

CONSTRUCTIVIST APPROACH IN EFL CLASSROOMS (A CASE STUDY A HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDONESIA)

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Abstract: The study adopts a qualitative research design, which aligns with the constructivist paradigm. The research employs an exploratory approach to gain in-depth insights into the constructivist approach's implementation in EFL classrooms. The participants in the study are EFL learners and lecturers from a higher education institutions in Indonesia. The sample is selected using purposive sampling. Semi-structured interviews are conducted with EFL lecturers to gain their perspectives on the use of the constructivist approach in the classroom. The researchers observe EFL classrooms where the constructivist approach is implemented. The qualitative data gathered from interviews, classroom observations, and student surveys are transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis. This study confirms that impact of the constructivist approach in EFL Classrooms in a Higher Education in Indonesia has been positive overall. It has contributed to a more student-centered and interactive learning environment, fostering greater engagement, autonomy, and critical thinking skills among EFL learners.

Key terms: Constructivist Approach, EFL Classrooms, Case Study

Introduction

The use of constructivism as an instructional approach in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms has gained significant attention in recent years. Constructivism is an educational philosophy that emphasizes active learning, learner-centeredness, and the construction of knowledge through meaningful experiences (de Soto, 2022a, 2022b; Kozlova, 2023). This background study explores the theoretical foundations and previous research related to the implementation of the constructivist approach in EFL classrooms.

Constructivism, as a learning theory, posits that learners actively construct knowledge and meaning based on their prior knowledge, experiences, and interactions

with the environment (Matriano, 2020; Shah Ph & Kumar, 2019). It suggests that learners are not passive recipients of information but rather engage in the construction of their own understanding (Casas Jr et al., 2021; Rhim & Han, 2020). English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms involve the teaching and learning of English in non-English speaking environments (Albiladi, 2019; Talley & Hui-Ling, 2014). EFL instruction often focuses on developing learners' communicative competence and language skills (Farooq, 2015; Rao & Lei, 2014; Sehlaoui, 2001). The constructivist approach aligns with learner-centered education, which places the learner at the center of the learning process (Blumberg, 2016; Bonk & King, 2012; Paquette & Trudel, 2018). Learner-centered classrooms encourage student autonomy, collaboration, and critical thinking, allowing students to actively participate in their learning (Darsih, 2018; Kladder, 2019; Moate & Cox, 2015).

Numerous studies have explored different strategies for implementing the constructivist approach in EFL classrooms. These strategies include project-based learning, problem-solving activities, collaborative learning, and inquiry-based approaches. Research has examined the effectiveness of these strategies in promoting language acquisition and enhancing learners' motivation and engagement (Cai et al., 2022; Jeong, 2019; Lai et al., 2016). Studies have investigated the impact of constructivism on various aspects of language learning, such as speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills. Findings suggest that constructivist approaches contribute to improved language proficiency, as learners actively engage in authentic language use and meaningful tasks (Ozverir et al., 2017; Sadik, 2008). Constructivist approaches have been associated with increased learner motivation in EFL classrooms. By providing opportunities for choice, autonomy, and relevance, constructivist practices foster learners' intrinsic motivation and positive attitudes towards learning English (Liu & Lan, 2016; Wang, 2014). The role of the teacher in constructivist classrooms is crucial. Teachers serve as facilitators, guiding students' learning, providing scaffolding, and creating a supportive learning environment (Pitkänen et al., 2020; Polly et al., 2017; Shadaan & Leong, 2013). Research has explored effective teacher practices, professional development needs, and challenges associated with adopting a constructivist approach in EFL classrooms.

Based on initial observations in one of the universities in Indonesia, there are several problems related to the constructivist approach in learning English as a Foreign Language. Some of the problems that occur such as students in college have a variety of learning styles. Although the constructivist approach emphasizes independence and active participation, some students may be more comfortable with more structured and instructional teaching methods. Universities need to pay attention to the individual needs and preferences of students when designing and implementing constructivism-based learning. Moreover, students at the university have varying levels of English proficiency. Some students may have good language skills, while others may still have difficulty understanding and using English effectively. In this context, the constructivist approach

must be able to accommodate differences in students' language skill levels and provide the necessary support for the development of their language skills.

Constructivism promotes hands-on, experiential learning, which can be time-consuming. EFL classrooms often have limited contact hours, and teachers need to cover a wide range of language skills and content within a specific timeframe. Implementing constructivist activities may result in inadequate time for the necessary practice and reinforcement of language skills. Constructivism emphasizes process-oriented learning and individualized experiences, making traditional summative assessments less suitable. Assessing language proficiency in a constructivist EFL classroom becomes complex, as it requires evaluating a student's ability to apply language skills in real-world, meaningful contexts. Based on the background mentioned above, the purpose of this study is to overview the constructivist approach in EFL Classrooms in a Higher Education in Indonesia.

Methodology

The study adopts a qualitative research design, which aligns with the constructivist paradigm (Creswell, 2012). The research employs an exploratory approach to gain in-depth insights into the constructivist approach's implementation in EFL classrooms. The participants in the study are EFL learners and lecturers from a higher education institutions in Indonesia. The sample is selected using purposive sampling. Semi-structured interviews are conducted with EFL lecturers to gain their perspectives on the use of the constructivist approach in the classroom. The interviews explore their instructional strategies, beliefs, and experiences related to constructivist principles. The researchers observe EFL classrooms where the constructivist approach is implemented. These observations focus on the interactions between instructors and students, student engagement, collaborative activities, and the overall classroom dynamics. Surveys are administered to EFL learners to gather their perceptions and experiences of the constructivist approach. The surveys assess their levels of engagement, motivation, and perceived language proficiency growth resulting from the constructivist instructional methods. The qualitative data gathered from interviews, classroom observations, and student surveys are transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Themes and patterns related to the implementation of the constructivist approach, its impact on student learning, and the challenges faced are identified. Findings from interviews, observations, and surveys are triangulated to ensure the validity and reliability of the results. The convergence of multiple data sources helps establish a comprehensive understanding of the constructivist approach in EFL classrooms.

Result

This section elaborates and investigates findings about the impact of the constructivist approach in EFL Classrooms in a Higher Education in Indonesia. Based on observation and interview with EFL learners and lecturers from a higher education institutions in Indonesia, data showed that constructivist approach positively impact in EFL Classrooms in a Higher Education in Indonesia such as active Engagement.

The constructivist approach in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms has had a significant impact on higher education in Indonesia. The constructivist approach to learning emphasizes student-centered activities, collaboration, and active engagement in the learning process. It views learners as active constructors of knowledge rather than passive recipients of information. Here is an overview of the impact of the impact of the constructivist approach in EFL Classrooms in a Higher Education in Indonesia:

a. **Active and Engaged Learning:** The constructivist approach encourages students to actively participate in their own learning. It promotes critical thinking, problem-solving, and decision-making skills. Students engage in activities such as group discussions, projects, and hands-on tasks, which enable them to construct their knowledge through meaningful interactions with the language.

b. **Collaborative Learning:** Constructivism emphasizes collaborative learning, where students work together in pairs or groups to solve problems, share ideas, and negotiate meaning. This approach fosters communication and cooperation among students, enhancing their language skills and promoting a supportive classroom environment.

c. **Learner Autonomy:** The constructivist approach empowers learners to take ownership of their learning process. Students are encouraged to set goals, explore topics of interest, and seek solutions independently. This autonomy enhances motivation, self-confidence, and self-directed learning skills among EFL students in higher education.

d. **Contextualized Learning:** The constructivist approach emphasizes the importance of connecting new knowledge to learners' prior experiences and real-life contexts. In the EFL classroom, this means relating language learning to meaningful situations, such as discussing current events or engaging in role-plays. This approach enhances students' understanding and retention of the language by making it relevant and applicable to their lives.

e. **Constructive Assessment:** The constructivist approach promotes a shift in assessment practices, moving away from traditional tests and exams towards authentic and performance-based assessments. Students are evaluated based on their ability to apply knowledge in real-world contexts, demonstrate problem-solving skills, and engage in reflective practices. This form of assessment aligns with the constructivist philosophy and provides a more comprehensive view of students' language proficiency.

f. **Teacher's Role as Facilitator:** In the constructivist classroom, the teacher takes on the role of a facilitator rather than a lecturer. The teacher guides and supports students' learning processes, scaffolding their understanding, and promoting active participation. This approach encourages teachers to create learner-centered environments that stimulate critical thinking and creativity.

The impact of the constructivist approach in EFL Classrooms in a Higher Education in Indonesia has been positive overall. It has contributed to a more student-centered and

interactive learning environment, fostering greater engagement, autonomy, and critical thinking skills among EFL learners. By embracing constructivism, EFL Classrooms in a Higher Education in Indonesia have sought to enhance the quality of English language education and prepare students for the challenges of the globalized world. This present study’ result related to the claim confirms that the impact of constructivism on various aspects of language learning, such as speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills. Findings suggest that constructivist approaches contribute to improved language proficiency, as learners actively engage in authentic language use and meaningful tasks (Ozverir et al., 2017; Sadik, 2008). Constructivist approaches have been associated with increased learner motivation in EFL classrooms. By providing opportunities for choice, autonomy, and relevance, constructivist practices foster learners' intrinsic motivation and positive attitudes towards learning English (Liu & Lan, 2016; Wang, 2014). The role of the teacher in constructivist classrooms is crucial. Teachers serve as facilitators, guiding students' learning, providing scaffolding, and creating a supportive learning environment (Pitkänen et al., 2020; Polly et al., 2017; Shadaan & Leong, 2013). Research has explored effective teacher practices, professional development needs, and challenges associated with adopting a constructivist approach in EFL classrooms.

Conclusion

Based on the result above, this study confirms that impact of the constructivist approach in EFL Classrooms in a Higher Education in Indonesia has been positive overall. It has contributed to a more student-centered and interactive learning environment, fostering greater engagement, autonomy, and critical thinking skills among EFL learners. For further study, it is recommended to develop and provide a wide range of authentic and relevant resources and materials that support the constructivist approach. These resources should engage students in real-life contexts, promote meaningful interactions, and allow for diverse perspectives and experiences.

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