

Constructivist English Class: Practices in the Teaching of Language

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ABSTRACT

This study explored senior high school English teachers' perspectives and classroom practices regarding Constructivist Learning Theory and examined how these practices aligned with constructivist principles in language instruction. A qualitative descriptive design was employed using focus group discussions with 16 purposively selected English teachers from four public senior high schools in the Division of Imus City, Cavite, with four participants from each school. Data were gathered through an expert-validated open-ended interview guide consisting of probe and exit questions. Focus group sessions were conducted online and in person, audio-recorded with consent, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed through open coding, categorization, and thematic analysis, with respondent checking and expert validation used to strengthen

credibility. Findings showed that teachers understood constructivism through five interconnected perspectives: student-centered learning, discovery learning, teacher-facilitated learning experiences, scaffolding-schema approaches, and connections to real-life experiences. These perspectives were reflected in practices such as group defense, position paper writing, mock interviews, extemporaneous speaking, role-playing, use of realia, translanguaging, symbolism, and video or film analysis, although implementation varied across schools. Misconceptions were also identified, particularly the beliefs that constructivism is purely discovery-based, minimizes or removes the teacher's role, overlooks sociocultural differences, or produces inconsistent outcomes. Based on these findings, constructivist-aligned classroom strategies were proposed to strengthen guided facilitation, reflection, authentic communication, cultural responsiveness, and structured assessment. The study underscores the need for sustained professional development and coherent support for context-sensitive constructivist English instruction.

Keywords: *constructivism, English language teaching, classroom practices, teacher perceptions, student-centered learning, focus group discussion*

INTRODUCTION

English language instruction remains central to learners' academic participation and communication, yet persistent difficulties in speaking and reading comprehension have reinforced calls for teaching approaches that move beyond passive reception of information. Philippine concerns regarding English performance and broader international assessment results have likewise drawn attention to the need for classroom practices that develop meaningful communication, learner autonomy, and critical engagement (Mocon-Ciriaco, 2019; Minshar, 2020). Within this context, constructivism offers a pedagogical perspective in which learners actively build knowledge by connecting new information with prior experience, reflection, inquiry, and interaction.

Constructivist teaching changes the classroom relationship between teacher and learner. Rather than treating students as recipients of completed knowledge, it positions them as active meaning-makers while the

teacher designs experiences, prompts inquiry, provides scaffolding, and guides reflection. Piaget's constructivist account of cognitive development emphasized active knowledge construction, while later educational interpretations associated with Vygotskian, Deweyan, and Brunerian traditions strengthened the social, experiential, and guided dimensions of learning (Piaget, 1977; Allen, 2022; Triantafyllou, 2022). In English instruction, such principles can support the integrated development of reading, writing, listening, and speaking through authentic and interactive language use (Haynor, 2018; Gul, 2022).

Despite the curricular emphasis on learner-centered approaches, the thesis identified a practical gap between constructivist theory and its classroom implementation. Some teachers may retain conventional teacher-centered routines, while constructivism itself may be misunderstood as unguided discovery or as an approach in which the teacher withdraws from instruction. Research cautions that pure discovery without sufficient guidance can result in weaker learning than guided discovery supported by feedback, modeling, and scaffolding (Mayer, 2004; Alfieri et al., 2011). Other studies have similarly described implementation barriers such as insufficient training, workload, limited resources, and misconceptions about constructivist practice (Ahmad, 2021; Gordon, 2018; Shah, 2019).

The study therefore focused on senior high school English teachers in four public schools in the Division of Imus City, Cavite, during the first semester of School Year 2024–2025. It sought to determine how teachers perceived constructivism, identify their constructivist classroom practices, examine how instructional strategies and approaches aligned with the theory, identify common misconceptions, and formulate classroom strategies and techniques responsive to the identified gaps. By grounding the analysis in teachers' actual experiences, the study aimed to provide practical directions for more coherent, inclusive, and context-sensitive constructivist English instruction.

Literature Review

Constructivism in the English Classroom

Constructivism views learning as an active process in which learners create meaning rather than merely receive information. Prior knowledge functions as the foundation upon which new understandings are assimilated or accommodated, and learning develops through interaction with content, people, and experience (Piaget, 1977; Office of Curriculum, Assessment and Teaching Transformation, 2021). In classroom terms, this means that students formulate questions, test ideas, reflect, collaborate, and connect new learning with existing schemas, while teachers organize conditions that make these processes productive (Gray, 2018; Western Governors University, 2020).

In language education, constructivism is especially relevant because communicative competence requires learners to use language for authentic purposes rather than memorize isolated forms. Poonam and Sharma (2018) argued that constructivist teaching can strengthen listening, speaking, reading, and writing by linking new knowledge to experience, while Jain (2023) emphasized meaningful communication, experimentation, and learning from errors. Gul (2022) likewise described constructivist methods in English as involving authentic interpersonal communication and integrated language skills. These views support English classrooms in which meaning is negotiated through purposeful activity and interaction.

Constructivism does not imply the absence of teacher guidance. Mayer (2004) cautioned against minimally guided discovery, and Alfieri et al. (2011) showed that supported forms of discovery are more effective when learners receive feedback, examples, or scaffolding. This distinction is crucial because a constructivist English classroom remains deliberately planned: teachers set goals, select tasks, activate prior knowledge, monitor interaction, and guide learners toward defensible interpretations and communicative outcomes.

Constructivist Practices and Their Effectiveness

Constructivist practices commonly emphasize active participation, collaboration, inquiry, authentic tasks, and teacher facilitation. Gray (2018) characterized constructivist classrooms as democratic and interactive

environments in which teachers operate as facilitators and students use inquiry, imagination, reflection, and social interaction to build meaning. Dilekli (2018) similarly found that facilitator-oriented teaching was associated with stronger self-efficacy for teaching thinking skills, reinforcing the importance of the teacher's supportive role rather than a withdrawal from instruction.

Empirical studies suggest that constructivist approaches can support academic and motivational outcomes, although effects depend on implementation. Kim (2018) reported that a constructivist teaching approach outperformed conventional instruction in academic achievement and was preferred by students as a learning environment. Can (2019) emphasized that constructivist approaches in technology-supported language environments can promote learner autonomy, communicative abilities, and social interaction. Conversely, Castro and Santos (2020) found that constructivist use did not necessarily improve language-learning satisfaction, indicating that constructivism should not be treated as automatically effective in every outcome or setting.

Implementation also depends on teacher preparation and working conditions. Ahmad (2021) identified constraints such as large classes, limited time, inadequate facilities, insufficient preparation, and lack of training when teachers attempted constructivist English grammar instruction. Shah (2019) and Gordon (2018) further noted that constructivist teaching is vulnerable to misinterpretation when student-centeredness is mistaken for weak structure. These findings suggest that successful practice depends on both sound conceptual understanding and institutional support.

Complex Language Skills, Authenticity, and Learner Engagement

Complex English language skills involve coordinated proficiency in reading, writing, speaking, and listening, together with the ability to use language meaningfully in academic and professional situations (Zu, 2022). Constructivist instruction is compatible with this goal because it situates language use in tasks that require interpretation, communication, collaboration, and reflection. Authentic activities such as interviews, debates, role-plays, writing for real audiences, and response-centered literature discussions can provide contexts in which language becomes a tool for accomplishing meaningful purposes rather than an object of memorization.

Learner-centered language instruction also recognizes that meaning is shaped by prior experience, identity, and social context. The shift from completed knowledge to knowledge construction encourages students to bring their own interpretations and experiences into classroom interaction (Jones, 2018). Such an orientation may be especially important in heterogeneous senior high school classrooms, where learners differ in linguistic background, confidence, interests, and lived experiences. Chuang and Muttaqin (2022) likewise demonstrated that educational background and English proficiency can be associated with achievement in English-medium settings, underscoring the importance of contextualizing instruction to learner characteristics.

Constructivist language learning therefore involves both autonomy and guidance. Students need opportunities to make decisions, test language, and collaborate, but they also benefit from clear criteria, models, feedback, and teacher mediation. The emphasis is not simply on activity; it is on structured activity that leads learners to more refined language use, stronger reflection, and transferable understanding.

Constructivist Teaching Strategies, Misconceptions, and Professional Support

Constructivist teaching strategies extend beyond cognitive engagement to social, ethical, and affective learning. Nucci and Narvaez (2008) emphasized reflection and discussion as means of developing values, while Lovat and Toomey (2009) described teaching that integrates academic learning with empathy, respect, and collaboration. In English classes, strategies such as collaborative interpretation, reflective writing, simulations, and authentic communication can therefore develop both language competence and dispositions needed for participation in social contexts.

A recurring problem in the literature is the misconception that constructivism is synonymous with unstructured student activity. Evidence on guided discovery shows that effective constructivist teaching requires purposeful support, and critiques of misapplied constructivism emphasize the continued importance of teacher facilitation (Mayer, 2004; Alfieri et al., 2011; Gordon, 2018). Misconceptions may also arise when teachers

assume that a single student-centered method will work similarly for all learners, overlooking cultural, linguistic, and contextual differences.

These concerns strengthen the case for professional development that helps teachers translate theory into classroom design. Brau (2020) emphasized alignment between learning theory and instructional practice, while Haynor (2018) highlighted active investigation, dialogue, experiential tasks, and scaffolding. The reviewed literature therefore supports examining teachers' own perceptions and practices as a basis for identifying where constructivist principles are well understood, where implementation is uneven, and what strategies may better align English teaching with guided, reflective, and contextualized knowledge construction.

Conceptual Framework

The study conceptualized an English constructivist classroom as a layered relationship in which Constructivist Theory informs teachers' perceptions, which in turn shape classroom practices and instructional approaches. These interrelated elements provide the basis for proposing constructivist classroom strategies and techniques for English teachers. The framework therefore connects theoretical understanding, teacher cognition, enacted practice, and the development of practical pedagogical responses.

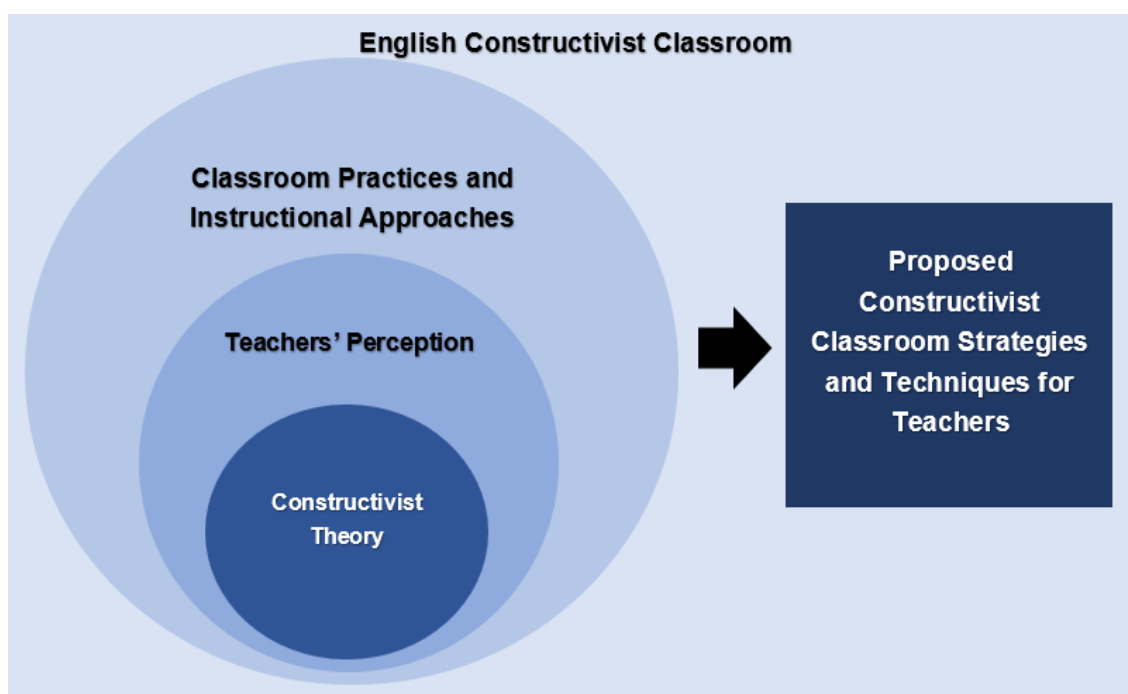


Figure 1. *Conceptual Framework of the Study*

METHODS

Research Design

The study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to explore how English teachers understood and applied Constructivist Learning Theory in classroom practice. The design was appropriate because the study sought to describe teachers' perspectives, experiences, and instructional practices in their natural professional context rather than test causal relationships. Focus group discussion was used as the principal data-gathering method because it enabled participants to articulate both shared and differing understandings through interaction.

Focus group sessions were conducted through both online and in-person formats according to the participating schools' availability. The online sessions involved General Flaviano Yengko Senior High School and General Juan Castaneda Senior High School, while in-person discussions were conducted separately with Gen. Pantaleon Garcia Senior High School and Gov. Juanito Reyes Remulla Senior High School. The discussions were recorded with permission, transcribed, and subsequently analyzed for recurring meanings and patterns.

Research Locale

The study was conducted in four public senior high schools under the Schools Division of Imus City, Cavite: General Juan Castaneda Senior High School, General Flaviano Yengko Senior High School, Gen. Pantaleon Garcia Senior High School, and Gov. Juanito Reyes Remulla Senior High School. These schools offered senior high school programs with active English instruction and represented varied school contexts within the division. The study covered the first semester of School Year 2024–2025.

Participants and Sampling Technique

Sixteen English teachers were purposively selected, with four participants from each of the four senior high schools. Purposive sampling was used because qualitative inquiry prioritizes information-rich participants whose experience is directly relevant to the phenomenon under investigation (Palinkas et al., 2015; Patton, 2015). Participants were selected because they had sufficient experience and qualifications to provide detailed accounts of constructivist English teaching.

The 16 participants comprised six male and ten female teachers, predominantly between 30 and 45 years old. Twelve had earned units toward a master's degree, three held master's degrees, and one held a doctoral degree; teaching experience ranged from five to fifteen years. Selection criteria required teachers to have taught English for more than three years, to use constructivist methods in their classes, and to have earned graduate-level units. Participation was voluntary.

Research Instrument

Data were gathered using an open-ended interview guide designed for the focus group discussions. The instrument had two sections. Probe questions examined participants' familiarity with the pedagogical mandate of Republic Act No. 10533, their definitions and examples of constructivism in English classes, specific constructivist practices, resources used, and ways in which these practices exemplified constructivist principles. Exit questions elicited recommendations and practical strategies that teachers considered effective for constructivist language learning.

Three professionals with expertise in qualitative research and pedagogy evaluated the interview guide for relevance and clarity, alignment with the research objectives, capacity to elicit comprehensive responses, and appropriateness of language. Their comments were incorporated before pilot testing and formal use. This validation process was intended to ensure that the questions adequately captured teachers' conceptual understandings, actual practices, challenges, and recommendations.

Data Gathering Procedure

Prior to data collection, formal permission was secured from the Schools Division of Imus City, the principals of the four participating senior high schools, and the individual teacher-participants. After consent was obtained, focus group schedules were arranged according to school availability. Online participants responded to questions presented through the chosen platform, while in-person participants were asked the same guide questions in facilitated discussions. The researcher clarified or simplified questions when necessary to encourage complete and accurate responses.

All focus group sessions were recorded with permission and transcribed for analysis. The researcher organized the transcripts by research question, reviewed the material repeatedly, and prepared the data for systematic coding and thematic development. The procedure was designed to preserve participants' meanings while enabling comparison of common and divergent experiences across the four schools.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed through thematic coding. The focus group recordings were transcribed verbatim, after which the transcripts were read repeatedly to establish familiarity with the data. Open coding was then used to break responses into meaningful units representing recurring concepts, practices, and interpretations. Related codes were grouped into broader categories and subsequently developed into themes that addressed the study's research questions.

Credibility was strengthened through respondent checking and expert validation. Participants were given the opportunity to review transcribed material and validate the intended meaning of their responses. The researcher also reexamined the relationship among interview questions, coded responses, and themes. Expert validators who had evaluated the instrument reviewed selected anonymized transcripts, initial codes, and thematic interpretations to determine whether the analysis remained consistent with participants' responses and constructivist principles.

Ethical Consideration

Informed consent was obtained from all participants, who were informed of the voluntary nature of participation and their right to withdraw. Confidentiality was protected through anonymized or pseudonymized reporting of responses, and recorded materials were used only for the research purposes described to participants. Potential risks and inconveniences were considered and minimized. The consent process also addressed audio-visual recording and publication of findings without disclosure of participant identities.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Teachers' Perspectives of Constructivism

Five themes described how the English teachers understood Constructivist Learning Theory: student-centered learning, discovery learning, teacher-facilitated learning experiences, the scaffolding-schema approach, and connections to real-life experiences. Across these themes, participants characterized learning as active knowledge construction rather than passive reception. Students were expected to question, interact, reflect, draw on prior knowledge, and apply ideas, while teachers structured and supported the learning process.

Table 1. *Teachers' Perspectives of Constructivism*

Theme	Core Description
Student-Centered	Students actively construct knowledge through questioning, reflection, social interaction, and application.
Discovery Learning	Students develop understanding through inquiry and active participation rather than passive information absorption.
Teacher-Facilitated Learning Experience	Teachers organize resources, structure tasks, support learners, and guide meaning-making.
Scaffolding-Schema Approach	Prior knowledge or existing schemas are activated and extended through guided support.
Connection to Real-Life Experiences	Learners connect lesson content with personal and shared experiences to make learning meaningful and applicable.

Note. Themes were derived from focus group responses and organized according to the participants' descriptions of constructivism.

The themes reflect core constructivist assumptions described in the literature. Student-centeredness and inquiry align with the view that learners create meaning through active participation, while scaffolding and facilitation demonstrate that constructivism does not eliminate the teacher's role (Gray, 2018; Mayer, 2004). The emphasis on prior knowledge and lived experience also corresponds with constructivist accounts of assimilation, accommodation, and schema development (Piaget, 1977; Office of Curriculum, Assessment and Teaching Transformation, 2021).

Constructivist Classroom Practices in English Language Teaching

Teachers translated their perceptions into specific English classroom practices. Discovery learning was reflected in group defense and position paper writing; real-life connection was developed through mock interviews, extemporaneous speaking, and role-playing; teacher-facilitated learning involved the use of realia and translanguaging; and student-centered learning was represented by symbolism and video or film analysis. The activities required learners to speak, write, interpret, defend ideas, and connect classroom learning with authentic contexts.

Table 2. *Classroom Practices Aligned with Constructivism*

Constructivist Orientation	Classroom Practices
Discovery Learning	Group defense; position paper writing
Connection to Real-Life Experiences	Mock interviews; extemporaneous speaking; role-playing
Teacher-Facilitated Learning Experience	Use of realia; translanguaging
Student-Centered Learning	Symbolism; video or film analysis

Note. Practices were identified from teachers' focus group accounts and aligned with the constructivist perspectives emerging from the data.

These practices show that constructivism in the participating classrooms was enacted through communicative, experiential, and interpretive tasks rather than through one uniform technique. Group defense and position papers required evidence-based reasoning; interviews, extemporaneous speaking, and role-play simulated real communication; realia and translanguaging supported contextual understanding; and symbolism and film analysis encouraged interpretation. These practices are consistent with language-teaching literature that emphasizes meaningful communication, active construction, and authentic application (Poonam & Sharma, 2018; Jain, 2023; Gul, 2022).

Alignment and Variation in the Use of Constructivist Strategies

Although constructivist strategies were evident across all four participating schools, their distribution and frequency varied. Some schools and teachers used a wider range of approaches, whereas other strategies appeared less frequently. The variation suggests that teachers were attempting to align instruction with real-world and student-centered learning, but the enactment of constructivism was not uniform across settings.

This pattern is important because constructivist pedagogy depends on teachers' capacity to translate broad principles into structured classroom actions. Differences in experience, resources, confidence, workload, and training can shape the strategies teachers select and how consistently they are implemented. Ahmad (2021) identified comparable constraints in constructivist English instruction, while Shah (2019) and Gordon (2018) argued that weak conceptual understanding can lead to inconsistent or misapplied practices. The findings therefore point to the value of shared professional learning, peer mentoring, and clearer examples of theory-aligned instruction.

Common Misconceptions About Constructivism

Four misconceptions emerged from the teachers' accounts: that constructivism is solely discovery-based and lacks teacher guidance; that it eliminates or minimizes the teacher's role; that it can be applied uniformly without sufficient attention to sociocultural differences; and that student-centered learning necessarily produces inconsistent outcomes. These misconceptions reveal tension between the language of learner autonomy and the practical need for structure, guidance, cultural responsiveness, and assessment.

The findings reinforce the distinction between guided constructivism and unguided activity. Evidence reviewed in the thesis shows that discovery is strengthened by feedback, modeling, and scaffolding rather than by the absence of instruction (Mayer, 2004; Alfieri et al., 2011). Similarly, constructivist learning should be responsive to learners' cultural, linguistic, and experiential backgrounds because knowledge construction is situated in prior experience and social interaction. The perception that student-centered work produces

inconsistent outcomes can be addressed through explicit objectives, structured tasks, rubrics, formative assessment, peer feedback, and guided reflection.

Proposed Constructivist Classroom Strategies and Techniques

To address the identified misconceptions, the study proposed classroom strategies that preserve student agency while making teacher guidance, contextual relevance, and assessment structures visible. The proposed activities were designed to demonstrate that constructivist English teaching can be purposeful, culturally responsive, and measurable.

Table 3. *Proposed Constructivist Classroom Strategies and Techniques*

Strategy/Technique	Essential Implementation	Misconception Addressed
Talk Show Simulation	Select an English-related theme; assign hosts and guests; provide guide questions; moderate discussion; conclude with reflection.	Constructivism excludes teacher involvement.
Reflective Journals / Daily Reflections	Use guided prompts; connect lessons with experience; collect reflections regularly; discuss insights.	Constructivism is merely activity-based and unguided.
Simulation of Interviews	Teach interview formats; let students draft questions; conduct mock interviews; provide feedback and reflection.	Constructivism overlooks learner diversity and context.
Business Correspondence & Research Articles	Model authentic texts; guide drafting, revising, and editing; use peer review and rubrics.	Student-centered work lack's structure or consistent outcomes.
Telephone / Customer Service Roleplay	Teach expressions; simulate realistic scenarios; use props/scripts; debrief for clarity and empathy.	Student-centered learning is unrealistic or inconsistent.
Field Trips / Exposure Activities	Plan relevant venue visits; provide observation guides; conduct post-visit reflection.	Constructivism neglects sociocultural and real-world contexts.
Culminating Performances / Presentations	Use debates, dramatizations, speeches, or oral defenses; provide rubrics and rehearsals; combine peer and teacher feedback.	Constructivist learning cannot be rigorously assessed.
One-Minute Talk	Schedule brief rotating talks and assess confidence, fluency, and clarity using clear criteria.	Student-led learning produces inconsistent outcomes.

Note. The proposed strategies were derived from the study's identified misconceptions and were intended to demonstrate guided, structured, reflective, and context-sensitive constructivist practice.

Collectively, the proposed strategies position the teacher as an active facilitator rather than a passive observer. They incorporate modeling, guide questions, reflection, authentic communication, contextual exposure, rubrics, rehearsal, and feedback. This design directly addresses the misconceptions found in the study and is consistent with the broader view that constructivism is effective when learners are active but appropriately scaffolded (Brau, 2020; Haynor, 2018).

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that senior high school English teachers understood constructivism primarily as a student-centered approach grounded in discovery, reflection, prior knowledge, teacher facilitation, and real-life experience. Their reported classroom practices—including group defense, position papers, mock interviews, extemporaneous speaking, role-playing, realia, translanguaging, symbolism, and film analysis—demonstrated meaningful alignment with constructivist principles, but implementation varied across schools and teachers. The variation indicates that constructivism was present in practice without being uniformly or consistently enacted. Misconceptions also remained, particularly the beliefs that constructivism is teacherless, purely discovery-based, insensitive to cultural differences, or inherently inconsistent in its outcomes. These findings show that effective constructivist English teaching requires both learner agency and deliberate teacher guidance. The proposed strategies contribute a practical framework for strengthening guided inquiry, reflection, authentic communication, cultural responsiveness, and structured assessment while retaining the central constructivist principle that learners actively build meaning through experience and interaction.

Recommendation

English teachers are encouraged to integrate constructivist strategies such as group defense, mock interviews, role-playing, reflective activities, and film analysis into daily lessons while maintaining clear objectives, scaffolding, feedback, and assessment criteria. Regular reflection on learner responses and outcomes may help teachers determine which strategies are most appropriate for particular classes and language competencies.

Students should be oriented to the purpose of constructivist activities so that they understand how inquiry, collaboration, reflection, and authentic communication support English learning. Journals, brief reflections, peer feedback, and class discussions may be used to help learners recognize their progress and connect classroom learning with real-life language use.

English coordinators and school administrators are encouraged to provide sustained professional development, peer mentoring, lesson-sharing opportunities, and classroom observation focused specifically on guided constructivist practice. Training should clarify common misconceptions, demonstrate culturally responsive scaffolding, and show how student-centered tasks can remain structured and assessable.

Future researchers may examine constructivist practices in other subjects, grade levels, and school divisions, include student perspectives, and compare constructivist and more conventional instructional approaches. Further work may also investigate how specific constructivist strategies influence language proficiency, engagement, learner autonomy, and classroom participation over time.

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