

Leveraging Hausa Language Teaching and Learning Using Constructivists Approach Among Students at Tertiary Level of Education in Nigeria: A Review

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Abstract

Most traditional teachers resist constructivist pedagogy because of basically three things: commitment to their traditional instructional approach, concern about students' learning and concern about classroom control. However, becoming a constructivist is not as daunting as many thinks. It is in this light that this paper move to demystify the concept of constructivism. The paper also analyzes the characteristics of a constructivist classroom as well as the characters of its learners. It also compares a typical traditional classroom with a constructivist one. The paper compares sides by side, the functions of a teacher and that of the students in a constructivist class. It further recognizes nine steps that could be used for teachers to be constructivist. It recommends among others that Hausa Language teachers should adopt and implement principles, approaches and strategies of the constructivist pedagogy. The paper concludes by advocating for teachers to be mediators rather than dispensers of knowledge.

Keywords: Constructivists, Hausa Language, Teaching and Learning

Introduction

Hausa Language is a Chadic language from the Afro-Asiatic language family with its largest number of speakers. It is spoken by about 35 million as their first language and by many more Nigerians as their second language as well as million more in other countries (Benin, Ghana, Cameroon, Togo, Ivory Coast etc.). It is a language predominantly used in education in many of the Northern states as (Kano, Kaduna, Sokoto, Bauchi, Kebbi, Zamfara, Katsina, Niger, etc.). This is in line with the provision of the Netcon NPC (2005) which states: "The medium of instruction in primary school shall be the language of the environment for the first three years. Despite the above, its teaching is deeply rooted in traditional methods, that is, through rigid curriculum, unsupportive administrators, and inadequate pre-service and in service, educational experiences. As a consequence, it is not yielding the desired outcome. In consonance with the above. it is about the right time for Hausa language teaching to embrace whole-heartedly modern method of teaching. Thus, the constructivist theory of language teaching fill in the bill because it is based on the notion that teachers are mediators of students and environment not simply givers of information and managers of behaviour. It is in this light that this paper is advocating for Hausa language teachers to become constructivists.

What is the Constructivist Teaching Method?

The constructivist teaching is based on the belief that learning occurs as learners are actively involved in a learning process of meaning and knowledge as opposed to passively relieving information. Learners are the makers of knowledge. It involves grouping students and learning and knowledge are interactive and dynamic. The great emphasis is placed on social and communication skills as well as cooperation and change of ideas.

Characteristics of Learning in a Constructivist Classroom

To Seigel (2004) the following are the characteristics of learning in a constructivist classroom.

1. Constructed: there the students learn how to construct the meaning of things or words through assimilating prior knowledge and new ones to gain new understanding;
2. Active: through constructivism students become active creators of knowledge;
3. Reflective: students reflect what they already know to their real life experiences;
4. Collaborative: Constructivism as a theory of learning enables students to construct meaning of certain words by discussing with peers and or in group discussion;
5. Inquiry Based: through constructivism students find solutions from the problem: and
6. Evolving: this in constructivism refers to evolving a temporary way of integrating the knowledge that is already gained to reduce invalidity.



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These characteristics are useful especially to students in taking a position in a constructivist classroom situations.

The Characteristics of Learners in a Constructivist Classroom

Can (2007) posits that, the learner's character is an important ingredient in a constructivist classroom. He strongly advocated for teachers to create the characters of the learners in such a way that the naturally feel responsible for their learning, develop awareness, autonomy, goals, initiative and strategies. They should also be willing to accept complexities of life, be respectful to multiple perspectives and world view, open-minded, task oriented, have self-control as well as being realistic, scientific value generators, holistic, articulate, flexible, moderate, and humanistic and so on.

Comparison between Traditional Classroom and Constructivist one

To compare constructivism with traditional (behaviourism and cognitivism) one needs to look at the role played by the curriculum, teachers, students, materials and assessment. The cumulative effect of all these will give a true reflection of the difference between traditional methods and constructivism.

a) Traditional Classroom

1. Curriculum begins with parts of the whole. Emphasize basic skills;
2. Strict adherence to fixed curriculum is highly valued;
3. Materials are primarily textbooks and workbooks;
4. Learning is based on repetition;
5. Teachers disseminate information to students, students are recipient of knowledge;
6. Teachers role is directive, rooted in authority;
7. Assessment is through testing, correct answers;
8. Knowledge is seen as inert; and
9. Students work primarily alone.

b) Constructivist Classroom

1. Curriculum emphasizes big concepts, beginning with the whole and expanding to include the parts;
2. Pursuit of the students questions and interest is valued;
3. Materials include primary sources of material and manipulative materials;
4. Learning is interactive, building on what the students already know;
5. Teachers have a dialogue with students. helping students to construct their own knowledge;
6. Teacher's role is interactive, rooted is negotiation;
7. Assessment include student works, observations and points of view, as well as tests;
8. Knowledge is seen as dynamic, ever changing with our experiences; and
9. Students work primarily in groups (Brooks & Brooks, 1993).

Kolawole (2017), attempted to identify the basic roles of teachers and students in a constructivist classroom. His assessment is based on what is available in the existing literature in the area.

Suggested role of the teacher	Suggested role of the student
A planner, an organizer, an evaluator	Active participant
Facilitator	Collaboration with peers an active participation
Decision making	Discussant researcher
Knowledge imparter	Confident and well-prepared
Adviser/counsellor/guidance	Agent of change, respondents
Disciplinarian/role enforcer	Willing collaborator/demonstrator
Time-keeper/evaluator	Diligent. hardworking, absorbing/enthusiastic/willing to internalize and implement/respond to prompts.

From the foregoing, a constructivist teacher;

1. Plan what and how by what, that is, plan how concepts are to be taught, procedure and materials involved are used.
2. Organizes: how to carry out the plan by his students.
3. Execute: Give them sufficient time to execute the plan.
4. Indicate Time: Give time-line for each activity and ensure compliance.
5. Supervise: Be a mediator through giving support, encouragement and supervision.
6. Evaluate: provide adequate reinforcement/feedback to the assigned activities.
7. Revise: Give them sufficient information that will help them round up the session (Kolawole, 2015).



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Becoming a Constructivist Teacher: The Nine Steps

Becoming a constructivist teacher is not as difficult as traditional teachers think. Several scholars such (Sigel, 2004; Atkin et al. 1962; Brooks and Brooks, 1993; Can 2007) have given a set of guidelines based on interactions with students and observations in the classrooms of many teachers. The development of these scholars effort has provided us with a useful framework within which teachers can experiment with this new approach constructivist teachers:

Step One: Accept, Encourage Student's Autonomy and Initiative:

While the philosophy of education and the mission of many schools is to produce students capable of rational thinking as well as individuals who set hypotheses and prove as disprove them. the organizational and management structures of the system and schools militate against these lofty goals. Thus, if the above goals are to be achieved, it must done within the confines of the classroom. To do this. the teachers frames an assessment to determine the degree to which students may be autonomous and use their initiative. Students, in turn, will frame questions and issues and then go about answering and analyzing them so as to take responsibility for their own learning and become problem solvers and, most importantly, problem finders. Thus, students in the pursuit of new understanding are led by their own ideas and informed by the ideas of others.

Step Two: Use Raw Data and Primary Source/Manipulative. Interactive and physical materials:

A constructivist teacher present realworld possibilities such as war, concepts, laws, guidelines that describe our world, then help the students to generate abstractions that explain and bind these phenomena together.

Step Three: Use Observable Verbs

such Classify Analyze Predict, and Create, framing task around cognitive activities such as analysis/interpretation, prediction explicitly help students to foster the understanding of new ideas and concepts.

Step Four: Use Students Responses to Drive Lessons, Shift Instructional Strategies and Alter Content:

As teachers we know that students' knowledge, experiences, interests occasionally do coalesce with urgent theme. Most teachers have experienced moments of excitement in the classroom such as gleam in our students' eyes, excitement about tasks and discussion. commitment to the task etc. These are indicators of lesson focus need be shifted in those directions.

Step Five: Inquire About Students' Understanding of Concept Before Sharing their Own Understanding:

This is important because, students naturally assume that teachers hold all the aces, that is, if teachers share their understanding it will stipple student's initiative. Put simply, such an action will stop students thinking about, the concept once "the correct answer" is prescribed by the teacher.

Step Six: Engage Students in Interactive Both with the Teacher and with One Another:

One of the best ways of students change or reinforce ideas/concepts is through social discourse with this facilitates the meaning making process. Put simply, the communication current generated between and among students will lead then to deeper understandings of the topic(s) under discussion.

Step Seven: Ask Thoughtful, Open Ended Questions and Encourage Students to Ask Questions of each other:

For students to value questions. teachers must value same. In essence, teachers must pose thoughtful questions that challenge students to look beyond the obvious, that is, to 'think out of the box' to form their understanding of events and phenomena (Johnson et al. 1981).

Step Eight: Seek Elaboration of Students' initial Response:

Teachers must grasp the implication that initial response are just initial response, that is, it is not necessarily students' final nor their best response. Thus, through elaboration students often reconceptualize and asses their initial response. It is only when they encourage to elaborate students are able to discover errors from their initial response and subsequently redirect their thinking.

Step Nine: Allow Wait Time After Posing Questions: the penchant is for teachers to ask and answer all the questions in virtually the same breath. Such teachers give their student little or no time to think about the question as such quickly answer the question themselves. In contrast, other teachers may not answer the questions themselves, they only allow the brilliant ones (two - five in the class) to answer the questions, that is, the Gatlin gun approach to asking and answering questions. To avoid this, after posing the questions, the teacher encourage small group to deliberate and report back to the class the answer. This is used as a basis for discussion by the whole class.



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Conclusion

Constructivism is a language theory that helps students in constructing meaning based on their own understanding, it emphasizes in students' role rather than teachers'. Constructivism thus emphasizes on how to construct the meaning (for instance, of a word or thing) based on students' experiences. This is achieved through individual experience and schema. The role of the teacher, as a mediator, is to ask students to learn to construct meaning and to assimilate and accommodate the students prior knowledge and the new ones.

Recommendation

In the light of the importance and the revolutionary nature of what this paper discusses, it is pertinent to recommend the following:

1. That Hausa language teachers should adopt and implement principles, approaches and strategies of the constructivist theory.
2. Conduct assessment, create and use technology and other instructional strategies of the constructivist theory.
3. Hausa departments should organize workshop and seminars to acquaint their lecturers with the latest development in task-based instruction so as to update their knowledge.

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