النظرية البنائية في التعليم والتعلم؛ هل المعلمون قادرون على تطبيقها؟

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Constructivism in Teaching and Learning: Are the teachers up for it?

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Abstract

The rational of this research paper is to receive a teacher-perspective understanding of constructivism within the process of teaching-learning. The constructivism in teaching-learning is exclusively referred to when learners are engaged in constructing their own ideas, perspectives and opinions. When individuals bring in their experiences, plans, ideas and perspectives within the surrounding learning environment in order to acquire an efficient understanding of the concepts, then they are able to put into action, the theory of constructivism. In the constructivist approach to learning, the students are aware and of drawing their own goals and objectives on their own. But also this does not mean that they are always right, but they need to take ideas and suggestions from their teachers to make sure that they are on the right track. The problem of this research paper is to shed light on constructivisim in teaching-learning process and to identify if Iraqi teachers are able to apply this theory in EFL classes or not. An open ended questions, were asked, to 10 teachers from the primary schools. The questions were asked not according to the protocol of the interview but were carried out more casually. The questions were modified according to the responses respondents and their experience on the subject matter. It is found that the respondents understood what construstism is, even though it is not entirely accurate, but it is part of the definition which says that constructivism is a new perspective that students not only receive passive knowledge from their teacher but build their knowledge through interaction with their environment.

Keywords : Constructivism, teaching-learning, teachers' views, respondents.

المستخلص

المنطق من هذا البحث هو تلقي مفهوم من وجهة نظر المعلم للنظرية البنائية في عملية التعليم والتعلم. يشار إلى النظرية البنائية في التعليم والتعلم حصراً عندما يشارك المتعلمون في بناء أفكارهم ووجهات نظرهم وآرائهم. عندما يجلب المتعلمون تجاربهم وخططهم وأفكارهم ووجهات نظرهم داخل بيئة التعلم المحيطة من أجل اكتساب ادراك فعال للمفاهيم ، فإنهم يكونون قادرين على جعل النظرية البنائية قيد التنفيذ. في النهج البنائي للتعلم ، يكون الطلاب على دراية برسم أهدافهم وغاياتهم بأنفسهم. لكن هذا لا يعني أيضًا أنهم دائمًا على حق ، لكنهم بحاجة إلى أخذ الأفكار والاقتراحات من معلميهم للتأكد من أنهم على المسار الصحيح. مشكلة هذا البحث هي تسليط الضوء على النظرية البنائية في عملية التعليم والتعلم وتحديد ما إذا كان المعلمون العراقيون قادرين على تطبيق هذه النظرية في دروس اللغة الإنجليزية لغةً أجنبية أم لا. تم طرح أسئلة مفتوحة الاجابة لعشرة معلمين من المدارس الابتدائية . لم

يتم طرح الأسئلة وفقًا لأساسيات المقابلة الرسمية ولكن تم إجراؤها بشكل عرضي. تم تعديل الأسئلة حسب ردود المبحوثين وخبراتهم في الموضوع. لقد وجد أن المستجيبين فهموا ماهية النظرية البنائية، على الرغم من أن اجاباتهم ليست دقيقة تماماً ، ولكنها جزء من التعريف الذي ينص على أن النظرية البنائية هي منظور جديد حيث لا يتلقى الطلاب المعرفة الذاتية من معلمهم فحسب ، بل يبنون معرفتهم من خلال التفاعل مع بيئتهم.

الكلمات المفتاحية: البنائية ، التعليم والتعلم ، آراء المعلمين ، المستجيبين.

Introduction

Learning English language has become more challenging in this 21st century with the educational paradigm shift that enforce teacher's role as solely educators to learning facilitators (Suwarsih Madya, 2016). National educational policy places "World-class education" as a discourse making the educational process as an important field in the routine life of schools and higher institutions. The recognition given to the education field has a serious impact on the teaching profession that is involved directly as a system to deliver knowledge. World-class education has a vision to produce a society which practices thinking skills, as well as being critical, creative and innovative in order to be able to compete in the international arena and generate ideas for the development of civilization of science, society, culture, nation.

Education field is synonymous with teaching and learning process and it closely involves the collaboration of teachers and students. Teaching needs to be systematically planned by teachers to be implemented with appropriate teaching methods and techniques, to guide, encourage and motivate students to take the initiative to learn, to gain knowledge and to master the skills required. Learning on the other hand, is a process of acquiring knowledge and skills. According to Garge's (1970) learning is a change in one's behavior or the ability to preserve a skill which has nothing to do with the changes caused by the growth process. Learning is also an internal change that happens to a person while forming a new relationship with another person.

The culture of innovation needs to be embraced and practiced by teachers in the teaching and learning process as a starting point to ensure that young people are equipped with creative and innovative thinking in order to drive this country into a developed nation. Educators are expected to acts as an agent that is capable to change people's thinking and ideas towards the digestion of positive and pragmatic ideas. Innovation is an idea, practice or object that is considered as new (Rogers, 2003). The concept of innovation is associated with something new, such as new methods, systems, tools, and more. Attempts to introduce something new such as, a new method, device, measurement, solution, product service, or idea are known as innovation. Therefore, it can be interpreted that innovation is a very broad term.

The word innovation is defined in a variety of styles according to the interests and expertise of each scholar. Spencer (1994) explains that innovation is something that an individual considers new and better than the old. Innovation in education, in the form of new solutions proposed through the foundations, or creative ways of renewing education, new educational culture or new ideas to solve some problems in education (ICEI, 2008). In general, elements of innovation have been absorbed in the education by a number of countries around the world such as in Malaysia and the world by integration across all subjects. However, there are still some countries which do accept innovation such as Iraq. Akrawi (2011) and Nabaz Noori Kareem (2017), talks about the way that teachers teach in Kurdistan. They state that the traditional method of teaching style in Kurdistan is an autocratic or a teacher-centred (authoritative) way of teaching rather than student-centred as other countries.

This leads us to the next question, the issue is to what the extent will the educators take the initiative to act proactively and innovate in the teaching and learning process to add value to students' understanding and interest. Manvender (2014), pointed out that teaching and learning innovations will focus on both theory and practical aspects. Hajimia et al. (2019), states that in the theory of constructivism the emphasis is placed more on students than on teachers. This situation is associated with the involvement of students who interact with materials and events to build their own concepts and thus provide opportunities for students to solve problems.

Related Literatures
Constructivism theory

For the past few years, scholars and the educational field have been giving a lot of attention to the constructivist approach in learning a foreign language due to its tenets (Haldun Kaya, 2015). According to this theory, the benefits that students receive can be divided into three stages: Psychomotor, cognitive and effective. All three of these elements are subject to learning outcomes. Cognitive is the intellectual ability of students to think, understand and solve problems. According to Bloom (1956) the purpose of the cognitive domain consists of six parts namely: a. knowledge, b. comprehension, c. Application, d. Analysis, e. Synthesis and f. Evaluation. Whereas, psychomotor is student's to master the verbal and written language skills. According to Davc (1970) the purpose of psychomotor domain classification is divided into categories namely a.Cognition, b.Manipulation, c.Retermination.

Therefore, according to the Constructive, knowledge is built actively built by the cognitive use of the student. A student does not passively absorb any knowledge conveyed by the teacher, instead they will adapt any new information to their existing knowledge to form new knowledge in their mind for example through interactions with friends and teachers. In teaching and learning processes that use constructive theory, there are certain principles to follow and many of these principles meet the requirements of implementing teaching and learning innovations. The teaching must be based on the student's experience as well as providing an environment that encourages the desire to learn. Alternatively, learning should have a diverse perspective and use authentic activities (Hajimia et al., 2019) as well as be student-centered and encourage discovery strategies. This should be done in order to avoid misinterpretation and lack of guidance in learning. Constructivism theory approach allows learners the right opportunity to self-learning by building a high level of understanding in their own mind framework based on their current experiences and environment (Hajimia et al., 2019).

There are a number of past studies related to this research. Arzu Gul (2016), carried out a seminar on constructivism and professional development for 10 days to 6 English teachers from 2 public schools in Ankara, Turkey. They examined the disadvantages of the traditional method and experimented using constructivism approach as a new method. The impacts of the seminar on teachers' change were observed.

P Yeni-Palabiyik, A Daloglu (2016), carried out a case study to explore the method of teaching English by English language teachers to very young learners in Turkish primary schools. The findings from the observational field notes, followup interviews and document analysis shows a variation in teachers' instructional practices ranging from traditional to constructivist. Two themes were identified based on this study which is Theme 1. Knowledge-Base for Language Teaching and Theme 2. Language Teaching Practices and Capabilities

Haldun Kaya (2015), identified the attempts made by the English language teachers in the ELT classroom to integrate technology into their classes by taking the foundations of constructivist pedagogy into consideration. The researcher also gave some practical applications and implications of using constructivism in ELT setting.

Nabi A Ebrahimi (2015), carried out an environmental survey regarding the application of Constructivist approach among the English language teacher education classrooms in Iran. A filed test was carried out on a sample of 622 Iranian English language student teachers in 28 classes. The findings shows that, student teachers preferred a more constructivist classroom environment on all scales.

However, most of the studies carried out failed to investigate the teachers point of view on constructivism during T & L. Thus, this study is filling up the gap of attaining ESL teachers perspective on applying this approach in the classroom. This study aims to identify the strengths and weaknesses of implementing a constructivism approach from the English teachers' points of view.

The objectives of this study are to:

1) Identify the advantages of implementing a constructivism approach in English subject
2) Identify the constraints of the implementation of the constructivism approach in English subject.

Methodology

Open ended questions were asked to 10 teachers from the primary schools. The questions were asked not according to the protocol of the interview but was carried out more casually. The questions were modified according to the responses-respondents and their experience on the subject matter.

This way, the researchers are able to access a wide range of information which provides a comprehensive overview of the implementation of constructivism approaches in English subject. Because interview questions are closely related to one another and were repeated a few times, the transcripts and interview notes were scrutinised a few times to come up with the category analysis. The three categories based on the theme of the interview questions are as follows. The first is the teacher's understanding of the implementation of the constructivism approach. Second is teachers' views on the implementation of the constructivism approach. The third is the teacher's view of the constraints and suggestions to overcome the weaknesses in the implementation of the constructivism approach.

Findings

1. Teachers' understanding about constructivism approach

Constructivism approach is one of the approaches which is recommended to be implemented in the English subjects. Through the interview, respondents explained their understanding about constructivism approach according to the given question,

Q1: What do you know about Constructivism approach?

The first teacher response (T1) was "... I think that constructivism focuses on student-centered in the classroom. Teachers are merely facilitators ... "

"... through constructivism teachers do not teach much but students search their own information ...". T2.

"... constructivism is more about group teaching and learning. Students find information, share and pass the information to other students in the classroom ..." T5.

"... I think it is a learning method that uses a variety of activities to engage students in learning ... " T8.

In conclusion, the respondents understood what construstism is, even though it is not entirely accurate, but it is part of the definition which says that constructivism is a new perspective that students not only receive passive knowledge from their teacher but build their knowledge through interaction with their environment. Through this learning approach it is believed that students build knowledge or concepts based on existing knowledge and experience. In this process, students will align their prior knowledge with the existing knowledge to build new knowledge.

2. Teachers' views on the implementation of constructivism approaches

Through the key questions raised, the researcher gained the respondents' views on the implementation of the constructivism approach. Q1: The teachers were asked about their practice of constructivism in teaching and learning.

All the respondents answered: "... have practiced constructivism, usually once a week ..." R3

Q2: Teacher's comfort level when applying contructivsm in the classroom

"... I enjoy conducting teaching and learning constructively because it helps me teach science subjects. Students cooperate well and are good at providing information that they seek themselves... "R3

"... this teaching method is good, especially for English subject. But, I get stressed using this sometimes because some students still face difficulties because they are weak in English language, shy and scared and some of them are not interested with the language. It does help when they work in groups, yet the shy once are still shy... "R4

"... I do apply this method, but I can't do it often. It takes time for students who are already spoon feed to be independent suddenly... " R5

" ... I'm okay with it. I used it at times, but, need to combine this method with traditional method too to catch up with the syllabus. It helps but I think good students can follow ... "R8

Q3:Student's mastery level and discipline during and after the Constructivism method.

Respondents explained: "... students show good level of mastery of content, perhaps they are more free to learn and like to share their knowledge with friends. Only the discipline is less controlled especially during the discussion session ... "R1"

"... less controlled, students will ask me back, this and that,. Feels like twice as much work. Discipline can be controlled, because they are afraid of me, they just can't learn English on their own ... "R2

" .... the level of curiosity is low. Sometimes they do a messy work, not all content can be conveyed. Discipline can be controlled, just that teachers need to prepare the lesson thoroughly before the lesson. Takes some time ... "R5

In conclusion, overall it was found that teachers are used to teaching using the constructivism approach. It helps the teaching and learning process but not all teachers are comfortable with it and the differences are quite significant between the teachers of the good classes and the weak classes. It is found that the good class teachers are more positive about this approach than weak class teachers.

3. Teachers' views on the constraints and suggestions for addressing the weaknesses in the implementation of the constructivism approach.

Q1: What are the problems and constraints faced by teachers with the constructivism approach?

"...The teaching materials especially the text book is not prepared to cater the constructivist approach...we need to do own searching and lots of preparation on their

own... Lots of other work to do in the school. Not much time to prepare for this type of lesson..." T1

"Lack of commitment from the students especially the weak once because they expect teachers to provide input ... "T2

"... Can't control the situation because number of students are many..."T3

". .. More time is required to teach constructively. It's not that we don't want to be constructive, but we are bound by the syllabus, which is more important for students. We are exam oriented.... So what's the point in using this approach? Need to catch up with the syllabus and prepare students for exam..."T4

" ... students play when they are constructive and difficult to control when they have the opportunity to talk with friends. The weak students would ld love this approach. The freedom given to them will make them not to concentrate on the lesson ..." T5

"... Some teachers are more comfortable with the old style of teaching and not will g to change to this. They think, teachers are responsible for students learning. If you give it to them, they are afraid that the objectives will not be achieved ... "T6

" ... not all students cooperate with one another. Some do not want to join, they may be embarrassed, most problems are communication problems in English. Weak students cannot and will be left behind... "T9

Conclusion

The results of the interview analysis were divided into three categories based on the theme of the interview questions, firstly the teacher's understanding of the implementation of the constructivism approach. Second, teachers' views on the implementation of constructivism approaches. The third is the teacher's view of the constraints and suggestions to overcome the weaknesses in the implementation of the constructivism approach. From the point of view of the respondents as a whole, it was found that teachers used to the constructivism approach. It helps in teaching and learning of the English language. However, not all teachers are comfortable with it because of the problems and constraints teachers face when implementing constructivism. Among them are insufficient time, a lot of syllabuses, weak students and a lot of teacher workload. But every problem has its way of resolving it. In order to increase the level of implementation of teacher constructivism approach, the teachers should be positive, plan lessons in advance and be prepared to attend courses organized by the ministry of education related to the method of constructivism. On the whole, to enhance the level of implementation of the constructivism approach it is recommended that English language syllabus be reduced and teachers also have to be positive, put lesson plans early and be prepared to attend courses organized by the ministry of education on the method of constructivism. Through this study, in-depth findings and discussions regarding the implications of this study on the practice of constructivism approach, KBSM English Education Policy and in-service courses have been conducted.

It is concluded from the discussion that, as the level of implementation of the constructivism approach is improved, the process of teaching and learning English in the classroom will be more effective. Therefore, all the sample parties are ready to defeat the difficulties since they are acquainted to the constructivism learning approach, and should work closely together to assist in the successful implementation of the constructivism approach to defeat learning challenges. Finally, ministries and educational institutions are urged to consider the suggestions made through this study to develop education towards world-class status.

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