received, but understanding cannot be, for it must come from making meaningful connections between prior knowledge, new knowledge, and the processes involved in learning.

Dr. Bada (2015) in his article compares the traditional classroom and the constructivist classroom (*Table 2*). Furthermore he states that «the constructivist classroom is no longer a place where the teacher pours knowledge into passive students, who wait like empty vessels to be filled» [1, pp. 68–69]. On the contrary,

students are actively involved in the process of their own learning. Teacher's role has changed from the transmitter of knowledge to the facilitator of learning.

Table 2

The Differences between Traditional Classroom and Constructivist Classroom

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 a fixed curriculum is highly valued	Pursuit of student 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 student already knows
Teachers disseminate information to students; students are recipients of knowledge (passive learning)	Teachers have a dialogue with students, helping students construct their own knowledge (active learning)
Teacher's role is directive, rooted in authority	Teacher's role is interactive, rooted in negotiation
Students work primarily alone (competitive)	Students work primarily in groups (cooperative)
Assessment is through testing, correct answers	Assessment includes student works, observations, and points 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

Borrowed from: Bada, S. O. (2015). Constructivism Learning Theory: A Paradigm for Teaching and Learning. *ISOR Journal of Research & Method in Education*, 5(6), 66–70. doi: 10.9790/7388-05616670

Having analysed *Table 2*, one can see significant differences in basic assumptions about knowledge, students, and learning. As it is outlined by van Laar et al. (2017), «the constructivist learning environment described by Bada, provides opportunities for students to acquire and perfect 21st century skills such as collaboration, communication, problem solving, and critical thinking» [7].

Summing up, we can state that the key features of the constructivist approach are typical of the EFL Methodology teaching. The conclusion is supported by the

core Curriculum analysis [2]. Sessions are designed relying on constructivist principles. The so-called «to theory through practice» approach used for session design testifies the application of the key features of the constructivist learning environment in the EFL Methodology classroom.

References

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