



**People's Democratic Republic of Algeria**  
**Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research**  
**Abu Bekr Belkaid University -Tlemcen-**  
**Faculty of Arts and Languages**  
**Department of Foreign Languages**  
**Section of English**



**Learner and Teacher Readiness for Constructivism in the  
Algerian EFL Classroom: The Case of 3<sup>rd</sup> Year Literary  
Classrooms in Colonel Abd Elhadi Secondary School  
(Sidi Bel-Abbes)**

**Dissertation Submitted to the Department of Foreign Languages as Partial  
Fulfillment for the Degree of "Magister" in Educational Psychology**

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**Academic Year: 2012-2013/1433-1434**



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## Dedication

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*To those who sparked my interest and eagerness to  
wonder, ponder and then learn; my parents.*

*To my family members and my friends wherever they are.*

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First and foremost, I would like to express my deep recognition to Allah, for giving me ambition, determination and strength to finish this work.

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## Abstract

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Many countries around the world launched reforms in their educational systems to meet the ever-evolving challenges and demands of an increasingly globalised world. In Algeria, the Competency-Based Approach (CBA) has been recently adopted; an approach which draws heavily on the principles of constructivism. The purpose of this work was, then, to explore the readiness of EFL learners and teachers for this new orientation in education and the extent to which this could be achieved in the Algerian EFL classroom. To reach this end, a case study research was conducted in Colonel Abd Elhadi Secondary School (Sidi Bel-Abbes) relying on a number of sources and research instruments for data collection. A questionnaire for learners, another one for teachers, classroom observation, and an interview with a general inspector of English were used. The data collected from these research instruments were analysed quantitatively and qualitatively. The triangulation of results revealed that Algerian EFL learners did not show readiness for autonomous learning and were not prepared to handle their learning process as required by constructivism. On the other hand, EFL teachers did not show a reliance on constructivist principles in their teaching practices in the EFL classroom which was far from being appropriate for creating constructivist learning/teaching environments. Accordingly, this work emphasised that understanding in depth the theoretical underpinnings of the CBA was crucial to achieve the objectives of the Algerian educational reform; preparing learners, teachers and the EFL classroom for constructivism was of paramount importance indeed.

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## **Key to Acronyms**

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**ADEP:** Accompanying Document of English Programme

**AF:** Absolute Frequency

**CBA:** Competency-Based Approach

**CLT:** Communicative Language Teaching

**EFL:** English as a Foreign Language

**ELT:** English Language Teaching

**ICTs:** Information and Communication Technologies

**MKO:** More Knowledgeable Other

**PBL:** Project-Based Learning

**PBM:** Project-Based Methodology

**RF:** Relative Frequency

**SBI:** Strategy-Based Instruction

**TEFL:** Teaching English as a Foreign Language

**TIB:** That Is Because

**WALT:** We Are Learning To

**WILF:** What I am Looking For

**ZPD:** Zone of Proximal Development

# *General Introduction*

## General Introduction

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Educational psychologists have long tried to answer the question of how people learn which represented one of the most controversial issues in education. In this respect, many researchers have contributed with their attempts to give an understanding of the nature of human learning and the different factors which may affect it. Recently, constructivism has been widely recognised as a leading force that shapes educational reform everywhere around an increasingly globalised world. In this new era, the role of education is no more concerned with the learner memorisation of information, but rather with his preparation for real life problems and situations. Furthermore, constructivism is largely adopted by educational authorities as it acknowledges the basic principle that learning is a process of knowledge construction requiring the learner's active engagement and participation, while the teacher's primary role is not only to transmit factual knowledge, but also to create an effective environment for learning to take place.

Within this context and being confronted with unprecedented challenges and demands imposed by globalisation, Algeria launched a general reform of its educational system on the ground of constructivist learning theory. However, it is noticed that the reform is not giving its anticipated goals. Furthermore, in the Algerian secondary schools traditional practices are still dominant; learners are not able to handle their learning process and be autonomous, instead they are over-reliant on their teachers. On the other hand, teachers seem to be unable to move towards constructivist EFL (English as a Foreign Language) classrooms and rely on constructivism as the underlying learning theory from which the Competency-Based Approach (CBA henceforth) is nurtured.

Thus, this research is an attempt to explore the extent to which theory meets practice in the Algerian EFL classroom. In other words, this work could contribute to the current pedagogical reform by settling two goals. First, it aims to investigate the reasons behind learners' over-reliance on teachers as it is observed in many classrooms across the country. In addition, it seeks to explore teachers' reluctance

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and resistance to move towards learner-centeredness in the EFL classroom where teachers' old practices are still dominant and/or repackaged in new ways in spite of the efforts to implement constructivist practices. Then, and on the basis of that investigation, some solutions will be suggested so that constructivism would be prevalent in the Algerian secondary schools in general and the EFL classroom in particular.

Indeed, the foreseen objectives of this research are deeply rooted and go beyond the teaching approach (CBA) since the researcher will extend the focus to spot some light on the underlying theory upon which the newly designed educational system is based. Therefore, the endeavor throughout this work is to examine the extent to which Algerian EFL learners can be autonomous and able to handle their learning process as it is required by constructivism. Moreover, the researcher will investigate EFL teachers' readiness to rely on constructivism in their pedagogical practices as it informs the CBA. However, this study will remain incomplete without paying some attention to the place where learners and teachers meet; the Algerian EFL classroom and its appropriateness for such new orientation in education inspired by constructivism will be also explored as a final step.

Consequently, the researcher strives to answer the following questions:

1. Are Algerian EFL learners autonomous and, therefore, ready to handle their learning process as required by constructivism?
2. Are Algerian EFL teachers ready to rely on constructivism in their teaching practices?
3. To what extent is the Algerian EFL classroom appropriate for creating constructivist learning/teaching environments?

The above mentioned questions led to formulate three hypotheses:

1. Algerian EFL learners do not seem to be autonomous and do not show readiness to handle their learning process.

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2. Algerian EFL teachers are not enough ready to rely on constructivism in their teaching practices.
3. The Algerian EFL classroom is far from being appropriate for creating constructivist learning/teaching environments.

In fact, the eagerness to reach the previously set objectives drives the researcher to design an exploratory case study research dealing with third year literary classrooms in Colonel Abd Elhadi secondary school (Sidi Bel-Abbes). This case study will collect qualitative and quantitative data from different sources relying on a set of research instruments: a questionnaire for learners, a second one for teachers, classroom observation, and an interview with a general inspector of English. The results will be analysed and triangulated on the basis of a mixed approach combining qualitative and quantitative methods.

To carry out this case study research, the present work is purposefully divided into four interrelated chapters. The first one reviews the literature on constructivism and provides the theoretical background for the issue under investigation. It seeks to draw a clear description of constructivism as it relates to learners, teachers, and the learning/teaching environment.

The second chapter consists of two parts. The first one is devoted to the description of the Algerian educational situation in accordance with constructivism considering the Algerian EFL secondary education and the case under study (third year literary classrooms). The second part deals with the research design and methodology through a detailed description of the data collection procedures and the research instruments.

The third chapter is concerned with the analysis and interpretation of data. Furthermore, the chapter seeks to answer the research questions by confirming or disconfirming the research hypotheses, and then concludes with the research results.

The fourth chapter considers some general guidelines and suggestions to make the reform more effective and the Algerian EFL classroom reflecting the



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principles of constructivist education. In addition, it highlights some solutions and strategies to promote learner autonomy as a pre-requisite for constructivist learning and to prepare teachers for constructivism as a theoretical framework as well as its pedagogical practice. Moreover, these suggestions seek to ensure that the Algerian EFL classroom provides an appropriate place for creating constructivist learning/teaching environments.

# **Chapter One**

## **Constructivism: Theoretical Background**

### **1.1 Introduction**

### **1.2 A Prelude to Constructivism**

### **1.3 Constructivism and Learning Theory**

1.3.1 Behaviourism

1.3.2 Information Processing Theory

1.3.3 Constructivism and the Notion of Learning

### **1.4 Dimensions of Constructivism**

1.4.1 Cognitive Constructivism

1.4.2 Social Constructivism

### **1.5 The Constructivist Learner**

1.5.1 Characteristics and Roles of Constructivist Learners

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### **1.6 The Constructivist Teacher**

1.6.1 Re-conceptualising Teaching

1.6.2 Characteristics and Roles of Constructivist Teachers

### **1.7 The Constructivist Learning/Teaching Environment**

1.7.1 Teaching Methods in the Constructivist Environment

1.7.3 Assessment in the Constructivist Environment

1.7.4 The Constructivist Environment and ICT integration

1.7.5 Barriers to Create Constructivist Environments

### **1.8 Conclusion**

**1.1 Introduction**

Constructivism is currently receiving much of researchers' interest in various fields. Moreover, policy makers around the world are in favour of constructivism due to the belief that constructivist learning and teaching will ensure a high quality of education and will, therefore, graduate learners who are able to meet the different challenges that life represents.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a theoretical account on constructivism by highlighting its guiding principles as compared to other learning theories. It also gives specific attention to the main characteristics and roles of both constructivist teachers and learners. The chapter then concludes with considerations of the constructivist learning/teaching environment and its features.

**1.2 A Prelude to Constructivism**

Covering a wide range of distinct trends including psychology, sociology, philosophy and education, constructivism has quickly become one of the most fashionable terms in academic debate. Constructivism means different things to different people; it is regarded as a philosophy by some researchers, a learning theory or a model for others, and yet for some others it is considered as a branch of cognitive psychology (Vadeboncoeur, 1997).

The question of whether to classify constructivism within a given category or not is still generating debate among researchers and practitioners; however, it is assumed that there is a common feature between these views which is a belief that knowledge is created by people and is affected by their social and cultural contexts (Philips 1997).

In a more detailed way, Glaserfeld (1989) claims that a clear understanding of constructivism cannot be formed unless ontology and epistemology are taken into account. Ontology and epistemology are two branches of philosophy which have the aim to answer in depth questions about the nature, origins, and limits of

reality and knowledge respectively. Constructivists favour an idealist ontological position claiming that there is no external or absolute reality as this latter is observer-dependent (Oxford, 1997). From another angle, constructivist epistemology entirely differs from traditional epistemology in its premise that knowledge is a subjective understanding of the observer (Kim, 2005).

Constructivism is receiving more interest in recent years, yet it is not a new idea. According to Pritchard and Woollard (2010), “there is a history of two thousand years attached to constructivist thought in the Eastern tradition and a history of at least three hundred years in Western thought” (Pritchard and Woollard, 2010: 2). Nonetheless, Giambattista Vico is an Italian philosopher who is often mentioned as the first to use the term ‘constructivist’ in his 1710’s Latin treatise. Von Glasersfeld (1989: 123) says: “One of Vico’s basic ideas was that epistemic agents can know nothing but the cognitive structures they themselves have put together...’to know’ means to know how to make” (qtd. in Tobias and Duffy, 2009: 3).

Although the origins of constructivism can be traced back to centuries ago, the researcher’s principal concern in the following sections will be directed fundamentally to the development of constructivism from the twentieth century onward.

### **1.3 Constructivism and Learning Theory**

According to Hilgard (1996, in Braungart and Braungart, 2007), philosophy, school administration, and conventional wisdom are the areas where matters related to learning have been discussed until the emergence of educational psychology as a new discipline during the twentieth century. This newly developed discipline was devoted to the scientific study of learning, teaching, and assessment (Woolfolk, 2001). Furthermore, educational psychology offers a variety of theories and models which attempt to explain the nature of human learning and the different factors which may affect it. One of the tasks of educational psychologists is to

systematically collect evidence and data with the intention of testing theories and hypotheses of learning (Braungart and Braungart, 2007).

In terms of learning theory, and to a large extent, the shift from one theory to another is a result of emphasising some factors and neglecting or giving less importance to others. In this sense, it is argued that a move from the study of environmental influences on the learner to the study of personal and cognitive factors was the most remarkable event during the twentieth century (Schunk, 2012).

Since then, Mayer (1992) says that education was dominated by three metaphors: First, behaviourism which defines learning as acquiring stimulus-response pairs. Information processing is the second metaphor describing learning as the processing of information. Third, an emphasis on social and individual building of knowledge as a constructivist view of how learning takes place. Indeed, our aim is not to draw a historical line of the development of these theories, but to illuminate their major principles and characteristics, with a special focus on their dissimilarities.

### **1.3.1 Behaviourism**

As far as the psychology of learning is concerned, the first half of the twentieth century was marked by the dominance of ‘Behaviourism’ (Schunk, 2012). However, the roots of behaviourism go back to the last years of the nineteenth century when animals’ automatic and involuntary responses to stimuli were receiving much of researchers’ interest (Jordan et al., 2008). In summarising its principles, Jordan et al. (2008) argue that observable change in behaviour, which is the result of stimulus-response relationships, is the prime focus of behaviourism. Furthermore, if a scientific study of learning is to be conducted, mental processes should not be taken into consideration. What is more is the behaviourist belief that human organisms learn exactly the same as any other organisms, including animals. These organisms, for behaviourists, are born as empty vessels waiting to be shaped

by the external environment, while the subject has nothing to do except for providing a previously predicted and appropriate stimulus.

A closer look at behaviourism may reveal some of its drawbacks. In fact, behaviourists were criticised for their neglect of the capacity of the human mind and the learner's mental processes and abilities. Opponents of behaviourism describe it as a dehumanising theory which makes human beings as machines or animals without creativity and freedom of will. However, more stress was put on mental abilities by information processing theory of learning.

### **1.3.2 Information Processing Theory**

Information processing theory (or cognitivism in a broad sense) emerged in the late 1950s and gained wide currency during the 1960s as a reaction to behaviourism and its overreliance on stimulus-response relationships to explain human learning. In addition, information processing theory was developed as a natural result of interest in internal mental processes and the widespread of mental experimentation (Doolittle, 2001). Another reason was “the development of computers and an interest in artificial intelligence” (Jordan et al., 2008: 36). In fact, the human mind was portrayed as a computer receiving, analysing, storing, and retrieving information. In this sense, Mayer (1996) says that the principles of this theory are as follows: first, humans are seen as processors of information while the mind is viewed as an information-processing system. Second, learning is defined as the acquisition of mental representations (qtd. in Schunk, 2012: 164). Moreover, learning is not an observable change in behaviour as it is assumed by behaviourists but a mental activity of information organisation and interpretation (Jordan et al., 2008).

Though the advocates of information processing theory and cognitivist theories in general claim a scientific basis for it and describe it as a sophisticated explanation of human learning, its opponents consider it as a limited theory which cannot account for the development of human knowledge. This critique was one of

the reasons behind the emergence of constructivism which is considered to be an outgrowth of cognitivism (Jonassen, 1991), but further it seeks to explain what people do with the processed information in order to build knowledge. This is actually what makes constructivism differs from cognitivism as it is noted by Jordan et al. (2008: 55):

whereas cognitivism focuses on how information is processed, constructivism focuses on what people do with information to develop knowledge. In particular, constructivism holds that people actively build knowledge and understanding by synthesizing the knowledge they already possess with new information.

Constructivism in this sense is more concerned with what people do with information than how they store it or retrieve it for use. It is about knowledge construction, not information processing.

### **1.3.3 Constructivism and the Notion of Learning**

The 1980s and 1990s witnessed the emergence of constructivism as a leading metaphor of human learning. This new born in the field of educational psychology was a direct outcome as interest was slowly directed away from behaviourism and information processing theories (Mayer, 1996). On the one hand, behaviourism has been criticised as being a teacher-centered theory in which learners are passive agents in the learning process (Braungart and Braungart, 2007). On the other hand, the assumptions of cognitivist and information processing theories have been questioned; Greeno (1989, in Schunk, 2012) refers to the following assumptions which have been doubted:

- ✓ Cognition resides in the mind rather than in interaction with the environment.
- ✓ Processes of learning and cognition are relatively the same across persons.
- ✓ The source of cognition is knowledge and skills developed in formal instructional settings rather than in personal experiences and inborn capacities.

Moreover, portraying the human mind as a computer, and sticking learning and learners to matters of information memorisation and retention makes these theories reductionist with a clear neglect of social and cultural impacts.

While Jones and Brader-Araje (2002) believe that the meaning of constructivism depends on the definer's view and position, other thinkers argue that constructivism lacks a harmonious agreement upon its meaning and definition (Schunk, 2012). Indeed, one of the debates which have not been completely resolved lies in the question of whether or not to consider constructivism a learning theory. In this vein, its opponents argue that constructivism is an epistemology or a philosophical explanation about the nature of learning, not a learning theory (Schunk, 2012). However, Brooks and Brooks (1993) who are pretty well-known for their commitment to constructivism make the following definition advocating the existence of constructivism as a learning theory: "...it is a theory about knowledge and learning...the theory defines knowledge as temporary, developmental, socially and culturally mediated, and thus, nonobjective" (Brooks and Brooks, 1993: vii). Generally speaking, constructivism is governed by the following assumptions as it is noted by Merrill (1991: 47):

- ✓ Knowledge is built from experience;
- ✓ Learning is a personal interpretation of the world;
- ✓ Learning is an active process in which meaning is developed on the basis of experience; and
- ✓ Conceptual growth comes from the negotiation of meaning, the sharing of multiple perspectives, and the changing of our internal mental representations through collaborative learning.



The same assumptions are clearly highlighted by Fosnot (1996: ix), in her definition of learning from a constructivist perspective:

a self-regulatory process of struggling with the conflict between existing personal models of the world and discrepant new insights, constructing new representations and models of reality as human meaning-making venture with culturally developed tools and symbols, and further negotiating such meaning through cooperative social activity, discourse, and debate.

The previous definition assumes that knowledge construction is an active process resulted from experiences of the individual in his social and cultural environment. In fact, this view has been originated from the influences of many researchers who contributed to constructivism: Piaget and his work on cognitive development, the sociocultural works of Vygotsky and Bruner, Dewey's active learning, Von Glasersfeld's epistemological debates, and the paradigm and scientific revolutions of Thomas Kuhn (Driscoll, 2000). However, for our purposes, the detailed description and the central focus will be addressed to cover cognitive constructivism and social constructivism developed basically, though not exclusively, by Jean Piaget (1896-1980) and Lev Vygotsky (1889-1934) respectively.

#### **1.4 Dimensions of Constructivism**

It is difficult to limit the scope of constructivism to only two dimensions (cognitive and social constructivism) with one having in mind that there are other significant dimensions which have been formulated by researchers in this area of inquiry. Cognitive constructivism and social constructivism are discussed here relying on the work of Vadeboncoeur (1997) who distinguishes between these two views as adapted for educational aims.

**1.4.1 Cognitive Constructivism**

Psychological constructivism, individual constructivism and cognitive constructivism are some terms used interchangeably to refer to the view which draws heavily on the work of the French researcher and psychologist Jean Piaget (1896-1980) is often regarded as the father of constructivist thought (Jordan et al., 2008). According to Oxford (1997), in his theory of knowledge development, Piaget (1954) described the child as a lone scientist creating his personal sense and understanding of the world. Moreover, Piaget asserts that “human beings are, from early childhood, active, independent meaning-makers who construct knowledge rather than receive it” (qtd. in Moore, 2000: 7).

Piaget (1969) took the idea of constructivism even further when he argued that interaction between the child’s previous cognitive structures and new experiences results in cognitive development. The latter, is grounded initially in four components which are: maturation, physical experience, social interaction, and a general progression towards equilibrium (Piaget, 1954). When the child is in front of a new experience or information which is not similar to his previously built mental representations, a state of conflict or ‘disequilibrium’, as it is labeled by Piaget, will occur. To make sense of the new experience and in order to reach a state of ‘equilibrium’, the child is required to build new cognitive structures or ‘schema’ through the processes of ‘assimilation’, ‘accommodation’, and ‘equilibration’ (Can, 2009).

Schemata are the mental representations of the world that human beings build as a result of their interaction with their surrounding environment. They “are integrated networks of knowledge which are stored in long-term memory and allow us to recall, understand and create expectations” (Pritchard and Woollard, 2010: 10-11).

Assimilation is a process through which the child integrates the newly detected or encountered elements and events to his previous structures as it is (Can,

2009; Moore, 2000). To make sense of the assimilated event, the child will go through a process of accommodation; it is through this process that “human beings adapt their developing understandings and expectations to the realities and constraints of the social and physical world” (Moore, 2000: 7). The final phase is equilibration which “makes internal mental structures and external environmental reality consistent with each other” (Schunk, 2012: 236). At this level, the child will arrive at a state of balance between what he has recently come across and his former schemas.

Central to Piaget’s overall developmental theory is the idea of progressive stages in which children follow a given sequence in their cognitive development. Throughout these stages, children will be “able to handle progressively more complex concepts in progressively more complex ways” (Moore, 2000: 9). Further, moving from one level or stage to another is characterised by essential and qualitative change in the child’s perception of the world, in his or her processing and response to information, and how they develop ideas and concepts or simply how they learn (Moore, 2000).

Piaget proposes four developmental stages to explain his theory: sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete operational, and formal operational. The sensorimotor stage is characterised by children’s spontaneous actions and their willingness to understand the external environment and to make sense of the world. At this level, children start to construct mental structures with an inner wish or motivation to do so. However, these schemas are said to be limited in the sense that meanings are associated to only present actions; a bottle is for sucking for example (Schunk, 2012).

In the next stage, i.e., the preoperational one, the child will be able to make associations between objects and meanings through language. This stage, indeed, is characterised by rapid language development. Once the child reaches the concrete operational stage, his abstract reasoning will flourish, language becomes more

social with openness towards other views as children's thoughts become less egocentric (Schunk, 2012), but still the child's thinking is concrete.

Being at the formal operational stage will allow children to think in a more abstract way. It is the period in which children's focus extends to concepts and ideas rather than events and objects. They will be able, also, to use logical reasoning and hypothesising to solve problems and generate their personal views and understandings (Moore, 2000).

As it is noticed by Can (2009), language is a cornerstone in Piaget's developmental and learning theory. "Children make sense of their world via language; as they advance through stages and processes, language acquisition plays an important role" (Can, 2009: 61).

Although cognitive constructivism concerns itself with the child's interaction with his external world, its first emphasis is the mental structures of the individual and how it develops. The role of social and cultural settings in shaping human knowledge is highly acknowledged by social constructivism.

#### **1.4.2 Social Constructivism**

While it is argued that both cognitive and social constructivist views of learning are epistemologically and ontologically equal in their assumption that people construct knowledge and understanding of the world relying on previous knowledge and experience, social constructivists believe that knowledge is constructed in a sociocultural context. The Russian psychologist and philosopher Lev Vygotsky (1889-1934) is often regarded the founding father of this view of constructivism as he emphasised the role of social artifacts in knowledge building.

Certainly, Piaget and Vygotsky share some views in common in their highlighting of the constructive nature of human learning. However, Vygotsky devoted most of his studies to the role of social and cultural factors in the process of learning and knowledge construction. He further argues, as opposed to Piaget, that

learning is the result of interaction not growing through developmental stages. Indeed, Vygotsky is well known for his Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD henceforward; illustrated in Figure 1.1) which he defines as:

the distance between the actual developmental level as determined through problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers... What children can do with the assistance of others might be in some sense even more indicative of their mental development than what they can do alone.

(qtd. in Pritchard and Woollard, 2010: 14)

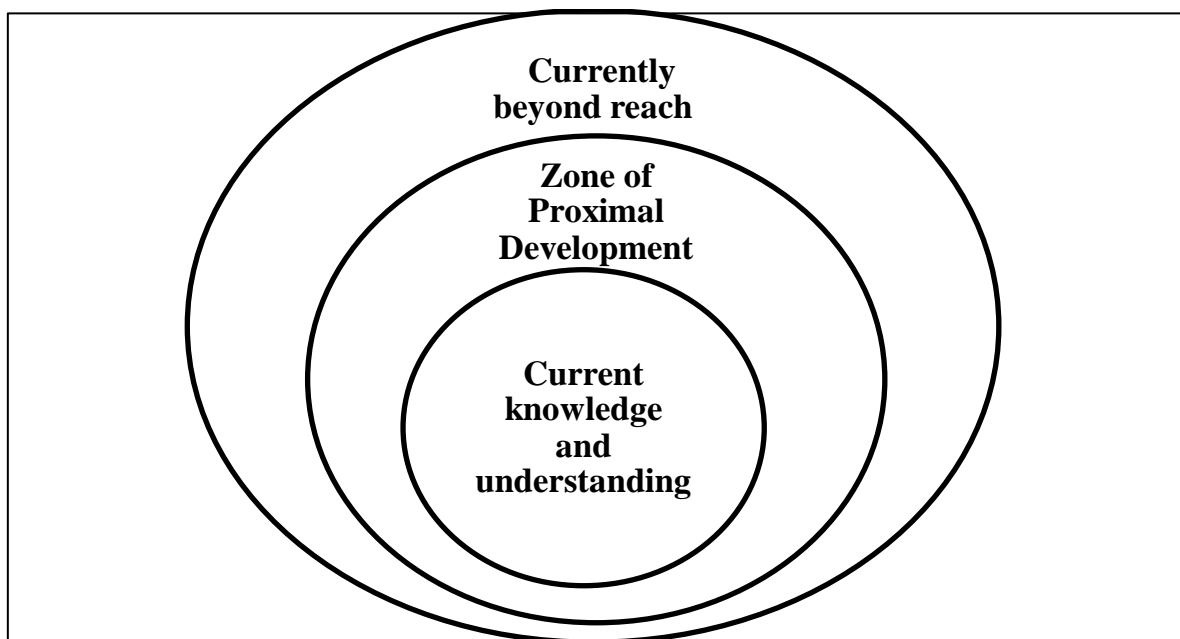


Figure 1.1 Zone of Proximal Development (From Pritchard and Woollard, 2010: 10)

Another associated concept to the ZPD is that of the More Knowledgeable Other (MKO henceforth), who is regarded as a person who could be a teacher or a peer with more knowledge and understanding of the problem or the subject being tackled by the learner. Moreover, this support or guidance provided by the MKO is referred to as Scaffolding which represents “a powerful metaphor as it suggests supports that are gradually withdrawn when learners have constructed their understanding and can act independently” (Jordan et al., 2008: 64).

It is worth noting at this level that knowledge construction for Vygotskian thinkers requires a socio-cultural basis through the use of cultural tools such as language. Indeed, language is central to social constructivists arguing that children use it in a variety of ways as they intend to make sense of the world around them; language becomes a device for thinking, solving a given problem, planning for an action, controlling their actions, and to ask help from others (Doolittle, 2001).

Discussing the major principles of both cognitive and social constructivism would certainly spark our attention towards the emphasis constructivists put on the individual learner as being the constructor of knowledge and as an active agent in the learning process.

### **1.5 The Constructivist Learner**

The constructivist classroom is often described as learner-centered wherein the learner is considered to be the core heart of the learning process (Gray, 1997). Indeed, in learner-centered environments learners are supposed to have characteristics and roles which are distinctly different from those observed in other paradigms and learning contexts as it will be explained in the following parts.

#### **1.5.1 Characteristics and Roles of Constructivist Learners**

As opposed to other epistemologies and learning theories, constructivism holds that learners are not empty vessels waiting for bulks or pieces of knowledge to be transmitted to their minds, but they dynamically seek meaning and understanding (Can, 2009). Furthermore, they “form, elaborate, and test candidate mental structures until a satisfactory one emerges” (Perkins, 1991: 2).

For constructivism, learners are active participants in the learning process rather than passive agents who wait for their teacher or another source to transform information to them while sitting on their desks. They are more engaged in making inquiries, searching new meanings, generating hypotheses, and reflecting on their

personal findings and conclusions as they are “checking new information against old rules and then revising the rules when they no longer work” (Salvin, 2006: 243).

Moreover, constructivists have a strong commitment to the belief that these learners bring with them expertise and knowledge they gained from previous experiences which will certainly affect the manner they will perceive the new experience and how new knowledge will be constructed on the basis of the new situation and the previous ones (Erben et al., 2009).

A number of researchers (Geary, 1995; Gray, 1997; Bruning et al., 2004) highlight the reflective nature of constructivist learners who can take an active role in thinking on and setting their personal goals, and in evaluating their development and skills. In addition, they are open to criticism and praise since they perceive feedback as something they can benefit from in their learning process.

To account for these characteristics and roles, constructivists have proposed the notion of self-regulation. In fact, Constructivist self-regulated learners “take care of their own monitoring, motivation and feedback process during and after learning” (Van Eekelen et al., 2005: 451) in the sense that they are more cognisant of the existing of learning strategies, and they know how and when to use each one effectively. Additionally, they are intrinsically self- motivated learners as they learn for the sake of learning not in return for external reward such as marks or the approval of other persons (Salvin, 2006).

Following Zimmerman’s list (2002: 66), constructivist self-regulated learners are characterised by, and are able to:

- ✓ Set personal goals;
- ✓ Adopt effective strategies to achieve these goals;
- ✓ Monitor personal performance;
- ✓ Restructure the learning environment to suit their personal goals;
- ✓ Manage time effectively;
- ✓ Self-evaluate their personal methods;

- ✓ Draw causality links between results and reasons; and
- ✓ Adapt their future methods.

However, Zimmerman (2002) makes a number of reservations when he contends that learners do not receive adequate and sufficient encouragement from their teachers to be self-regulated as teachers do not show their learners how to make use of different learning strategies. From another perspective, Zimmerman (2002) maintains that self-regulation does not exclude the social nature of learning highlighted by social constructivists; he goes to emphasise that learners will always search help from a teacher or more competent peers in the learning process.

In dealing with these issues, and as another quality of self-regulated learners (Brockett and Hiemstra, 1991), autonomy and autonomous learning are receiving considerable attention as it will be illustrated next.

### **1.5.2 Constructivism and Learner Autonomy**

In its overall framework, constructivism acknowledges learning as a process of search for understanding, meaning making and knowledge building on the ground of previous experiences and prior knowledge. However, this process requires full participation of the learner who should be active as it is made by Jenkins (2000: 61: 601) asserting that “constructivists of different persuasion hold a commitment to the idea that the development of understanding requires active engagement on the part of the learner” (qtd. in Jones and Brader-Araje, 2002: 3). In such a way, constructivism puts more emphasis on learning instead of teaching, learners’ involvement and autonomy in the learning process (Wang, 2011) and “if learning is a matter of the construction of knowledge, effective learners must be cognitively capable of performing actions that enable them to take control of their learning” (Benson, 2001: 40).

Many definitions of learner autonomy have been proposed since its emergence in the field of education. One the most frequently used definitions in language learning and teaching is proposed by Holec (1980) who views an



autonomous learner as one who “is capable of taking charge of one’s own learning and nothing more... to take charge of one’s own learning is to bear responsibility for all the decisions concerning all aspects of this learning” (Holec, 1980: 3). These decisions are identified by Holec (1980: 4) to include five components:

- ✓ Determining objectives;
- ✓ Defining contents and progressions;
- ✓ Selecting methods and techniques to be used;
- ✓ Monitoring the procedure of acquisition; and
- ✓ Evaluating what has been acquired.

To account for these decisions, Benson (1996) proposed three types of learner autonomy: technical, psychological, and political. The latter refers to learners’ control of the process as well as the content of learning. Technical autonomy is the act of learning outside the educational setting without help from the teacher. Psychological autonomy describes an internal capability which makes learners taking more responsibility for their learning process.

It is worth to note that autonomy does not mean self-instruction or learning without a teacher or his interference in the learning process (Esch, 1996). Autonomy can take place within a group as explained by Jefferies (1990: 35) who views autonomous learning as “learning in which an individual or a group of learners study on their own possibly for a part or parts of a course”. Indeed, autonomous learning is not a kind of isolation from others but a “willingness to act independently and in cooperation with others” (Dam, 2003: 1).

Nonetheless, learners may not accept to take responsibility or charge of their learning. Thus, teachers are required to teach and show them how to be autonomous by providing them with the necessary skills and strategies for autonomous learning (Little, 1995). Little (1995) expands his point of view even more by arguing that if teachers are to enhance their learners’ orientedness towards autonomy, they are

themselves required to be autonomous through “reflecting on their own beliefs, practices, experiences and expectations of the teaching situation” (Little, 1995: 47).

In line with that, constructivism invites teachers and educationalists to rethink, and re-conceptualise the notion of teaching as well as roles that teachers are to perform in their classrooms.

### **1.6 The Constructivist Teacher**

People engaged in constructivist learning and teaching matters have always been trying to raise awareness against the position holding that constructivism, as frequently misunderstood, is a teaching approach per se. Rather, constructivism is a theory of learning not a description of a specific teaching method or technique (Fosnot, 1996; Rowe, 2006). However, constructivism has greatly influenced education and has implications for teaching and curriculum development as the teaching process has come to be known differently under different labels and names.

#### **1.6.1 Re-conceptualising Teaching**

Change in the beliefs and perceptions of what learning is and what it entails led to a consequent re-conceptualisation of what teaching is and what it is all about. This new orientation in understanding both learning and teaching is reflected essentially in two opposing poles: constructivist teaching and instructivist teaching (Westwood, 2008). The latter refers to the position supporting knowledge transmission models of teaching, while the former describes teaching practices which are informed by the premises of constructivist learning where knowledge is created by the learner himself.

Moore (2000) makes a distinction between these two models in terms of the educational purposes that are intended to be achieved. He comments that a transmissive model aims at making learners memorise information and be obedient. However, a student-centered approach based on progressive or constructivist

principles supports learners' independence and freedom of thought (Moore, 2000). Transmissive teaching is grounded on what Barnes (1986) has called 'cold knowledge' transformation from the head of a teacher to the heads of his learners which allows for the creation of barriers between what learners already know in their lives outside the school or the educational institution that Barnes (1986) has termed 'action knowledge' and what is being taught inside the school or 'school knowledge'. On the contrary, exploratory teaching draws clear links between school knowledge and action knowledge through assisting learners' tendencies towards understanding not memorisation (Barnes, 1986).

Another standing figure in this area of interest is Freire (1972) who describes metaphorically the knowledge transmission model of teaching as a 'Banking Model' where the teacher transforms deposits of information to learners' heads who are required then to receive, memorise, and repeat them when needed (Larsen-Freeman, 2011). However, Larsen-Freeman (2011: 162) recognises that "knowledge transmission remains a common practice in many parts of the world" though "these days it is common to be critical of a knowledge transmission view of teaching for the passive role it ascribes to language learners" while Barnes (1986) explains that this high advocacy that the transmission approach still receives in many places is due to its capacity in discipline maintenance.

Constructivists believe that knowledge and understanding are created on the basis of prior knowledge and experience rather than being imparted or predigested in the form of information and skills provided by a teacher or another source like the textbook (Zevenbergen, 1995). Furthermore, unlike instructivist models and approaches of teaching which are inspired from behaviourist and information processing theories (Roblyer et al., 1997), constructivist teaching regrets that learners come to the classroom as blank slates or tabula rasa. Indeed, learners are "intelligent humans with curiosity and feelings; they are not parrots. For most students, an over-dependency on memorization may easily deaden the sense and creativity we want to foster" (Paul, 1995: 66).

For constructivists, direct teaching (or sometimes referred to as traditional teaching) of “skills is therefore frowned upon, and activities such as drill and practice are dismissed as boring and meaningless rote learning” (Westwood, 2008: 5). In taking a socio-constructivist position, it would be argued that Vygotsky’s attempt was to call for teaching that employs “strategies that are not only ‘student-centered’ but that create spaces for students verbally to elaborate developing concepts, and that involves the teacher in partnership model of teaching with the student” (Moore, 2002: 16). However, in order to build and strengthen this partnership, constructivist teachers are challenged to adopt new roles and features which will be highlighted in the following sections.

### **1.6.2 Characteristics and Roles of Constructivist Teachers**

Moving from a traditional instructivist model to constructivist-informed teaching practices requires deep transformation and understanding of teachers’ roles in the classroom. Traditionally, the teacher is seen as ‘the sage on the stage’ or the fountain of knowledge who has all the wisdom; he stands in front of rows of learners sitting on their desks waiting for knowledge to be poured into their empty cans. The teacher in traditional settings has the role of knowledge transmitter, controller of learning content and activities, a subject matter expert, and a monitor of progress (Murray and Christison, 2011). On the opposing hand, constructivism favours a ‘guide on the side’ role of a teacher who uses his authority in a selective and wise manner with the aim of pushing learners for gradual construction of personalities that are self-confident, show respect for one’s own self and others as well, and to develop their brains to be active, inquiring, and creative (De Vries, 1997).

Moreover, Marlowe and Page (1998) view the effective constructivist teacher as one who can provide his learners with opportunities that allow them to think and behave like historians, storytellers, mathematicians, and scientists, not to make them memorise facts about these topics or subject matters. Marlowe and Page (1998: 27)

also argue that this kind of constructivist practice can be achieved through “doing and reflecting, more doing and reflecting, and then more doing and reflecting”.

Selley (1999) claims that constructivists prefer to use terms such as encouraging rather than teaching due to their strong belief that learning is something learners do for themselves, not to be imposed by a teacher or someone else. Therefore, the teacher should encourage learners in solving problems and decision making throughout their learning process. He is challenged to teach them a wide range of strategies that help them solve problems, monitor their learning, assess their progress, and control their emotions and anxieties (Dollard and Christensen, 1996). The constructivist teacher is invited:

to adhere to the methods of a flexible coach, facilitator, researcher, learner, interior designer, evaluator, professional and team player. Constructivist teachers will need to move from teaching in a one-dimensional, simplistic and flannel graphed format to a multi-mediated, complex and learner focused forum.

(Cey, 2001: 16)

Acknowledging the facilitative and guiding roles of a constructivist teacher in the learning process, which necessitates less authority and control than in a traditional classroom, is not an equivalent of whole freedom for learners in taking all decisions and whatever actions in the classroom. In fact, constructivist teachers show different tendencies in managing their classrooms through engaging their learners in experiences that are relevant and interesting to the learner himself not necessarily of importance to the teacher (Hoover, 1996). It is believed that learners’ disruptive behaviour and discipline problems will be easily handled and resolved as far as the experiences are engaging and interesting (Marlowe and Page, 1998).

To overcome these issues and in order to become successful and effective teachers, Brooks and Brooks (1993) emphasise that a constructivist teacher:

- ✓ Encourages and accepts learners autonomy and initiative;

- ✓ Uses raw data and primary sources, along with manipulative, interactive and physical materials;
- ✓ Uses cognitive terminology such as ‘classify’, ‘analyse’, ‘predict’, and ‘create’;
- ✓ Allows the students' responses to drive lessons, shift instructional strategies, and alter content;
- ✓ Inquires about students’ understandings of concepts before sharing his own understanding of these concepts;
- ✓ Encourages students to engage in dialogue, both with the teacher and with one another;
- ✓ Encourages students’ inquiry by asking thoughtful, open-ended questions and encouraging students to ask questions of each other;
- ✓ Seeks elaboration of students initial responses;
- ✓ Engages learners in experiences that might engender contradictions to their initial hypotheses and then encourages discussion;
- ✓ Allows wait time after posing questions;
- ✓ Provides time for students to construct relationships and create metaphors; and
- ✓ Nurtures students’ natural curiosity.

Throughout studies devoted to constructivist teachers, .i.e., their qualities and roles, special concern has been placed on the teacher’s primary role in creating appropriate, safe, and trusting environments and conditions for learning to take place (McLellan, 2008). Thus, it is of prime importance to understand the characteristics of the constructivist learning/teaching environment which is the focus of the following section.

### **1.7 The Constructivist Learning/Teaching Environment**

The constructivist learning environment differs entirely from the traditional one in which the central figure is the teacher, and the purpose of education is information memorisation and reproduction. On the contrary, the constructivist environment offers learners a space wherein they can work cooperatively and

provide support and help to one another. It is a place where they take advantage of using a wide range of information resources and tools while attempting to reach their learning goals and solve problems (Wilson, 1996). It is, therefore, a learner-centered environment which provides learners with the opportunity to develop their potentials and actively engage them in continuous undertaking of problem-solving, decision-making and critical thinking. The targeted goals in such an environment are to make learners “become inquisitive, inventive and reflective, and to encourage them to take the initiative, think, reason and be confident to explore and exchange ideas with others” (Project Construct, 2004, qtd. in Westwood, 2008: 5).

The exchange of ideas and views can be fostered by collaborative learning which is at the heart of constructivist environments. In addition to its role in raising learners’ awareness of the existence of multiple truths and representations held by each person, collaborative learning “facilitates the socio-moral atmosphere of the learning environment by implicitly referring to values, consideration, fairness, respect to others, [and] helpfulness” (Watson et al., 1999, qtd. in Can, 2009: 64). On the other hand, collaborative learning as it is often misunderstood does not impede individual progress since each learner has the chance to work under the constraints and possibilities of his ZPD as part of differentiated instruction. Indeed, differentiated or individualised pedagogical strategies help in making sure that every learner is receiving enough and appropriate attention and support. Differentiated instruction in the constructivist environment comes to the side of ‘equity of education’ which is one of the main principles of student-centered classrooms; a principle that calls for providing equal and fair opportunities for all learners to be participants in the learning process (Erben et al., 2009).

Interaction between learners and their teacher, and learners themselves are highly valuable in the constructivist environment and thus noise becomes a natural part of it; working in total silence is not a feature of socially collaborative classrooms (Pritchard and Woollard, 2010). Moreover, learners should be provided with authentic, relevant, realistic, complex, and meaningful experiences and

activities (Wilson, 1996; Simons, 1997). Indeed, learners will be intrinsically motivated as far as they find those activities and experiences engaging and interesting (Murray, 2004).

A great body of research has been conducted in recent years to describe constructivist learning environments in comparison to traditional ones. Chung (1991) claims that in a constructivist environment, knowledge and authority are shared between learners and teachers who play the role of guides while learners are working in heterogeneous and small groups. For Gray (1997), a constructivist environment is characterised by the following: (1) learners who are actively involved in the learning process; (2) it is a democratic environment; (3) the activities and experiences are interactive and learner-centered; and (4) the teacher facilitates learning and encourages learners' autonomy and responsibility.

Jonassen (1994: 35) suggests that a constructivist environment should:

- ✓ Provide multiple representations of reality.
- ✓ Avoid oversimplification and represent the complexity of life.
- ✓ Emphasise knowledge construction not knowledge reproduction.
- ✓ Emphasise authenticity of tasks in meaningful contexts rather than decontextualised instruction.
- ✓ Provide real-world settings or case-based learning instead of predetermined sequences of instruction.
- ✓ Encourages thoughtful reflection on experiences.
- ✓ Enables context- and content- dependent construction of knowledge.
- ✓ Supports collaborative knowledge construction via social negotiation not competition.

Although creating constructivist environments can be challenging, but it can be achieved through relying on a number of teaching methods and strategies.



**1.7.1 Teaching Methods in the Constructivist Environment**

As opposed to traditional teaching methods and strategies whose purpose is to make learners memorise and then retrieve a large amount of sequenced information, learner-centered methods and strategies intend to bring about deep changes in the mental cognitive, social, and emotional aspects of the learner, and make learners work collaboratively and autonomously. Indeed, learner-centered education has been developed as a concept in the sphere of educational psychology and has recently become at the forefront of academic organisations' and policy makers' agendas worldwide (Attard et al., 2008). Learner-centeredness differs from teacher-centeredness in the sense that in the former decisions about the content of a curriculum, when to teach it, how to teach and assess it are shared with learners (Nunan, 1995).

To avoid traditional instructional strategies, alternative strategies have been proposed to be utilised in the constructivist environment such as: simulations, strategy and role-playing games, Socratic dialogues, group and pair work, discussions, microteaching, research assignments, presentations, journal writing, creative activities (like creating a poem, a story or a slogan), peer teaching, debates, and brainstorming to mention only a few (Wilson, 1996; Kesal, 2003).

Moreover, in a learner-centered environment a teacher may rely on constructivist methods that range from Inquiry-Based Methods including Discovery-Based Learning, Problem-Based Learning, and Resource-Based Learning, to Project-Based Methods. Though these methods and types can be used separately, similarities between them exist and their principles may overlap with each other. These methods encourage learners to raise questions, carry out research, investigate, think critically, draw conclusions, and solve real problems or issues (Westwood, 2008).

One of the methods that gains popularity in recent years and which is widely used in educational institutions is Project-Based Methodology (PBM henceforth). Asan and Haliloglu (2005, qtd. in Erben et al., 2009: 61) claim that:

Project-Based Learning is a model for classroom activity that shifts away from the classroom teaching practices of short, isolated, teacher-centered lessons and instead emphasizes learning activities that are long-term, interdisciplinary, student-centered, and integrated with real world issues and practices.

Westwood (2008) argues that advocacy of PBM is due to many reasons. There is an enormous ability to use it in most curricular areas, it poses real world issues and problems that can allow learners to make meaningful links between new and previous knowledge and experiences and thus deepen their knowledge about the issue or topic being tackled. In addition, it increases learners' self-directedness and motivation since it puts responsibility in the hands of learners together with strengthening their collaborative skills. It also provides learners with the opportunity to interact with each other and to access different views and representations. Finally, learners will be able to acquire a set of skills about collecting and analysing data with the ability of using higher-order and critical thinking.

At the same time, Westwood (2008: 34) enumerates some difficulties that may impede teachers to use this methodology as:

- ✓ Some learners lack adequate skills for searching and collating information;
- ✓ Some learners may give the impression of productive involvement in the work, but may in fact be learning and contributing very little;
- ✓ Where projects involve the production of posters, models, charts, recordings, photographs, and written reports on display, there is a danger that these are actually 'window dressing' that hides shallow investigation and a weak understanding of the topic; and

- ✓ When different aspects of a topic are given to different members to research, there is a danger that individual members never really gain an overall understanding of the whole topic.

The picture of the constructivist learner-centered environment would be incomplete without referring to the issue of how learners are assessed and what teachers assess.

### **1.7.2 Assessment in the Constructivist Environment**

Within the realm of constructivist environments, Jonassen (1991) emphasises the use of evaluation strategies that reflect both the cognitive and social dimensions of knowledge construction. Jonassen (1991) argues that assessment should be an integral part within the learning process and not separated from teaching.

In traditional environments, the purpose of assessment is to identify whether or not, and to what extent learners are able to retrieve previously memorised information. On the other hand, constructivists put high emphasis on assessment methods and strategies which are described as formative not summative (Moore, 2000). The former refers to evaluating learners in the process of learning, while the latter describes evaluation which aims at summarising and measuring what learners have grasped through separate tests at the end of a lesson or unit (Brown, 2003).

Constructivist assessment honours learners' attempts for building knowledge and understanding, not its reproduction. Thus, "students' demonstration of knowledge construction acquisition, their products, should be noted as only part of the evaluation; the process should also be evaluated" (Chen, 2003: 22). Within this framework, correct answers are not the aim, but multiple truths and representations are encouraged and accepted (Jonassen, 1991).

Formal assessment through objective tests and standardised examinations is not neglected or prohibited, rather it is disfavoured because it brings learners uninterested and hinders them to develop knowledge that they may use in situations

other than official exams (Richardson, 1997). In addition to formal assessment, constructivism encourages teachers to use informal assessment strategies that are reflected in eye contact, body language, and facial expressions (Kesal, 2003). Informal assessment can be provided through feedback and negotiation engendered from continuous interaction among learners and teachers.

Besides written exams and formal tests, assessment in constructivist environments may take several forms such as assessing learners' portfolios, research reports, project works, essays, and term papers. It may include the evaluation of performance in group or class discussions, debates, or plays. In addition, a teacher may evaluate his learners' participation, and rely on peer-evaluation, self-evaluation, and group-evaluation (Wilson, 1996; Kesal, 2003).

Before concluding this section, the role of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs henceforth) in building constructivist environments cannot be underestimated and should be given some attention.

### **1.7.3 The Constructivist Environment and ICTs integration**

It is commonly documented by eminent scholars and researchers on constructivism and constructivist learning environments that the latter is technology rich or based. In this line of thought, Collins (1991: 31) argues that "technology seems to be coming down on the side of constructivists, who have been trying- unsuccessfully to date- to change the prevailing societal view of education". Moreover, Mann (1994) argues that new attention in the field of education has been directed towards constructivism due to its reliance on technologies. Furthermore, linking constructivism and ICTs will empower students with access to real data and provide them with the opportunity to work on authentic problems. Indeed, "if we wish to prepare students for life-long learning, we must begin to introduce them to the tools which they will use in the process they pursue after their formal education is completed" (Barr, 1990: 84).

The importance of integrating ICTs in the constructivist classroom is not restricted to their utility in providing learners with large amounts of information, but goes beyond this and helps learners to become actively engaged in the learning process and be autonomous. In addition to the vital role it plays in enhancing collaboration between learners, ICTs change the role of the learner from one to be taught to one who learns and the teacher as a guide instead of an expert (Negroponte et al., 1997). These technologies “provide language teachers and learners with effective means to make language acquisition in the classroom viable in a way that has not been possible before” (Tschirner, 2001: 305).

Generally, ICTs can be used for teaching and learning, to facilitate communication between those who are engaged in the learning process, to evaluate learners, and to manage learning activities (Carliner et al., 2008). However, Compoy (1992) warns that ICTs are a means to end, not an end in itself and it serves as tools to facilitate learning not for the sake of using it. ICTs may include computers alone or with internet access, Audiovisual aids, White Interactive Boards, iPods, recorders, MP3s to note only a few.

In an attempt to draw a clear picture of how the constructivist learning/teaching environment looks like and to distinguish it from the traditional one, Brooks and Brooks (1993) provide the following figure which they entitled “A Look at School Environments”:

Traditional Classroom	Constructivist Classroom
Curriculum begins with the parts of the whole. Emphasises basic skills.	Curriculum emphasises big concepts, beginning with the whole and expanding to include the parts.
Strict adherence to fixed curriculum is highly valued.	Pursuit of student questions and interests is valued.
Materials are primarily textbooks and workbooks.	Materials include primary sources 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.	Teachers have a dialogue with students, helping students construct their own knowledge.
Teacher's role is directive, rooted in authority.	Teacher's role is interactive, rooted in negotiation.
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.
Students work primarily alone.	Students work primarily in groups.

Table 1.1 Traditional and Constructivist Classrooms Compared (Brooks and Brooks, 1993: 17)

Constructivist learning environments provide a place for knowledge construction, collaboration, and developing learners' responsibility and autonomy. However, challenges to create such environments exist and the task of smoothly building it is highly demanding.

**1.7.4 Barriers to Create Constructivist Environments**

In discussing reform efforts based on constructivist principles, Tellez (2007: 553) concludes that the “importance of constructivism in educational theory and research cannot be underestimated”. He also draws attention to the question of how to bridge theory and practice. Indeed, it is highly believed among educationalists that classroom teaching practice is likely to have positive effects on learners’ outcomes and development when it is informed by constructivism, but it is difficult for practitioners to link its multidimensional pieces with each other, and to transform it into effective classroom practices (Gordon, 2009).

In this line of thought, Sultan et al. (2011) further argue that constructivism can be challenged by many obstacles and barriers to be transformed into practice, and teachers may face problems in creating constructivist learning/teaching environments. According to Sultan et al. (2011: 152), these barriers may arise as a result of different reasons including:

- ✓ Conceptual barriers which arise when there is a need to acquire new dimensions of instructional expertise that are rooted in teachers’ attempts to understand the principles of constructivism;
- ✓ Pedagogical barriers which arise from the need for teachers to develop more complex approaches to designing instructional materials that constructivist learning/teaching environments require because the latter necessitates that teachers work hard, concentrate more and embrace larger pedagogical responsibilities;
- ✓ Cultural barriers which emerge in the constructivist environment involving learners and teachers, and which require an understanding of the norms and values necessary to accommodate the constructivist approach as it is crucial to understand and consider multidimensional cultural realities in school before implementing curriculum and pedagogical proposals; and
- ✓ Political barriers which are associated with resistance from various environments outside the school and which require teachers to deal with.

In reviewing the main reasons behind teachers' resistance to constructivism and their inability to create appropriate conditions for it, Jordan et al. (2008) highlight a number of reasons which may include the following: (1) imposing curricula by education authorities create difficulties for teachers to meet pupils' constructions of knowledge; (2) the inadequacy of teachers' training on constructivism in terms of learning and teaching, and in terms of scaffolding strategies; (3) classroom size is an obstacle in assessing and estimating each learner's development and progression through the ZPD; (4) classroom discussion as a constructivist practice may be regarded as inefficient for learning by some teachers; (5) classroom management and controlling learners' behaviour is another source for teachers to avoid constructivist practices in the sense that it requires some control from the part of learners; and (6) assessing learners in constructivist learning/teaching environments is difficult and requires more energy, and thus make teachers resist it.

Moreover, Bliss et al. (1996, qtd. in Jordan et al., 2008) argue that large classes and crowded curricula have a negative impact on the practice of constructivism, and in many cases creating a constructivist learning/teaching environment remains an ambition far from being realised. In addition to this, constructivism "may not transplant smoothly into non-Western classrooms where teachers are expected to be authorities" (McCarty, 2009: 186). Indeed, Murray and Christison (2011) draw attention to the fact that teachers are not free to adopt constructivist roles and to assign some roles to learners in some educational settings and situations because of the institutional demands and culturally defined appropriate roles. Besides, learners in their turn may have specific beliefs about the appropriateness of roles depending on their personal experiences and culture.

Another issue related to creating constructivist environments lies in the use of ICTs in learning and teaching. It is noticed by many researchers that teachers are not adequately educated on how to integrate and use technology in educational settings (Mouza, 2002).



**1.8 Conclusion**

Constructivism represents a high challenge for policy makers, teachers, learners, and society as a whole to review their concepts about education and its purposes. In a globalised world, traditional classrooms are unable to prepare learners for real life situations where the individual is required to bring a wide range of knowledge, skills, abilities, and competencies. Constructivism provides a theoretical framework about the nature of learning that differs entirely from notions emphasised in other learning theories and philosophies. Teaching has also been re-conceptualised to go beyond the transmission of information towards passive learners. Learners are given the opportunity to take charge of their learning and work in collaborative and authentic environments. However, it is a demanding task to build constructivist environments in a context full of barriers and obstacles.

Constructivism is currently driving reforms in educational systems worldwide including Algeria. Indeed, one would wonder about the extent to which the Algerian EFL classroom is appropriate for creating constructivist environments for our learners, and whether learners and teachers are ready to take a constructivist position towards learning and teaching respectively. Thus, the following chapter will focus on the Algerian EFL situation and its consistency with constructivism.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Situation Analysis and Research Design**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

#### **2.2 ELT and Reform in the Algerian Education System**

#### **2.3 Objectives of ELT in the Algerian Secondary Schools**

2.3.1 Linguistic Objectives

2.3.2 Methodological Objectives

2.3.3 Cultural Objectives

2.3.4 Socio-professional Objectives

#### **2.4 Constructivism and the CBA in the Algerian EFL Classroom**

2.4.1 Privileging Learner-Centeredness upon Teacher-Centeredness

2.4.2 Project-Based Methodology in the Algerian EFL Classroom

2.4.3 Constructivism within “New Prospects”

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#### **2.5 Research Design and Methodology**

#### **2.6 Sampling and Research Informants**

2.6.1 Sampling Techniques

2.6.2 Pupils’ Profile

2.6.3 Teachers’ Profile

2.6.4 The General Inspector of English

#### **2.7 Data Collection Instruments**

2.7.1 Pupils’ Questionnaire

2.7.2 Teachers’ Questionnaire

2.7.3 Classroom Observation

2.7.4 The General Inspector’s Interview

#### **2.8 Conclusion**

**2.1 Introduction**

Being part of a globalised world imposes challenges and demands on each country. Within such context, researchers and practitioners in various fields argue that it becomes a necessity for the educational system to adapt itself to these evolving requirements. Indeed, Algeria struggled to meet this stimulating situation by launching an educational reform by the beginning of the twenty-first century. This reform is characterised by adopting a new teaching approach (CBA) which is based on constructivist learning theory. Moreover, more interest was directed towards the learning/teaching of English due to its importance in different life domains, and as a global language.

The first part of this chapter will give some attention to the Algerian EFL context by referring to ELT (English Language Teaching) in the Algerian secondary schools through an attempt to draw a clear picture of the place of constructivism in the newly designed educational system. Then, the second part of this chapter will be devoted to the research methodology and design focusing on data collection procedures and instruments.

**2.2 ELT and Reform in the Algerian Educational System**

English enjoys an eminent status around the world because of the utility it provides for anyone who seeks access to a highly globalised world. Moreover, English is largely considered as the language of international communication and diplomacy, economy, science, technology, tourism, and so many other fields.

Algeria is a country where a number of languages co-exist as a result of cultural, historical, religious, political, and economic reasons. Indeed, Algerian policy makers and language planners have long worried about the appropriate way to select the language that better fits the needs of the country and the individuals as well. Thus, the history of Algeria as an independent nation shows a change of emphasis from one language to another. Recently, Algeria follows a policy which

favours English as a global language and shows more tendencies towards it for different reasons. In this vein, Miliani (2000: 13) states:

In a situation where the French language has lost much of its ground in the sociocultural and educational environments of the country; the introduction of English is being heralded as the magic solution to all possible ills -including economic, technological and educational ones.

However, throughout the history of ELT, the apparatus of educationalists' views has swung against or for teaching English relying on one or another methodology. In Algeria, behavioural and information processing models were adopted as it is represented in the Grammar-Translation Method, the Direct Method, and the Audio-lingual Approach which were used in ELT for a long period of time. However, these methodologies brought about a large movement of dissatisfaction among teachers, learners, educational authorities, and parents for its highly mechanical nature and its focus on repetition and drilling rather than communication which is crucial for language learning.

To meet this human necessity of communication, the Algerian educational system was reformed during the 1980's as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT henceforward) emerged to promote fluency besides accuracy in language teaching and learning. During this phase, a number of ELT textbooks were designed with reference to CLT: *Newlines*, *Midlines*, *Think it Over* during the 1980's, then *My New Book of English*, *New Midlines*, and *COMET (Communicative English Teaching)* during the 1990's (Hadi, 2012: 46).

However, CLT was challenged by new demands of globalisation where learners are required to master a number of skills, strategies, and competencies inside and outside the school setting. This view was expressed by the former Minister of Education Benbouzid who declares: "a global reform aims to build a coherent and efficient educational system which is needed at present to allow the

Algerian society to cope with many challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century”<sup>(1)</sup> (qtd. in Aimeur, 2011: 38).

As far as the English language is concerned, the syllabus designers declare that the purpose of its introduction in the Algerian educational system is to help the Algerian society to integrate harmoniously into modernity through full and entire participation in the linguistic community that utilises the English language for all types of interaction (*Syllabus of English of 3<sup>rd</sup> year*, 2011: 56).

Moreover, participation in the linguistic community of English which is based on sharing and exchanging ideas and scientific, cultural and civilisational experiences, will allow for better understanding of one’s self and the target language identity (*Syllabus of English of 3<sup>rd</sup> year*, 2011: 56). However, the designers of English syllabus go further to claim that ELT does not imply solely the acquisition of linguistic and communicative competencies, but in addition and in an equal pace to develop transversal competencies of a methodological/technological, cultural, and social nature such as the competencies of critical and analytical thinking, attachment to national values, openness and respect of universal values which are based on tolerance and respect of one’s personal identity as well as of the other (*Syllabus of English of 3<sup>rd</sup> year*, 2011: 56). These objectives will be illustrated with more details in the following section.

### **2.3 Objectives of ELT in the Algerian Secondary Schools**

The objectives of teaching/learning English in secondary schools rest upon the general objectives of reform of the Algerian educational system introduced in 2003. In addition, teaching English as a second foreign language seeks to give the learner a world vision which allows him to share knowledge, science, and

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(1): Translation mine: Une réforme globale visant à l’édification d’un système éducatif cohérent et performant s’impose donc aujourd’hui pour permettre à la société Algérienne de faire face aux multiple défis du 21<sup>ème</sup> siècle.

technologies and to become tomorrow's citizen who is respectful and able to integrate harmoniously and efficaciously in the process of globalisation (Syllabus of English of 3<sup>rd</sup> year, 2011: 57). These objectives can be divided into four interrelated categories: linguistic, methodological, cultural, and socio-professional (*Syllabus of English of 1<sup>st</sup> year*, 2005; *Syllabus of English of 2<sup>nd</sup> year*, 2006; *Syllabus of English 3<sup>rd</sup> year*, 2011).

### **2.3.1 Linguistic Objectives**

- ✓ Provide the learner with a solid linguistic basis of grammar, vocabulary, syntax, and pronunciation.
- ✓ Allow the learner to understand and communicate easily in the target language.
- ✓ Allow the learner pursuit successfully studies at university or in a professional milieu.

### **2.3.2 Methodological Objectives**

- ✓ Promote the learner's strategies of autonomous learning to allow him deepen and expand his knowledge.
- ✓ Develop the learner's mental and intellectual abilities of analysing, synthesising, and evaluating through a number of pertinent activities.
- ✓ Prepare the learner for professional life through learning the rational use of English texts.
- ✓ Enable the learner to use ICTs due to their importance in the learning process.

It is worth noting that Algerian policy makers and educational authorities attempt not to introduce ICTs as a separate topic, but as an integral part in each subject matter in all streams and at all levels. That is to say, each teacher whatever his or her specialism is expected to benefit from ICTs as tools for the delivery of instruction.

**2.3.3 Cultural Objectives**

- ✓ Raise the learner's intercultural awareness through exposing him to diverse civilisations and cultures.
- ✓ Stimulate the learner's curiosity and open-mindedness.
- ✓ Encourage interdisciplinary learning by bringing themes studied in other subject matters to integrate all the acquisitions together.

**2.3.4 Socio-professional Objectives**

- ✓ Allow the learner to be an active participant in life after finishing his studies.

To achieve these objectives a new teaching approach was adopted in Algerian secondary schools: the Competency-Based Approach.

**2.4 Constructivism and the CBA in the Algerian EFL Classroom**

To overcome the challenges faced by learners inside and outside the school and in order to make a coherent link between all the acquired skills and competencies, the CBA was adopted in the Algerian educational system. This new approach is meant to help the learner not only to acquire knowledge for its memorisation and retention when needed, but to share exchange and cooperate with others.

As it is noted in the *Accompanying Document of English Programme (ADEP henceforward)*, this approach is inspired from and grounded on cognitivist and social constructivist conceptions of learning and teaching (2011: 83). The syllabus designers further argue that this approach is learner-centered and, therefore, it is crucial to:

- ✓ Respect the learner's needs and interests;
- ✓ Take into account the different learning styles by providing varied learning situations;

- ✓ Consider the language as a tool or means for communication so to provide the learner with the opportunity to use it in a significant context;
- ✓ Provide activities responding to a need for authentic or real communication by emphasising the meaning of the message rather than its form;
- ✓ Tolerate form mistakes that do not interrupt transmitting and receiving the message;
- ✓ Insist on authentic and real language practice rather than repetitive and monotonous activities;
- ✓ Emphasise comprehension and understanding on production by providing various and multiple reading and listening situations;
- ✓ Stimulate the learner to search meaning through the whole message rather than being limited to words and isolated utterances.

As it was mentioned previously, the CBA is a learner-centered approach not teacher-centered requiring deep changes in the roles performed by learners and teachers alike as it will be illustrated next.

#### **2.4.1 Privileging Learner-Centeredness upon Teacher-Centeredness**

The CBA requires deep changes in both teachers' and learners' roles and a challenging shift from a teacher-centered environment to a learner-centered one. Furthermore, the syllabus designers argue that this approach is based on learning not teaching; however, it does not aim to reduce the role of the teacher. The teacher will not be the transmitter of knowledge but to guide, help and encourage the learner in building his own understanding. Moreover, the teacher creates a supportive environment for the learner by providing positive situations for the target language. Then, the teacher's primary role is to teach his pupils how to learn in terms of appropriate learning strategies.

The syllabus designers provide a comparison between the teacher's roles in previous approaches used in traditional classrooms and the new approach:



Teacher's Role		
The previous approaches and Methods (Grammar-Translation Method, the Direct Method, and the Audiolingual Approach)	The new approach (CBA)	What has changed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledge holder</li> <li>• Knowledge provider</li> <li>• Omnipresent in the classroom</li> <li>• Decision-maker</li> <li>• Authoritarian</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Guide/ Help</li> <li>• Counselor</li> <li>• Facilitator</li> <li>• Co-learner</li> <li>• Participator</li> <li>• Developer of learner autonomy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Less authoritarian attitude</li> <li>• Open to discussion and negotiation               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More awareness of learners' problems and needs</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Table 2.1 Teacher's Roles in Previous and New Approaches (From *ADEP*, 2011: 90)

Moving from a teacher-centered approach to a learner-centered approach necessitates changes in the learner's characteristics and roles. The learner, indeed, is no more regarded as a passive recipient of knowledge transmitted by the teacher. The learner is challenged by adopting new roles as he is supposed to:

- ✓ Know what to learn.
- ✓ Be responsible of his learning.
- ✓ Construct his strategies.
- ✓ Know the procedures of working.
- ✓ Solve problems.
- ✓ Assess his learning.

To make the learner autonomous and carry out these roles, and in order to make him elaborate his cognitive structures and construct his personal view of the world, the Project-Based Pedagogy is so beneficial as it is believed by the designers of the syllabus of English (ADEP, 2011).

#### **2.4.2 Project-Based Methodology in the Algerian EFL classroom**

According to the syllabus designers, the project-work represents the visible and assessable manifestation of the pupils' competencies as it reflects their command of language and of the skills and strategies they have acquired throughout the unit (*Teacher's book of 3<sup>rd</sup> year*, 2011). Moreover, "the project boots the learners' sense of achievement resulting in an increasing sense of achievement, responsibility, self-esteem, self-confidence, and autonomy in learning" (*Teacher's book of 1<sup>st</sup> year*, 2005: 21).

Project-Based Methodology is grounded on constructivism and draws heavily on interdisciplinary learning and collaboration; it aims at making knowledge functional and motivating learner's interests. It is a creative process involving both individual and collaborative work (*Syllabus of English of 3<sup>rd</sup> year*, 2011). Moreover, PBM implies the following (ADEP, 2011: 83):

- ✓ Learner autonomy as an objective and a pre-requisite at the same time;
- ✓ Learner motivation as a condition for functioning; and
- ✓ Great suppleness even for the suppression of the hierarchy that may exist in teacher-learner rapports.

The syllabus designers (*Syllabus of English of 3<sup>rd</sup> year*, 2011) propose six themes for projects in both scientific and literary streams which are: (1) Ancient Civilisations; (2) Ethics in Business; (3) Education in the World: Comparing Educational Systems; (4) Advertising, Consumers and Safety; (5) Astronomy and the Solar System; and (6) Feelings and Emotions. These themes and projects are realised under six rubrics or resources: project outcomes, learners' outcomes, language outcomes, skills and strategy outcomes, intercultural outcomes, and

technology skills. Table 2.2 provides some guidelines for teachers concerning the outcomes of Project-Based Methodology. The researcher took the example of the unit that the teacher dealt with during the classroom observation. The syllabus designers argue that the goal of this project entitled 'Education in the World: Comparing Educational Systems' is to increase learners' understanding of educational systems in the world (*Syllabus of English of 3<sup>rd</sup> year*, 2011).

Theme	Education in the World: Comparing Educational Systems
Project outcomes	<p>Pupils will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Be involved in a panel discussion.</li> <li>▪ Make a survey on different systems of education in the same country and in countries from northern and southern hemispheres.</li> <li>▪ Write reports comparing different systems in the world.</li> <li>▪ Make ‘commercial’ flyers on this theme.</li> </ul>
Learners’ outcomes	<p>Pupils will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Discuss issues related to the differences between educational systems.</li> </ul>
Language outcomes	<p>Pupils will learn:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Functions (describing, expressing wish and desire, comparing, expressing result, and expressing purpose).</li> <li>▪ Grammatical structures.</li> <li>▪ Vocabulary.</li> <li>▪ Pronunciation and spelling.</li> </ul>
Skills and strategy outcomes	<p>Pupils will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Identify the characters of different educational systems.</li> <li>▪ Take notes, compare, synthesise, draw conclusions and evaluate.</li> <li>▪ Use critical judgment.</li> </ul>
Intercultural outcomes	<p>Pupils will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Be made aware of what educational systems have in common at world level.</li> <li>▪ Be made aware of the differences and the specificity of each country.</li> </ul>
Technology skills	Pupils will use technology to search for information related to the topic on the net.

Table 2.2 Project-Based Methodology Outcomes (From *Syllabus of English of 3<sup>rd</sup> year*, 2011: 69-70)

To achieve valuable outcomes, the project-work needs to have the following characteristics (ADEP, 2011: 84-85):

- ✓ A creative process;
- ✓ A definite period of time;
- ✓ An accessible result;
- ✓ Individual phases;
- ✓ Collective phases;
- ✓ Specific skills and knowledge;
- ✓ Periodic confrontation; and
- ✓ Realisation.

The project-work requires some changes in teachers' and learners' roles as well as the reorganisation of classroom spaces to meet the different steps and phases of realising the final product (*ADEP*, 2011). The six projects are supported by a textbook which reflects the same principles as it will be discussed next.

### **2.4.3 Constructivism within “*New Prospects*”**

Achieving the objectives of the reform necessitates designing new textbooks which are consistent with constructivism as a guiding theory. Table 2.3 provides a general overview of English textbooks, with the time load and coefficient of English for the three secondary school levels in all streams:

Level	Stream	Time Load of the English Course	Coefficient of English	Textbook
1 <sup>st</sup> Year	▪ Literary Stream	4 hours	3	<i>At the Crossroads</i>
	▪ Science and Technology	3 hours	2	
2 <sup>nd</sup> Year	▪ Experimental Science	3 hours	2	<i>Getting Through</i>
	▪ Economy and Management			
	▪ Technique and Mathematics			
	▪ Literary and Philosophy	4 hours	3	
	▪ Literary and Foreign Languages	4 hours	4	
3 <sup>rd</sup> Year	▪ Experimental Science	3 hours	2	<i>New Prospects</i>
	▪ Economy and Management			
	▪ Technique and Mathematic			
	▪ Literary and Philosophy	4 hours	3	
	▪ Foreign Languages	4 hours	5	

Table 2.3 English Time Load, Coefficient, and Textbooks

As it is shown in the previous table, ‘*New Prospects*’ is the last of a series of three textbooks designed for secondary school pupils. The textbook reflects constructivist principles in the sense that it:

provides a large number of effective learning tasks through which students are brought to *notice*, *reflect* and *analyse* how English is used. The tasks devised provide ample opportunities for learners to *interact* in the classroom and *negotiate meaning*. Most of these tasks involve the use of ‘*discovery learning*’, and are intended to enhance *individual learning* as well as *learning with peers*. (emphasis is mine)

(*Teacher’s book of 3<sup>rd</sup> year*, 2011: 9)

*New Prospects* encompasses six units dealing with distinct topics: Ancient Civilisations; Ethics in Business; Education in the World: Comparing Educational Systems; Advertising, Consumers and Safety; Astronomy and the Solar System; and Feelings and Emotions. The diversity of the topics is intended to meet the different needs and interests of pupils in both streams: literary and scientific or technical. Thus, learners in each stream will have the opportunity to choose (with the inspector and their teacher) four compulsory units among the six relying on the units’ relatedness to their field of study (*Teacher’s book of 3<sup>rd</sup> year*, 2011). The division of units according to streams is represented in Table 2.4:

Units	Scientific or technical streams	Literary streams
Ancient Civilisations		*
Ethics in Business	*	*
Education in the World		*
Advertising, Consumers and Safety	*	
Astronomy and the Solar System	*	
Feelings and Emotions	*	*

Table 2.4 Division of Units According to the Stream (From Syllabus of English of 3<sup>rd</sup> year, 2011: 64)

The textbook has a cyclical design in the sense that all its units are made up of similar sequences which in their turn are structured in the same way. The general structure (after a number of revisions and modifications that the textbook was subject to) of each unit revolves around the following parts:

- Presentation of the Project Outcomes;
- Two parts: each one containing two sequences which are subdivided into rubrics;
- Take a Break: which is a section wherein learners can relax to better start the next part;
- Research and Report: in this section learners will individually or in groups re-invest what they learned in the first part;
- Project Outcomes;
- Assessment; and
- Time for...



**Part One:**

The first part of each unit contains two sequences: ‘Listen and Consider’ and ‘Read and Consider’, the focus of which is to study grammatical structures, vocabulary building, pronunciation and spelling. Both ‘Listen and Consider’ and ‘Read and Consider’ are subdivided into more or less the following similar rubrics:

- ✓ **Language Outcomes:** this rubric does not contain any tasks; it only reviews the main language objectives that are to be attained by the end of the sequence.
- ✓ **Getting Started:** the aim of this rubric is to introduce the learner to the topic through activating and accessing his prior knowledge as he first looks at the thematic pictures, discuss the topic with his peers and answer comprehension questions. It also prepares him to the next phase;
- ✓ **Let’s Hear It (in Listen and Consider):** this rubric provides a number of listening tasks and exercises such as ‘Listen +re-order’, ‘Listen+ answer questions’, etc.
- ✓ **Taking a Closer Look (in Read and Consider):** a rubric which requires learners to read a text silently and individually, then to answer some questions of comprehension.
- ✓ **Around the Text:** in this rubric the emphasis is made on the grammatical and lexical content of the text. Moreover, the pupils are asked to focus on specific grammar features, vocabulary, pronunciation and spelling. The kind of tasks included in this rubric may include matching sentences, identifying the functions of words, etc. the rubric contains two types of exploring activities: Grammar Explorer and Vocabulary Explorer.
- ✓ **Pronunciation and Spelling:** this rubric is devoted to develop the learners’ understanding of the sound-spelling relationships that are specific to the English language. Activities such as ‘Listen for stress’ and

‘Listen for syllable division’ are introduced to achieve a good listening (then speaking) ability.

- ✓ **Think, Pair, Share:** this rubric emphasises individual-work, pair-work then group-work to allow for personal thinking then interaction between a group and even the whole classroom. The pupils are requested to produce a piece of writing in the form of descriptions, narrations, poems, dialogues, etc.

The second sequence of the first part, i.e., ‘Read and Consider’ ends with the ‘Take a Break’ section which provides a space for relaxation and leisure through jokes, proverbs, songs, etc. ‘Take a Break’ section is followed by another section called ‘Research and Report’ wherein pupils are asked to work individually or collaboratively outside the classroom to prepare some written or oral pieces like poems, short stories and speeches.

**Part Two:**

The second part of the unit comprises two more sequences entitled ‘Listening and Speaking’ and ‘Reading and Writing’. ‘Listening and Speaking’ which is the first sequence in the second part is made up of the following rubrics:

- ✓ **Skills and Strategies Outcomes:** this rubric does not include tasks or activities as it just presents the main objectives of this sequence which are communicative at the first place.
- ✓ **Before Listening:** through this rubric learners are made prepared to understand an aural text (of or pertaining to hearing or the ear) relying on pre-listening activities which help the pupils in predicting the content.
- ✓ **As you Listen:** along this rubric, learners will be asked to listen to the teacher and try to confirm or disconfirm the expectations and predictions made in the previous rubric.
- ✓ **After Listening:** this post-listening stage differs from the pre-listening stage in the sense that it helps the learners shape their understanding of

the text not only to predict its content. Indeed, after listening learners will be able to practise the skills of speaking, reading and writing.

- ✓ **Saying it in Writing:** in this rubric learners will be prepared to the ‘Reading and Writing’ sequence through producing written materials from what they were listening to.

The second sequence in part two is entitled ‘Reading and Writing’ since pupils will be engaged in activities and tasks that develop and reinforce their reading and writing abilities. This sequence is subdivided into the following rubrics:

- ✓ **Skills and Strategies Outcomes:** it defines the objectives that learners need to achieve in terms of linguistic, communicative and cognitive ones.
- ✓ **Before Reading:** learners will be predicting the content of the topic through their answers to a number of questions.
- ✓ **As you Read:** a rubric which focuses on learners’ use of skimming and scanning skills to make sense of the text.
- ✓ **After Reading:** at this level learners will be asked to identify the structure of the text. It also prepares them for the next rubric through the use of writing activities.
- ✓ **Writing Development:** this final rubric in the second sequence provides learners with an opportunity of expressing their opinions, giving reasons, presenting arguments, etc.

The second sequence of the unit’s second part is followed by the ‘Project Outcomes’ section providing suggestions and guidelines on how to realise the project-work. The last section concerns ‘Assessment’ and it contains a number of activities for learners to assess their outcomes and achievements. Indeed, assessment in the newly designed syllabuses and textbooks is part of the learning and teaching processes not separated from them as it will be highlighted in the following part.

#### 2.4.4 Assessment in the Algerian EFL Classroom

According to the syllabus designers (ADEP, 2011), assessment is part of teaching and learning and it can take different forms:

- ✓ *Diagnostic evaluation*: it is a test made in the beginning of the school season to identify the learners' level to be aware of each learner's weaknesses and strengths.
- ✓ *Summative evaluation*: it is an integral part of each school or education institution to evaluate the general level of a learner during one semester or the whole school year.
- ✓ *Formative evaluation*: it is the evaluation of learners' products and the process of production. It takes different forms and the teacher can evaluate learners' journals, portfolios, interviews, or through discussion and debates.
- ✓ *Formative assessment*: evaluating learners' in the classroom can be done by the teacher, but it can be done by the learners themselves through peer- or group-evaluation (learner-learner), self-evaluation, and co-evaluation (learner-teacher).

As it can be noticed from all that has been said so far, reform in the Algerian educational system takes constructivism as a new ground for learning and teaching through the principles of knowledge construction instead of knowledge transmission, learners' autonomy and collaboration, teachers as guides and facilitators instead of controllers and authoritarians, within a general framework of moving from teacher-centered classrooms to learner-centered ones. Indeed, to explore the readiness of both learners and teachers for such changes as well as the appropriateness of the Algerian EFL classroom for creating constructivist learner-centered environments, the researcher will conduct a research study to achieve the previously mentioned objectives.

### 2.5 Research Design and Methodology

While it seems risky to take such a position, the researcher will rely heavily on constructivism and constructivist assumptions itself as it relates to the research methodology and design. In this regard, Lincoln and Guba (1985) assert that reality is socially constructed and, thus, every person brings his personal understanding and viewpoint to a given situation or setting relying on his previous experience, knowledge, and background. Hence, “the researcher must attempt to understand the complex and often multiple realities from the perspectives of the participants” (Lodico et al., 2006: 9). For this reason, a case study is a suitable method to reflect the complexity and multiplicity of perspectives and truths about learner and teacher readiness for constructivism in the Algerian EFL classroom because this type of research is “a hybrid in that it generally utilises a range of methods for collecting and analysing data, rather than being restricted to a single procedure” (Nunan, 1997: 74).

A case study is also appropriate to have a thorough investigation of a specific situation, and it can provide an in depth understanding of a given phenomenon. Moreover, the rationale behind the use of a case study lies in the emphasis it puts on the context of the studied unit, as it is stressed by Yin (1984: 23) when arguing that a case study is “an empirical inquiry that *investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context...*and in which multiple sources of evidence are used”.

In order to carry out this case study, data were collected from different sources. The following section is mainly devoted to the informants and their description.

**2.6 Sampling and Research Informants**

A sample of informants was taken from a larger population through the use of a number of sampling techniques.

**2.6.1 Sampling Techniques**

Informants were secondary school learners and teachers in the Wilaya of Sidi Bel-Abbes who were targeted to respond to the research instruments addressed to them. However, from this larger population, we have drawn a sample of fifteen (15) teachers and twenty-four (24) learners to represent the whole population. In fact, a probability sampling technique was used which means that members of the whole population had the same chance of being chosen, and there was no specific feature upon which the fifteen teachers and the twenty-four learners were selected amongst the total population; they were included in this study through random sampling in order to make data more accurate and generalisable.

**2.6.2 Learners' Profile**

Informants in this study were third year literary pupils (males and females) who have completed six years studying English as a second foreign language (four years in middle school and two at secondary school) after French which is considered to be their first foreign language. These pupils study in Colonel Abd Elhadi secondary school which is located in Telagh, fifty (50) Kilometers far from the Wilaya of Sidi Bel-Abbes. Therefore, this area is supposed to be still rural and pupils share approximately the same cultural and social background, with Algerian Arabic as their mother tongue.

The choice of these pupils is due to many reasons. First, these learners will sit for their baccalaureate exam by the end of the year which makes them aware of the challenges and demands of such a test. Further, this exam requires learners to be active and autonomous since what teachers provide in the classroom will be always insufficient, and soon they will reach university where they have to rely on

themselves. Second, these learners are older than pupils in other levels, and they are in a literary stream (Literary and Philosophy, and Literary and Foreign Languages) so they are said to be mindful about the importance of languages in their future studies. In this line, Kennedy and Bolitho (1984:13-14) contend that “the older a learner is, the more likely to have his own definite ideas on why he is learning English... the utility of learning English is likely to be apparent”. In addition, these pupils are learning English under the principles of the CBA and Project-Based Methodology which are derived from constructivist learning theory.

### **2.6.3 Teachers’ Profile**

In addition to third year literary pupils, this study is concerned with fifteen English teachers (males and females) in four secondary schools in the Wilaya of Sidi Bel-Abbes, including the four English teachers in Colonel Abd Elhadi secondary school where the classroom observation was conducted. The fifteen teachers who were chosen randomly are holders of a ‘Licence’ degree in English and are in charge of the three levels: first year, second year, and third year in all streams. Among these teachers some are full time teachers, substitutes and trainees, with varying experience ranging between two and twenty-five years.

The choice of secondary school teachers stems from the belief that they are more aware of the importance of raising constructivist learners who are mainly autonomous and can handle their learning process as far. In middle school, learners are still beginners or intermediate and the task of introducing constructivism seems to be difficult since learners need greater support from the teacher. Secondary school teachers are also supposed to be aware of the challenge put on their shoulders that is preparing learners for the baccalaureate exam and/or professional life where learners need to apply equally what they have acquired in school to real-life situations. Again, these teachers are said to rely on the CBA and PBM which are guided by constructivism.

**2.6.4 The General Inspector's Profile**

The general inspector of English is a fifty-four years male who has been a secondary school English teacher for twenty years. In addition, he has fifteen years of experience as an inspector. Our choice of interviewing the general inspector is twofold; first, the answers will reflect the position hold by the educational authorities in Algeria and will provide a view on how constructivism as a theoretical framework and as a practice is implemented in the Algerian educational system. Second, the interview will give insightful ideas about the situation encountered in the Algerian EFL classroom because of his long experience in the field and his regular visits to these classrooms.

**2.7 Data Collection Instruments**

As it is noted earlier, our purpose is to investigate in depth learner and teacher readiness for constructivism and this can only be achieved through an exploratory case study within the actual Algerian EFL context experienced by the participants day-to-day. Throughout this work our endeavor will be to draw a cause-effect relationship by trying to identify the reasons behind the current situation of the Algerian EFL classroom, and its impact on learners, teachers, and the larger society.

To draw a picture of how the Algerian EFL classroom looks like and how learners and teachers perceive themselves and act within what is supposed to be a constructivist framework, a triangulation technique best fits our purpose to “map out, or explain more fully, the richness and complexity of human behaviour by studying it from more than one standpoint and, in so doing, by making use of both quantitative and qualitative data” (Cohen et al., 2007: 141).

Actually, many researchers claim that methods for data collection in research studies carried out on constructivism and its pedagogical and educational practice tend to be more qualitative than quantitative. These methods utilise a host of instruments including portfolios, journal writings, recordings, interviews, and



classroom observations (Cobb et al., 1991; Hand and Peterson, 1995; Hewson, 1999, in Kesal, 2003). Nonetheless, other researchers such as Taylor and Fraser (1991), Taylor et al. (1995) and Taylor (1995) as noted by Kesal (2003) have developed measures and models to evaluate learning and teaching practices from a constructivist perspective.

As far as this work is concerned, a mixed approach using together qualitative and quantitative methods is adopted to ensure reliability and generalisability of the findings. The resulting combination of different sources through a triangulation technique is likely to be more effective as data collected from different research instruments will corroborate, strengthen and inform each other. It is true that the findings may not be easily generalised, but still it would provide suitable suggestions and recommendations for constructivism to be a dominant feature of Algerian EFL learners and teachers and, thus, in the Algerian EFL classroom. Therefore and for our purposes, a questionnaire for pupils, another one for teachers, classroom observation and an interview with a general inspector of English were used.

Interaction between all these poles including the role of learners, teachers, education authority (represented in the person of the general inspector) and the context (the EFL classroom), will bring some insights for better understanding and answer the issues raised in this work. This interaction is illustrated in the following diagram which represents the procedures of data collection and the multiplicity of perspectives taken into account:

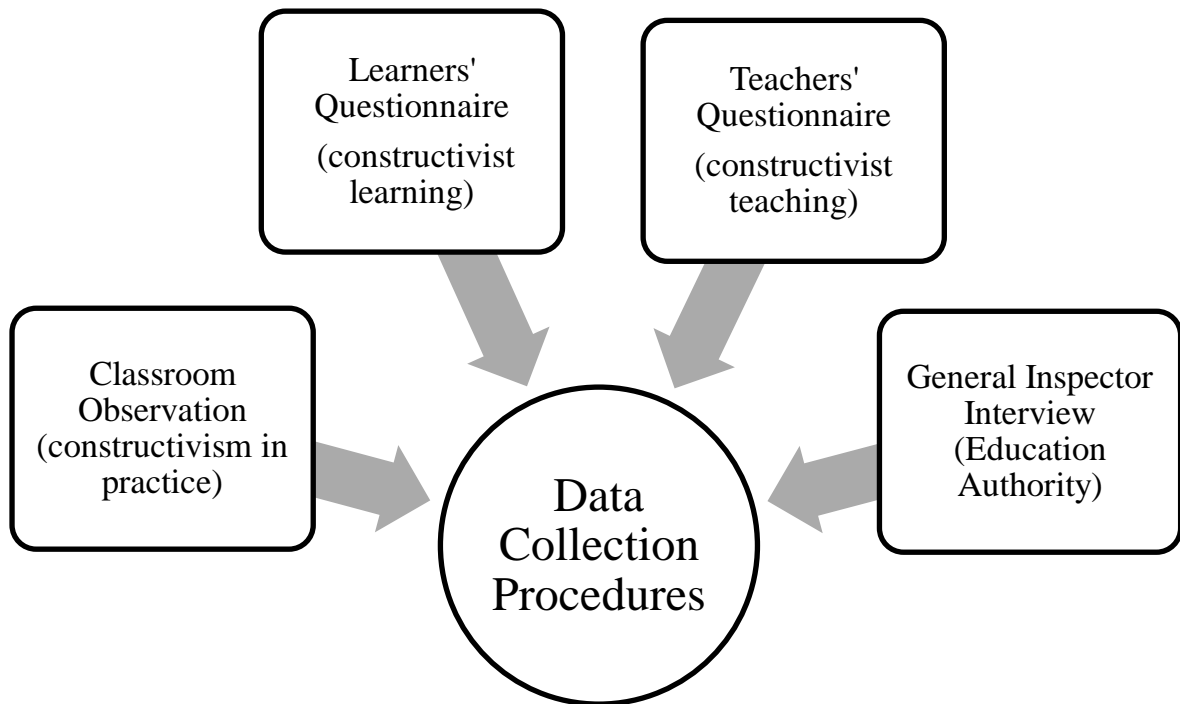


Figure 2.1 Data Collection Procedures

The following parts describe in detail each research instrument, its objectives and the reasons why it was utilised in this case study.

### 2.7.1 Pupils' Questionnaire

Since the learner is the central figure of constructivism, learners' views and impressions are crucial to be considered in this work. Indeed, pupils' viewpoints are important in identifying if they are ready to handle their learning process, and the way their teachers' behaviour and attitudes in the classroom affect their willingness to be autonomous. At another level, their views will reveal some of the Algerian EFL classroom characteristics which may hinder or foster their orientation towards constructivist and autonomous learning.

The questionnaire is a tool of data collection which is thought to give the researcher the advantage to collect a large amount of diverse data within a short period of time and with less energy. This view is clearly highlighted by Dörnyei (2007: 101) who believes that "the popularity of questionnaires is due to the fact

that they are relatively easy to construct, extremely versatile and uniquely capable of gathering a large amount of information quickly in a form that is readily accessible". It is also useful in getting detailed answers about the topic under investigation without referring to other issues which may be the case with interviews.

Thus and for our purposes, a questionnaire (see Appendix A) was designed for twenty-four pupils studying in two separate classrooms (Third Year Literary and Philosophy containing 16 pupils, and Third Year Literary and Foreign Languages consisting of 08 pupils) in Colonel Abd Elhadi secondary school. After administering the questionnaire and in order to make sure that the answers reflect only those of the pupils, they were asked to handle the questionnaire back in the same session. It was also made sure that each learner answered the questions individually through making them sit on different tables.

Pupils' questionnaire (see Appendix A) included a collection of sixteen questions organised under three rubrics which go hand in hand with the questions and hypotheses of this work. The first rubric which comprises seven questions was arranged in a way that gives information on the readiness of the pupils to handle their learning process, and how they perceive themselves as autonomous learners within a constructivist framework. Its aim was also to investigate the pupils' attitudes towards learning English and their ability to rely on themselves in the learning process. The second rubric, through posing eight questions, was mainly dedicated to generate data concerning teaching practices in the EFL classroom and how these practices from the part of the teacher may affect the pupils either positively or negatively to become constructivist learners who are able to handle their learning process. In the third rubric which contains only one question more consideration was paid to the appropriateness of the Algerian EFL classroom for creating a constructivist learning/teaching environment, its impact on learners and how they perceive it; either as a source of contribution or prevention for learning to be constructivist and autonomous as well.

It is worth noting that questions in each rubric vary from close-ended, mixed, and open-ended questions. In a close-ended question the researcher seeks to collect information which are limited to the possible answers or parameters he supplies, whereas in open-ended questions the researcher provides his informants with the opportunity to answer in any way that makes them comfortable (Mackey and Gass, 2005). However, mixed questions typically combine the characteristics of both open and close-ended questions; the researcher asks the informants to choose one (or more) possible answer (s), and then they are expected to justify or explain their choice (s).

### **2.7.2 Teachers' Questionnaire**

Secondary school teachers of English were the second target in this case study. As it is the case, another questionnaire (see Appendix B) was addressed to randomly chosen teachers across the thirty-two secondary schools existing in the Wilaya of Sidi Bel-Abbes. The questionnaire was administered to twenty teachers; however, only fifteen of them handed it back.

The questionnaire intends to discern what views teachers deem about constructivism, its impact on their pedagogical practice if any, and whether they are ready to rely on constructivist principles in their teaching. It also tries to generate data on how these teachers perceive their learners' readiness for constructivism and more precisely for autonomous learning as prerequisite for such a theory of learning. Teachers are additionally asked about the Algerian EFL classroom and its appropriateness for creating constructivist learning/teaching environments where collaboration, problem solving, project-based learning will take place with greater autonomy from the part of learners.

Accordingly, teachers' questionnaire (see appendix B) was intentionally divided into three rubrics with each aiming at eliciting data on a specific aspect. However, this does not mean that the answers gained from one question or rubric will not corroborate another one. Rubric one which is made up of two questions was

devoted to teachers' views about their learners' readiness to learn under the constructivist premises and if they are able to handle their learning process and be autonomous. Questions and their reciprocal answers regarding classroom teaching practice and the readiness of teachers for constructivism were put under the second rubric. Moreover, the rubric through a set of fourteen questions tries to generate data on teachers' practices in the EFL classroom and whether or not these practices are in harmony with constructivism, and if teachers received adequate and sufficient education on constructivism in a way which allows them to rely on its principles in their classrooms. Finally, the third rubric consisting of four questions was devoted entirely to the appropriateness of the Algerian EFL classroom to create constructivist learning/teaching environments in terms of space suitability for collaborative activities and the availability of materials and ICTs which are integral in constructivist environments. The rubric concludes by providing a room for teachers to express their views and propose suggestions and solutions so that constructivism becomes prevalent in our schools generally and the EFL classroom particularly.

### **2.7.3 Classroom Observation**

As an instrument which allows the researcher to compare what the informants say and what actually happens in the real settings, a structured, non-participant, overt classroom observation (see Appendix C) was conducted. In fact, classroom observation was adopted as another source for data collection due to its utility and usefulness in generating data which are different from teachers and learners' personal and subjective judgments. Furthermore, classroom observation allows the researcher to observe several aspects such as the participants, their behaviour, and their interaction, within a specific context and setting which is to be observed too.

This view is clearly showed in the words of Mackey and Gass (2005: 175-176) asserting that:

Observations are useful in that they provide the researcher with the opportunity to collect large amounts of rich data on the participants' behavior and actions within a particular context. Over time and repeated observations, the researcher can gain a deeper and more multilayered understanding of the participants and their context.

For this case study, the classroom observation will allow the researcher to examine the real life situation and to discover if secondary school EFL learners and teachers are ready to rely on constructivism in their learning and teaching respectively. It can also serve as a source of data which cannot be captured by the other instruments like teaching practices, learners' behaviour in addition to the ability to have a look at the appropriateness of the Algerian EFL classroom for creating constructivist/learning environments.

Thus and following a broad practical period, classroom observation was conducted in two literary classrooms in Colonel Abd Elhadi Secondary School over a two months period of time. The first classroom is third Year Literary and Philosophy which is made up out of nine girls and seven boys. Pupils in this stream have English as a compulsory subject matter in addition to nine other subject matters. The coefficient of English is three. They also attend thirty-two lectures a week, four are devoted to English. The second observed classroom is Third Year Literary and Foreign Languages consisting of one boy and seven girls. The same teacher was in charge of both classes and the decision of observing the teacher in two different classes stems from the researcher's intention to see if the teacher will change his pedagogical practices depending on the changing nature of the classroom setting and the learners, or he will keep the same standards including the methods, techniques, materials, and so on.

For the sake of recording data during classroom observation, two techniques were used: a rating scale and note taking. The latter helps in recording data which the researcher may neglect, or in observing new aspects which were not included in

the rating scale. Indeed, the rating scale was divided into three parts (see Appendix C) to observe learners' behaviour, teachers' behaviour, and the classroom setting in this respective order. The purpose of the first part was to observe pupils' behaviour in the classroom with specific attention to their ability to work autonomously and therefore to handle their learning process. In fact, fourteen aspects were observed at this level reflecting some activities and actions of constructivist and autonomous learners and learning. On the other hand, teacher's behaviour and practices were observed relying on thirteen aspects to see the extent to which he relies on constructivist principles in his pedagogical practices including for example his roles in the classroom, the use of collaborative and project-works, his use of ICTs, etc. the last part was devoted to observing the classroom setting so that to gain information on the appropriateness of the Algerian EFL classroom for creating constructivist learning/teaching environments by focusing on three aspects: classroom organisation, the suitability of space for constructivist activities such as group-work (in terms of crowded or normal classroom), and finally considering the availability of ICTs.

#### **2.7.4 The General Inspector's Interview**

To have a closer look at the current situation of constructivism in the Algerian EFL classroom, a structured interview (see Appendix D) with a general inspector of English was utilised. Interviews serve as instruments for eliciting qualitative data on the informants' beliefs, attitudes, perceptions and interests on a specific topic. Thus, with an attempt to explore learners' and teachers' readiness for constructivism in the Algerian EFL classroom, and the appropriateness of the latter (the EFL classroom) to constructivism, a structured interview with a general inspector of English was carried out in March, 2013 in his office. The general inspector will provide this research with a holistic overview about teacher education programmes and their consistency with constructivism as a learning theory which guides and informs teaching practices. The interviewee will also contribute with his experience in the field and will give some suggestions on the ways that can foster

the implementation of constructivism in the Algerian educational system in general and the EFL classroom in particular.

The interview included ten questions (see Appendix C). The first two questions aimed at generating data on the notions of learning and teaching the educational reform was grounded on. The purpose behind the third question was to draw out the informant's understanding of constructivism. The next question was meant to see whether constructivist principles are applied in the Algerian EFL classroom. Then, the interviewee was asked about learners' and teachers' readiness for constructivism in questions five and six respectively. Importantly, the aim behind introducing the two following questions (seven and eight) was to investigate whether constructivism is included in teacher education programmes and which principles are emphasised. Finally, the two last questions (nine and ten) were intended to draw out the general inspector's views about the appropriateness of the Algerian EFL classroom for constructivism, then to furnish our study with some suggestions on how to successfully implement constructivism in the Algerian educational system.

After collecting data from the previously mentioned research instruments, i.e., learners' questionnaire, teachers' questionnaire, classroom observation, and the general inspector's interview a quantitative and qualitative procedure of data analysis was carried out.



**2.8 Conclusion**

In 2003, Algeria launched a new reform in its educational system to meet the demands of globalisation and to enable learners establish clear links between what they learn in schools and their daily lives outside of it. However, this cannot be achieved unless learners handle their learning process and be autonomous which are prerequisites of constructivism; the theory upon which the new educational system was designed. The current chapter was an attempt to describe the Algerian EFL situation as it relates to the newly designed educational system and its relation to constructivism. It was concerned with outlining the focal points where constructivism affected the teaching and learning processes in secondary schools. Additionally, the chapter provided an overview of the research design and methodology followed to collect data and evidence that support the hypotheses formulated in this work and then to answer the research questions in the following chapter.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Data Analysis and Research Results**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

#### **3.2 Data Analysis Procedure**

#### **3.3 Pupils' Questionnaire**

##### 3.3.1 Results

##### 3.3.2 Interpretation

#### **3.4 Teachers' Questionnaire**

##### 3.4.1 Results

##### 3.4.2 Interpretation

#### **3.5 Classroom Observation**

##### 3.5.1 Results

##### 3.5.2 Interpretation

#### **3.6 The General Inspector's Interview**

##### 3.6.1 Results

##### 3.6.2 Interpretation

#### **3.7 Discussion of the Main Results**

#### **3.8 Conclusion**

**3.1 Introduction**

After collecting data from different sources through the use of a set of research instruments including a questionnaire administered to pupils, another one for teachers, classroom observation and an interview with a general inspector of English, the data were analysed relying on a mixed approach which combines both quantitative and qualitative methods.

Correspondingly, the present chapter is devoted to the procedures of data analysis, and the interpretation of the results gathered from each instrument. It, further, spots light on the main results and conclusions drawn from this case study after the triangulation of data.

**3.2 Data Analysis Procedures**

To arrive at conclusions and attain the purposes of this work, a process of data analysis is to be undertaken. Data analysis, similar to data collection, will draw upon a mixture of qualitative and quantitative methods so as to have multi-levels of analysis as it was made by many researchers who claim that:

we gain better understanding of complex phenomenon by converging numeric trends from qualitative data and specific details from qualitative data. Words can be used to add meaning to numbers and numbers can be used to add precision to words.

(Dörnyei, 2007:45)

On the one hand, the collected data will be quantitatively analysed through shifting, organising, summarising and synthesising it. Further, the attempt is to make sense of the participants' definitions of the situation, noting patterns, themes, categories and regularities (Cohen et al., 2007: 184). On the other hand, the researcher will employ statistically and mathematically based techniques and methods in analysing data quantitatively. In a more detailed way, Wallace (1998: 38) points out that:

quantitative is broadly used to describe what can be counted or measured and can therefore be considered objective. Qualitative is used to describe data which are not amenable to being counted or measured in an objective way, and are therefore 'subjective'

Indeed, learners' questionnaire, teachers' questionnaire, and classroom observation will be analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively, while the general inspector's interview will be analysed qualitatively in the following sections.

### **3.3 Pupils' Questionnaire**

The first questionnaire in this exploratory case study was administered to twenty-four third year literary pupils (Literary and Philosophy, and Literary and Foreign Languages) in Colonel Abd Elhadi secondary school. The questionnaire was delivered and handed back in February 2013, during two sessions. The first session was from 09:30 to 10:30 for Foreign Languages pupils and the second one started at 10:30 to 11:30 for Literary and Philosophy pupils. Then, the data collected from the questionnaire were quantitatively and qualitatively analysed.

#### **3.3.1 Results**

Before asking any questions concerning our topic of interest, the researcher designed three questions in order to identify pupils' age, gender, and stream of study. The results showed that pupils' ages range between 18 and 20 years. Their gender distribution and number are shown in the following table (Table 3.1) according to their stream:

Gender	AF of Pupils		Total	RF of Pupils
	Literary and Philosophy	Literary and Foreign Languages		
Male	09	01	10	41.67%
Female	07	07	14	58.33%
Total	16	08	24	100%

**AF:** Absolute Frequency

**RF:** Relative Frequency

Table 3.1 Pupils' Age and Gender

It was noticed that the number of female pupils is superior to the number of male pupils. This difference in the number of pupils in terms of gender is represented in Figure 3.1:

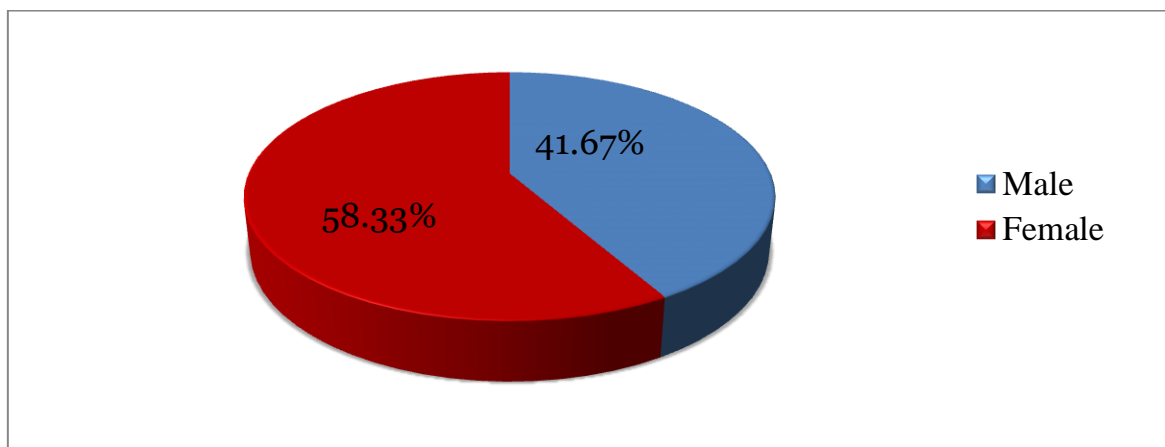


Figure 3.1 Pupils' Gender

### ***Rubric One: Learners' Beliefs about their Readiness for Autonomous Learning***

The aim of this rubric was to explore what beliefs learners had about their readiness for autonomous learning as a prerequisite for constructivism.

*Question One: Pupils' Attitudes towards English Learning*

The first question addressed to third year literary pupils intended to identify their attitudes towards learning English and to find out what were the reasons and motives behind their responses. 83.33% (20 pupils) of pupils expressed a positive attitude towards learning English believing that it is important to learn this language. The most quoted reason was that English is an important subject matter in their field of study and they have to learn it in order to have good marks in the Baccalaureate exam. Three pupils reported that the importance of English for them lies in its universality as the language of the whole planet. In addition, they showed more interest in learning the language due to its utility in their lives especially in relation to technology in general and the internet in particular. Four pupils expressed an ambition to become English teachers in the future because they love the language and teaching as well. On the contrary, 16.67% (see Table 3.2) of the pupils showed negative attitudes towards learning English because this foreign language has nothing to do with their future lives as it was declared by two male pupils. Furthermore, two other pupils expressed their embarrassment because they cannot interact through English which seems to them a strange and useless language. Additionally, one informant commented that he is learning English only because it is a compulsory subject matter that he has no way to avoid.

	AF	RF
Yes	20	83.33%
No	04	16.67%
Total	24	100%

Table 3.2 Pupils' Attitudes towards English Learning

*Question Two: Pupils' Views about English Sessions*

Figure 3.2 below represents the results obtained while inquiring about learners' views concerning what they learn in English sessions; if it is interesting, relevant, realistic, and/or authentic. The purpose behind asking this question was to know how the content and experiences in English sessions may affect the pupils' orientedness towards autonomous learning since interesting, realistic, relevant, and authentic experiences make learners more motivated and willing to learn and take charge for their learning process.

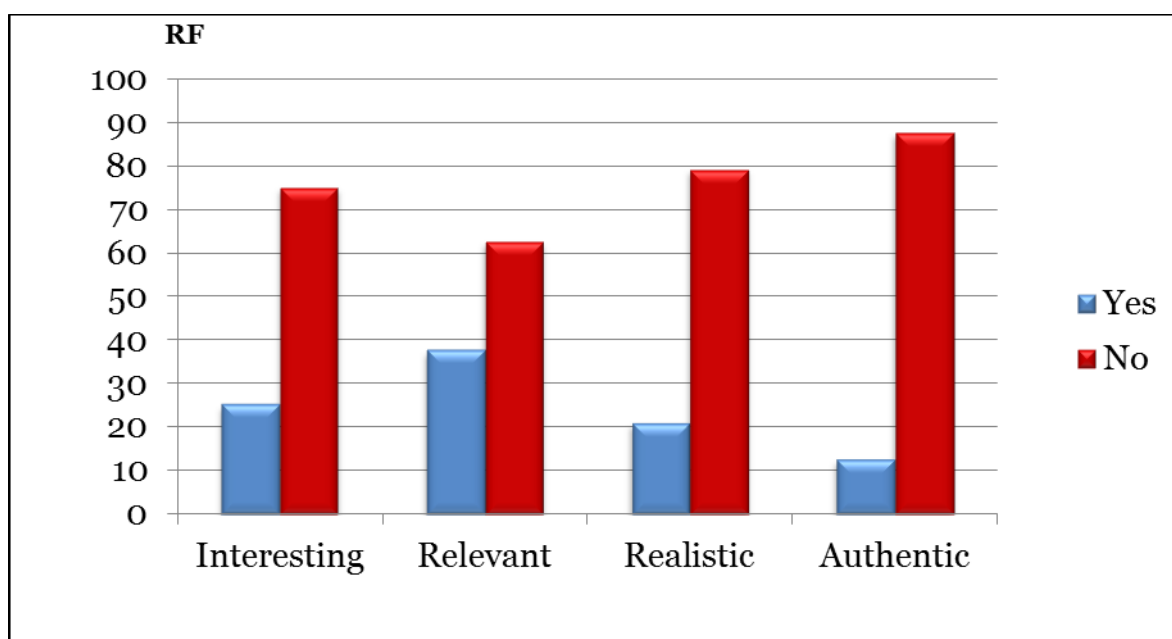


Figure 3.2 Pupils' Views about English Sessions

The results clearly showed that the great majority of pupils perceive what they learn in English sessions as not interesting, irrelevant, unrealistic, and non-authentic.

*Question Three: Pupils' Home Preparation of Lectures*

To explore the extent to which the pupils are making personal efforts to learn English outside the classroom, they were asked whether they prepare their lectures

at home or not. This question sought to figure out if they are doing further research as autonomous learners or they rely only on what is provided by the teacher.

The results summarised in Table 3.3 revealed that only seven pupils (29.17%) among the twenty-four pupils prepare their lectures at home arguing that preparing the lecture before coming to the classroom gives them the advantage to understand better with the teacher. The seventeen remaining pupils (70.83%) who do not prepare their lectures at home similarly expressed the same reasons for not doing so; time is not sufficient to prepare for all the subject matters. In addition, the most surprising reason behind this behaviour is directly associated with their teacher who does not ask them to prepare, and they see no need to do something they are not asked to do because they are 'lazy' (to use their expression).

	Number of Pupils	Percentage
Yes	07	29.17%
No	17	70.33%
Total	24	100%

Table 3.3 Pupils' Home Preparation of Lectures

**Question Four:** *Learners' Beliefs about their Ability to Learn English Independently*

The aim behind asking this question was to unveil pupils' perceptions of their ability to learn English independently and if they can rely on themselves or not. In fact, the results revealed that only five learners expressed their self-reliance. All the other learners (79.17%) perceived themselves as unable to take an independent action for their learning process; a situation which was justified by the reasons summed up in the following table:



	AF (n=19)	RF
The teacher knows better than me	16	84.21%
I used to rely on my teacher	15	78.94%
I don't know how to study by myself	12	63.15%
The teacher does not give me the opportunity to study by myself	15	78.94%

**n:** Number of Pupils

Table 3.4 Pupils' Reasons for not Studying Independently

**Question Five: Pupils' Perceptions of Responsibility in Learning**

For the sake of eliciting data on how pupils perceive responsibility in the learning process and who should take the lion's share, the fifth question was asked and the results are represented in Figure 3.3 below:

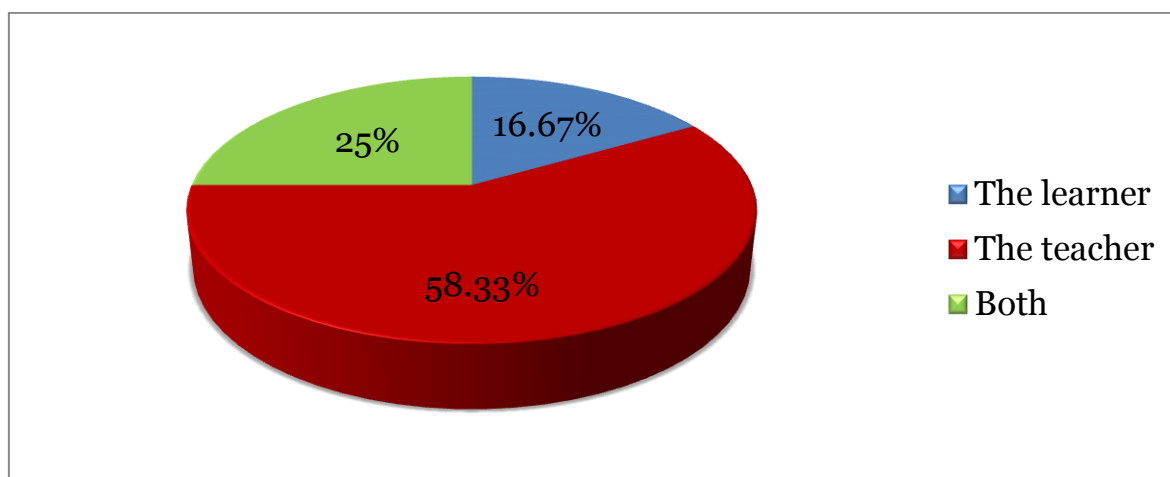


Figure 3.3 Pupils' Perceptions of Responsibility in Learning

As Figure 3.3 shows, 25% of pupils perceive the learning process as a shared responsibility between the learner and the teacher. While 16.67% of them believe that learning is their personal responsibility, more than half of the total number (14 pupils out of 24) considers learning as purely the teacher's responsibility.

*Question Six: Learners' Ability to Prepare Project-Works*

Since the project-work is the final product of each unit and due to its importance in the CBA, this question was specifically designed to explore the pupils' ability to prepare a project-work. Indeed, the results revealed that 79.17% of them are unable to do such a task. They justified their inability by the fact that the realisation of a project-work is hard because they do not master the language very well and, thus, they cannot search for information. Other pupils (29.17%) said that the project-work needs much energy and a long period of time which makes it difficult to prepare projects for all the subject matters at the end of each unit. However, 25% of the pupils referred to their teacher's unsupportive behaviour as they are not taught how to do this task. In fact, the common obstacle for them was their lack of how to search, select, organise, plan, and present the data.

*Question Seven: Learners' Decisions in the Classroom*

Pupils' perceptions and views about themselves as learners who can take decisions in the classroom are important to identify the extent to which they are ready to handle their learning process and be self-regulated learners. Answers to this question are summarised in the following table (Table 3.5):

	AF	RF
Deciding on the objectives of the lesson	03	12.5%
Deciding on the time spent on each activity	05	20.83%
Deciding on the learning materials	05	20.83%
Deciding on the way (s) of evaluation	02	08.33%

Table 3.5 Learners' Decisions in the Classroom

The great majority of pupils showed their inability to take decisions in the classroom. Only five pupils (20.83%) perceive themselves as able to decide on the time spent on each activity and the materials to be used. On the other hand, 8.33%

of pupils said that they can decide on the way of evaluation and 12.5% of them perceive themselves as capable to decide on the objectives of a lesson.

***Rubric Two: Teachers' Behavior in the Classroom***

The aim of this rubric was to elicit data on the teacher's behaviour in the classroom and whether or not it encourages constructivist and autonomous learning.

***Question Eight: Learners' Opportunity to Take Decisions in the Classroom***

This question is highly related to the previous one in the sense that it tries to figure out whether the teacher gives his pupils the opportunity to decide on any of the actions mentioned in the seventh question. Giving them the opportunity to decide on those actions is an important feature of constructivist teachers in constructivist environments with the aim to make learners feel they are part of the learning process. However, the results revealed that the teacher never gave them the opportunity to decide on any of those actions.

***Question Nine: Learners' Choice of their Sitting-Place***

Our interest in the extent to which learners are given freedom to choose where to sit led to asking them this question. The pupils replied with the same answer saying that there is a sitting-plan for each classroom. This plan is designed by a teacher who is responsible for their class and everybody has to respect it in all subject matters; choosing their sitting-place is not a given option even for other teachers.

***Question Ten: Teacher's Encouragement of Discussion***

Discussion among learners in the constructivist environment is crucial since it helps learners in building their understanding and knowledge by testing their hypotheses against other representations, and the constructivist teacher should encourage it. However, the results of this question indicated that the learners are not given such opportunity most of the time as it is represented in Figure 3.4:

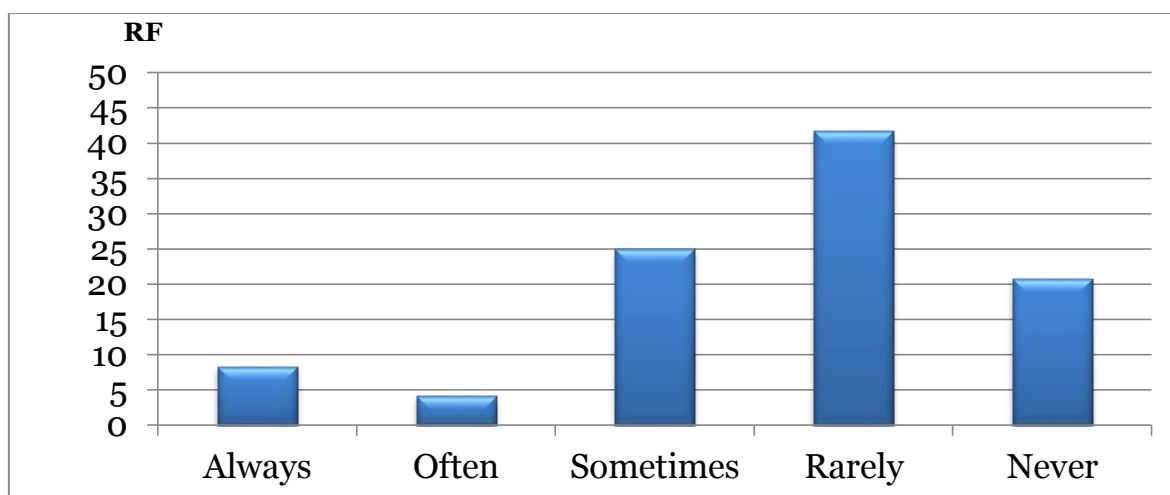


Figure 3.4 Teacher's Encouragement of Discussion

**Question Eleven: Time for Thinking Given by the Teacher**

This question intended to see whether the teacher gives his learners enough time for thinking after asking a question. By giving them time, the learners can reflect and activate their prior knowledge and experiences to generate new answers. In addition, each learner will be operating under the constraints of his ZPD which differs from a learner to another. Answers to this question are reported in Table 3.6 below:

	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Total
AF	02	03	04	13	02	24
RF	08.33%	12.5%	16.67%	54.17%	08.33%	100%

Table 3.6 Time for Thinking Given by the Teacher

**Question Twelve: Teacher's Acceptance of Learners' Questions**

Pupils' questions give the teacher insights on his learners' understanding and knowledge construction. The purpose of this question was to know if learners' questions are accepted by their teacher. Importantly, the results showed that pupils' questions for clarification are not accepted to a large degree as fifteen pupils (62.5%) expressed a negative answer to this question. Similarly, 54.17% of pupils

said that their attempt for more explanation is faced by the teacher's refusal of their questions.

**Question Thirteen:** *Teacher's Acceptance of Learners' Initiatives*

A constructivist teacher is the one who accepts learners' initiatives and encourages their autonomy by giving them the opportunity to share their proposals, comments, extra information, and extra work. However, the results obtained from the pupils showed that learners' initiatives are not very welcome in the classroom. Indeed, only 16.67% of pupils expressed that their teacher gives them the opportunity to propose something in the classroom, while 75% of pupils expressed a negative answer about their teacher's acceptance of comments. Three pupils (12.5%) said that the teacher accepts their extra information; however all the pupils expressed a negative answer as their extra works are not accepted by the teacher (see Figure 3.5).

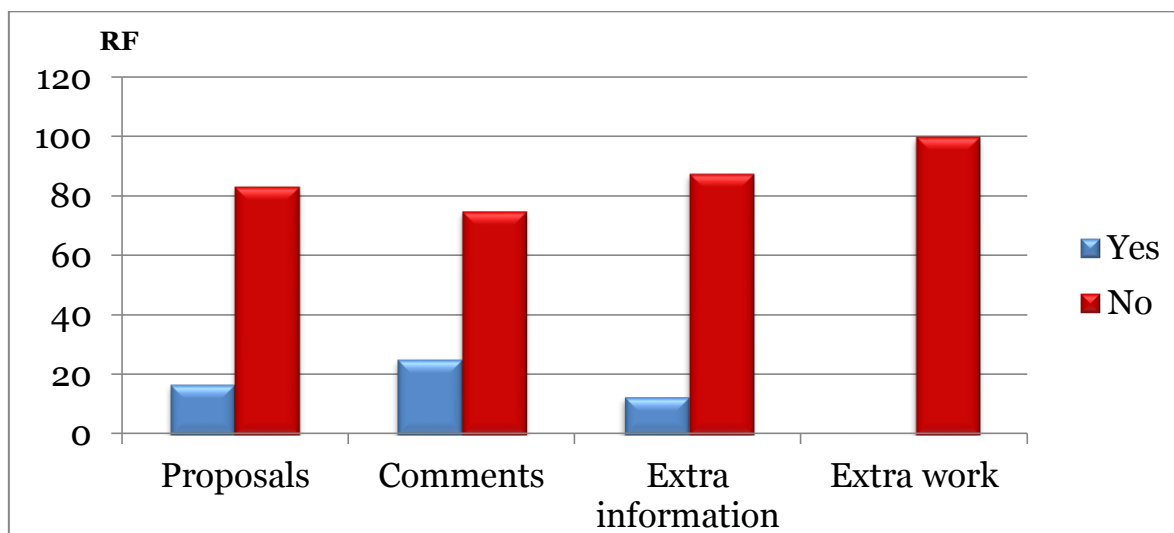


Figure 3.5 Teacher's Acceptance of Learners' Initiatives

**Question Fourteen:** *Correction of Learners' Mistakes*

Correcting learners' mistakes in the learning process can be done by the learner himself, his peers, or by the teacher. However, in a constructivist environment it is favored to make learners correct their mistakes by themselves or

to be corrected by their peers not to be corrected by the teacher most of the time. The results of this question which aimed to explore who corrects learners' mistakes are shown in Table 3.8:

	AF	RF
Self-correction	04	16.66
Peer-correction	02	8.33
Teacher-correction	24	100

Table 3.7 Correction of Learners' Mistakes

***Question Fifteen: Teacher's Encouragement of Projects' Realisation***

To see whether the teacher encourages and helps the learners in preparing projects this question was formulated. Unsurprisingly, the results showed that the teacher does not encourage his pupils to prepare any projects. Moreover, he does not rely on such a methodology as it was observed during classroom observation.

***Rubric Three: The appropriateness of the EFL Classroom***

The purpose behind this rubric was to collect data on the appropriateness of the EFL classroom for constructivism according to the pupils' viewpoints.

***Question Sixteen: Learners' Preferences in Using Textbooks or Computers***

The constructivist environment is technology-rich, and to account for the extent to which the Algerian EFL classroom is appropriate for constructivism and ICTs integration, learners were asked if they prefer working with textbooks or computers. The results showed that fifteen pupils (see Figure 3.6) prefer to work using computers if they were available, and the remaining pupils (37.5%) prefer a textbook.

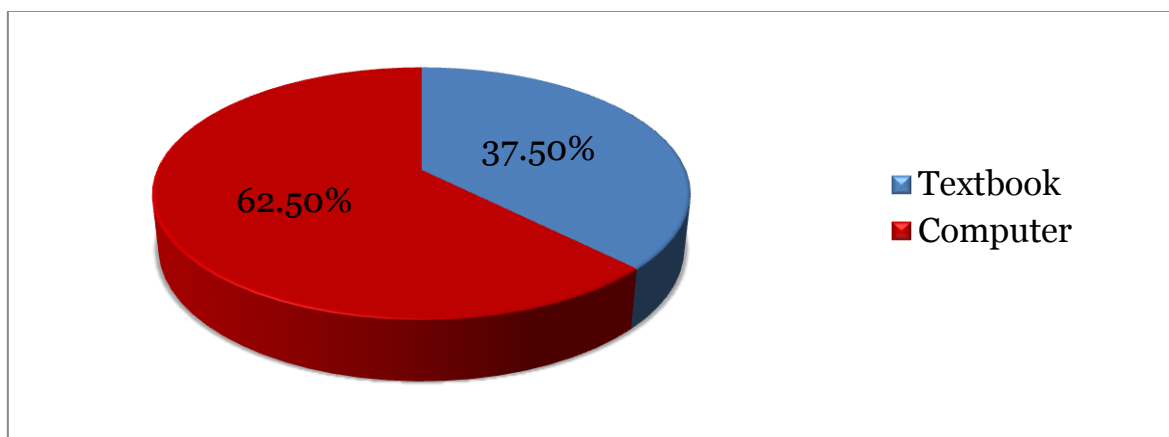


Figure 3.6 Learners' Preferences in Using Textbooks or Computers

The learners who prefer to use a computer justified their answers by the fact that they are accustomed with it in their lives and that the computer can help them in searching for more information. The nine pupils who prefer the textbook expressed their wish to use a computer too, but their problem is that they do not know how to use it appropriately.

### 3.3.2 Interpretation

Moving from a traditional teacher-centered paradigm to a constructivist learner-centered one is not an easy task. Indeed, such a shift is highly demanding and requires learners themselves to be at the first place responsible for their learning process and to take an autonomous standpoint. However, the data collected from the questionnaire addressed to the twenty-four third year literary pupils in Colonel Abd Elhadi secondary school revealed that these pupils were not ready to handle their learning process and be autonomous. These learners showed an over-dependency and reliance on their teacher who is regarded as the one who knows all or who is the fountain of knowledge; their learning is his responsibility and he should nurture their minds with information which they do not even bother themselves to look for using other sources.

The results also showed that these pupils were neither self-regulated nor autonomous learners who can take action for themselves and decide on the goals,

the materials, or the ways of evaluation as these decisions are given to the teacher since they perceive themselves as not able to study independently. Additionally, these learners lack the necessary skills and strategies that enable them to handle their learning process and be self-regulated and autonomous learners. Furthermore, they are not intrinsically motivated to handle their learning process and take responsibility of it as they devote no more time or energy to prepare their lectures or projects.

Nonetheless, it should be noted that the teacher's authoritarian behaviour contributes to this situation in many ways. The pupils are not encouraged to be autonomous and to be responsible for their learning process since they are not taught how to do so. Additionally, the teacher seems unaware of the importance of his pupils' questions, discussion, and initiatives which are crucial in fostering their sense of creativity, autonomy, and knowledge construction. The teacher's behaviour may also deaden the pupils' attempts of reflective learning and thinking because of not giving them more time to think, analyse, and generate their own hypotheses and conclusions.

Another issue revolves around the kind of experiences provided by the teacher in his sessions which do not meet the learners' needs and interests. The experiences are perceived as not interesting, irrelevant, unrealistic, and non-authentic by the pupils who feel dissatisfied. Moreover, their only motive behind learning English is to have good marks and better grades in the Baccalaureate exam because they do not see the relevance of what they learn in the classroom to their lives outside of it.

Pupils' lives are, to a large degree, surrounded by technology and computers which can contribute to their learning process in many ways. Yet, these tools and ICTs are not in their hands because of the lack of such equipment in the EFL classroom.



To conclude, the results obtained from the pupils' questionnaire revealed that the learners are not yet ready to handle their learning process and be autonomous and self-regulated learners as a prerequisite of constructivist learning. Learners are not intrinsically motivated, they perceive themselves as not responsible for their learning, and they do not know how to learn independently from their teacher who keeps spoon-feeding them.

### **3.4 Teachers' Questionnaire**

A second questionnaire was designed for collecting information from secondary school teachers of English in randomly selected secondary schools in the Wilaya of Sidi Bel-Abbes. The results gathered were analysed both qualitatively and quantitatively.

#### **3.4.1 Results**

Among the twenty teachers to whom the questionnaire was administered, fifteen of them have handed the questionnaire back. The total number of these teachers includes nine females and six males with their age ranging between twenty-five and forty-seven years. Their teaching experience varies between two years and twenty-five years which means that some of them were teaching before reforming the educational system, while others started their career after the introduction of the new approach (CBA).

#### ***Rubric One: Teachers' Beliefs about Learners' Readiness for Autonomous Learning***

The aim of this rubric was to explore teachers' beliefs about their learners' readiness to be autonomous and, therefore, to handle their learning process.

#### ***Question One: Teachers' Views about Pupils' Readiness for Autonomy***

The purpose behind asking this question was to explore how secondary school teachers of English perceive their learners' readiness to handle their learning

process. Interestingly, the results showed that the great majority of teachers believe that their pupils are not ready to handle their learning process and be autonomous. Only three teachers saw that their pupils are ready to take charge of their learning. This point of view was explained by the teachers arguing that if the teacher stops spoon-feeding his pupils they will find themselves obliged to work independently. By contrast, the teachers (twelve informants) who said that their pupils are not able to take charge of their learning (see Figure 3.7) reported that these pupils used to rely on the teacher for a long period of time starting from the primary school and thus it is difficult to make them rely on themselves. In addition, these pupils wait for the teacher to bring everything for them without being motivated to do further research or devoting some energy to do so.

Three teachers expressed that their pupils are not yet ready to be autonomous due to their lack of strategies and skills that enable them to be independent learners who can rely on themselves. Despite this, two informants reported that teachers were responsible for this situation because they do not encourage their pupils to be self-reliant as they keep providing them with ready-made information without giving them the chance to experience things and discover it for themselves.

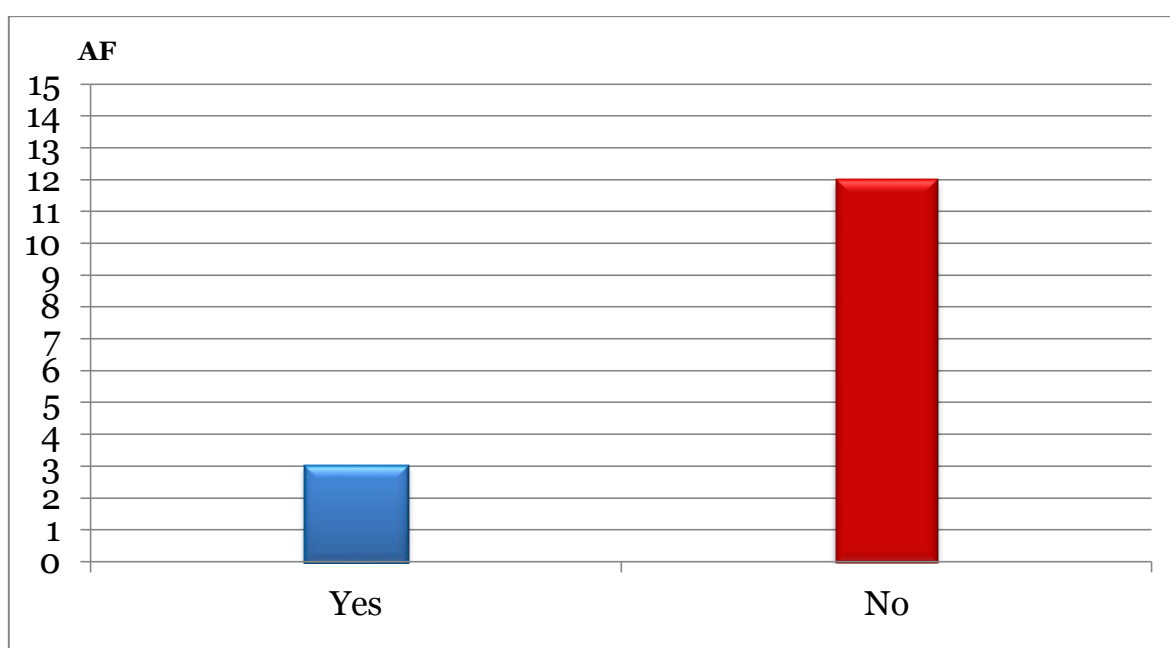


Figure 3.7 Teachers' Views about Pupils' Readiness for Autonomy

*Question Two: Teachers' Views about Pupils' Ability to Take Decisions*

In order to elicit information on whether pupils are able to take decisions in the classroom or not this question was designed.

	AF
Yes	01
No	14
Total	15

Table 3.8 Teachers' Views about Pupils' Ability to Take Decisions

The results summarised in Table 3.8 above revealed that only one teacher thinks his pupils are able to take decisions in the classroom. All the other teachers think the contrary contending that the pupils' dependency to their teacher is an obstacle to take decisions and that learners think it is the teacher's responsibility to take decisions in the classroom. Importantly, some teachers (four persons) confessed that they themselves do not give the pupils such an opportunity to take decisions in the classroom whatever the circumstances are because they are more aware than their pupils of what to do or not to do and how things should go on.

*Rubric Two: Teachers' readiness for constructivism*

This rubric aimed to explore the extent to which teachers are ready to rely on constructivism in their teaching practices.

*Question Three: Teachers' Perceptions of Learning*

For the sake of obtaining information on teachers' perceptions of the nature of learning and if it is in harmony with constructivism as a learning theory upon which the CBA is based, teachers were asked to choose their own definition of learning among a list containing three choices. The results showed that the majority of them (eleven teachers) hold either a behaviourist definition of learning (five

teachers) or a definition inspired by information processing theory of learning (six teachers). The third definition which takes a constructivist position was chosen only by four teachers. Though it seems that the results are close, it should be remembered that unlike behaviourists and information-processing theorists who are in favour of objectivist epistemologies, constructivists suggest a subjectivist epistemological and ontological view of learning and knowledge.

**Question Four: Teachers' Conceptualisation of Teaching**

Tightly related to the previous one, this question attempted to discover how secondary school teachers of English conceptualise teaching. Asking this question appears relevant to this work since teachers' roles cannot be underestimated in the learning process and a teacher's understanding of the nature of teaching will influence his practices inside the classroom. As it is exposed in Figure 3.8 most of the informants (ten teachers) possess a traditional knowledge-transmission view of teaching based on behaviourist and information processing theories. By contrast, five teachers (see Figure 3.8) hold a view of teaching that is informed by constructivist assumptions.

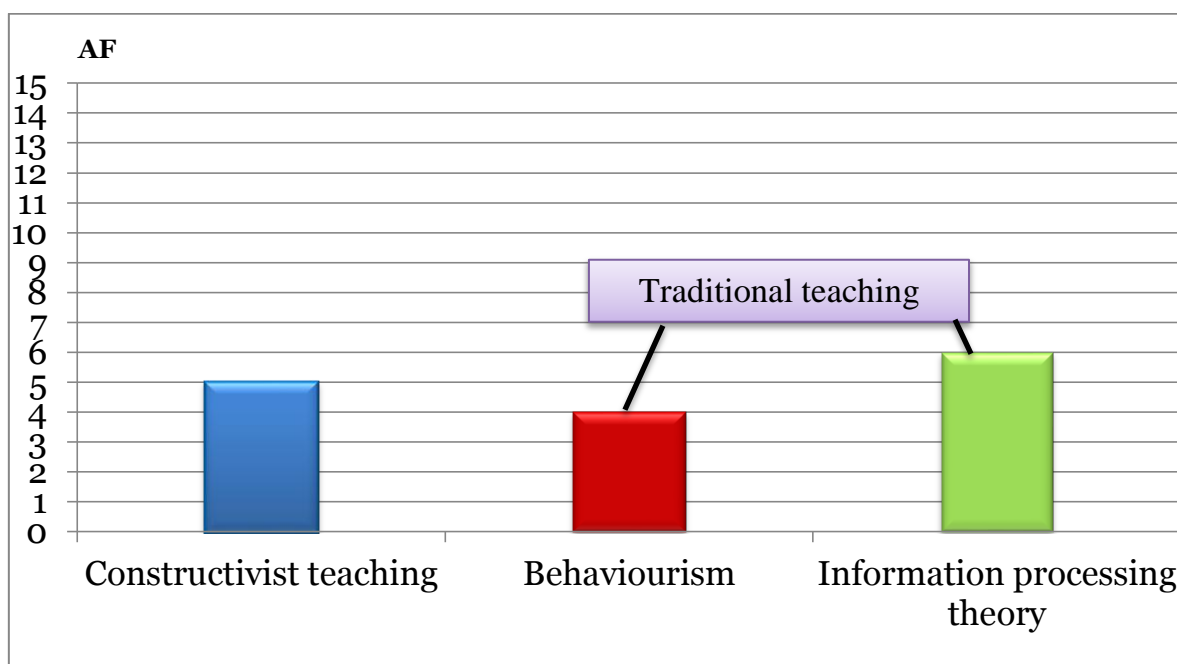


Figure 3.8 Teachers' Conceptualisation of Teaching

*Question Five: Teachers' Reliance on some Constructivist Activities*

The aim of this question was to know which constructivist activities are used in the EFL classroom if any. The teachers were provided with some examples of activities which are included in the English textbooks of secondary school. The results represented in Figure 3.9 indicates that most of the teachers do not use activities such as journal writing (used by four teachers), debates (five teachers), role playing (three teachers), and creative activities (two teachers). Instead they pointed out that they use drilling and repetitive activities to improve their pupils' grammar and vocabulary which are of paramount importance in the baccalaureate exam.

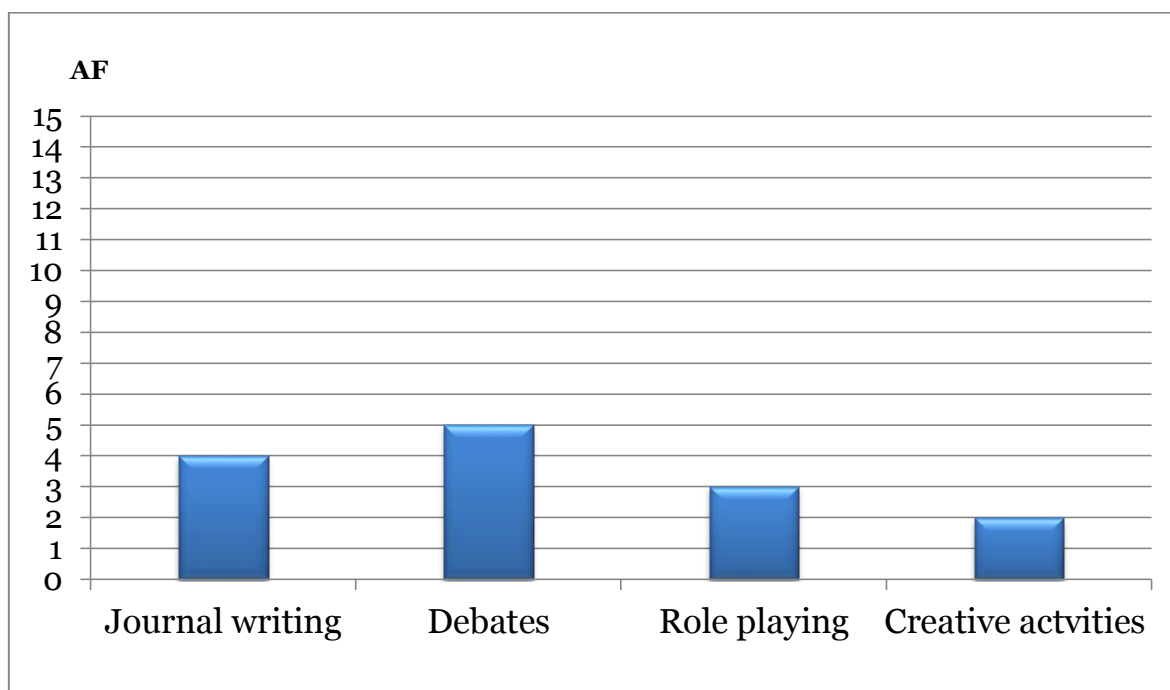


Figure 3.9 Teachers' Use of Constructivist Activities

*Question Six: Teachers' Reliance on Collaborative and/or Individual Work*

A constructivist environment is a place where learners work collaboratively more than individually. Therefore, teachers' were asked on the kind of work they relied on most in their teaching. The results showed that individual work is preferred more than collaborative work by eight teachers who maintained that in

most cases the classroom is over-crowded and relying on pair- and group-work can make the classroom look like a market with learners' disruptive behaviour and talkative nature. In addition, two teachers asserted that pupils do not know how to work collaboratively and sometimes the brilliant learners do most of the work while lazy pupils take the mark. However, it is worth mentioning that some teachers reported that they use collaborative work to break the routine in the classroom and because collaborative activities or tasks are mentioned in the textbook so they have to follow it. Some teachers favour pair-work because they see it more beneficial than group-work in terms of classroom management and it can be less disruptive and less demanding as group-work can be.

***Question Seven: Teachers' Reliance on Project-Work***

Secondary school teachers in Algeria are supposed to apply the CBA through Project-Based Methodology. In fact, this question aimed to know if project-work is used in the EFL classroom. The results (see Table 3.9) showed that project methodology is not followed by the majority of the informants (eleven teachers) and the project-work is totally neglected in their classrooms. These teachers argued that their pupils do not know how to prepare a project work and they cannot do a good job, and even when they bring something it does not necessarily reflect their personal effort as much as it reflects the work of 'Mr. Google' as it was called by a teacher referring to the phenomenon of ready-made projects on the net whereby pupils can access an infinite number of prepared works without the less of effort. The same view was expressed by two other teachers who commented that their pupils bring projects from the net without paying attention to its low quality and the stupid mistakes inside of it. Furthermore, some teachers believe that the project-work is time consuming and pupils cannot prepare it for each unit in different subject matters. Additionally, some teachers are convinced that in case of relying on PBM there is a risk of making the learners more reliant on their peers since only the brilliant pupils will work hard on the project while the other members of the group will have no contribution in the whole process.

	AF
Yes	04
No	11
Total	15

Table 3.9 Teachers' Reliance on Project-Work

**Question Eight: Teachers' Roles in the Classroom**

This question had the purpose to explore what kind of roles do secondary school teachers perform in their classrooms. The results revealed that the most frequent role is that of the controller as it is indicated in the following figure:

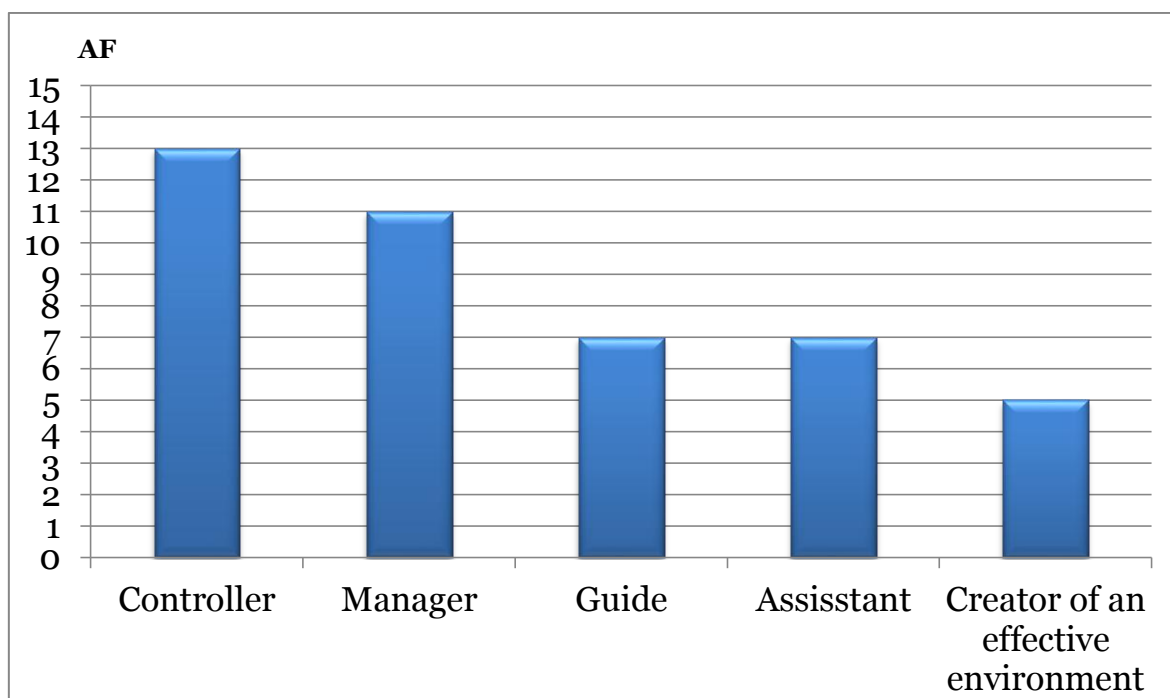


Figure 3.10 Teachers' Roles in the Classroom

Some teachers provided examples of other roles they perform in their classrooms such as; evaluator, model of language, transmitter of information, and a language expert.

*Question Nine: Learners' Assigned Roles by Teachers*

One of the premises of constructivism is that the learner is an active agent in the learning process who is supposed to take greater responsibility in the classroom. Indeed, our interest in eliciting data on this point drove the researcher to formulate this question. Surprisingly, answers to this question (see Figure 3.11) made it visible that the great majority of secondary school teachers (ten teachers) assign a passive role to their pupils since they are required to be followers of the teachers' instructions and lectures. In contrast to that, merely five teachers reported that they assign an active role to their pupils in the classroom and regard them as participant in the learning process.

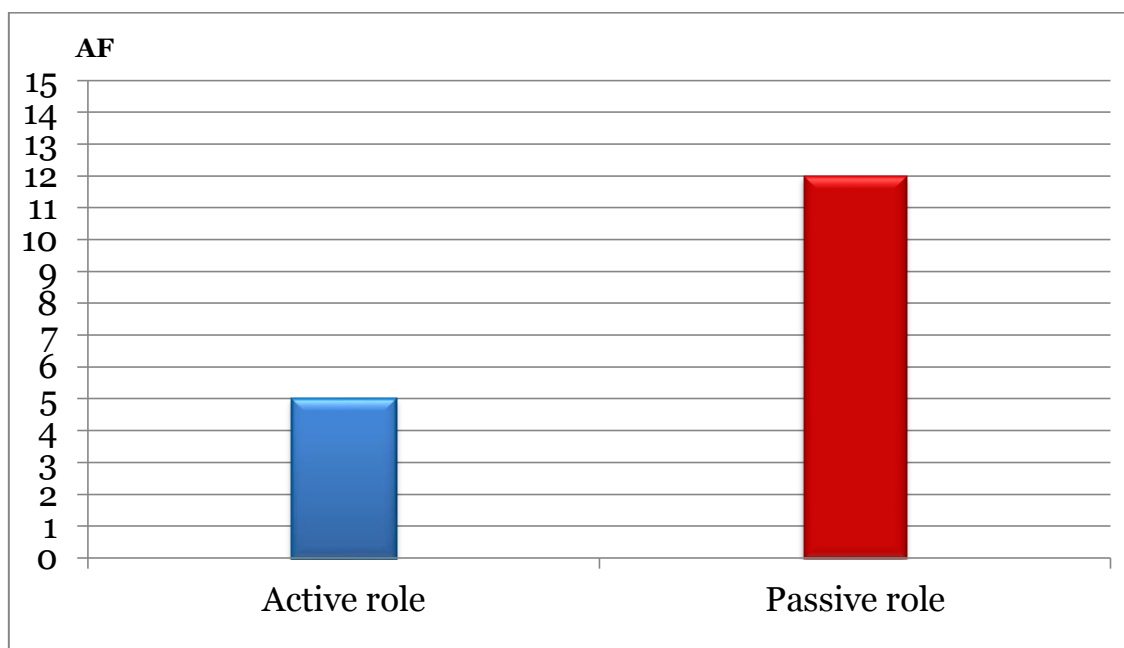


Figure 3.11 Learners' Assigned Roles by Teachers

*Question Ten: Teachers' Use of ICTs*

The purpose of this question was to know if teachers use ICTs in their classrooms and to what extent they are aware of its advantages. Indeed, the results showed that only two teachers make use of technology in their teaching, whereas all the other informants (see Table 3.10) do not use it completely. Teachers who do not



integrate ICTs in their teaching exposed a number of reasons behind their behaviour. The most common reason was that ICTs are not available in their schools, and even when they are available, they are used by teachers of Science and Physics only. Although some teachers commented that they do not know how to use ICTs in their classroom, others go further to say that ICTs are not fruitful and their use is a waste of time.

	AF
Yes	02
No	12
Total	15

Table 3.10 Teachers' Use of ICTs

***Question Eleven: Evaluation Strategies***

This question aimed at eliciting information on the ways through which learners are evaluated in the EFL classroom and whether constructivism has an impact on teachers' choices of evaluation strategies. The results showed that nine teachers rely on formal evaluation at the end of each unit or lesson. Four teachers use formal evaluation in addition to evaluation during the learning process including journal assessment and other strategies. Two teachers did not choose any of the answers provided, but they commented that their pupils are evaluated through official tests and exams since they will have the Baccalaureate exam at the end of their secondary school cycle.

***Question Twelve: Teachers' Understanding of Constructivism***

As it was previously mentioned, the current Algerian educational system is grounded on constructivism so this question aimed to elicit data on teachers' understanding of it. Surprisingly, nine informants left the place where the question was supposed to be answered blank. Yet, among the six teachers who answered the

question, three provided unclear and ambiguous answers which have no relation to constructivism. Another teacher reduced the meaning of constructivism to the help (scaffolding) that teachers provide to their pupils in order to make them autonomous. A teacher reported that constructivism, according to her humble knowledge, is the belief that learners cognitively construct their knowledge. One teacher said that constructivism is a theory that explains how learners construct new knowledge on the ground of previous knowledge and understanding.

***Question Thirteen: Teacher Education on Constructivism***

Since the CBA is inspired by constructivism, it was necessary to ask the informants if they received education on such a theory and its practical implications for teaching. There is no teacher who was educated on constructivism; all the informants said 'No'.

***Question Fourteen: the Amount of Constructivist Teacher Education***

The present question was asked in order to know the amount of constructivist education in the whole preparation programmes that teachers received. However, the question was not answered by all the teachers because they did not absolutely receive education on constructivism.

***Question Fifteen: Constructivist Principles Emphasised in Teacher Education***

The aim of this question was to elicit information on the constructivist principles that are emphasised in preparing teachers for their job. Though there was no teacher who received constructivist education, some teachers provided principles that seemed to them consistent with constructivism. Two teachers indeed said that they were educated on autonomy and Project-Based Methodology.

***Question Sixteen: Teachers' Reliance on Constructivist Principles***

The purpose of this question was to explore the extent to which secondary school teachers can bridge theory and practice through applying some constructivist

principles in their classrooms. However, the results were scanty since almost all the informants did not answer this question.

***Rubric Three: Teachers views about the appropriateness of the Algerian EFL classroom for constructivism***

The aim of this rubric was to collect data on how secondary school teachers perceive the EFL classroom and its appropriateness for creating constructivist learning/teaching environments.

***Question Seventeen: The Appropriateness of the EFL Classroom for Collaborative Work***

Constructivism holds that knowledge is built through social interaction and collaboration between all the members involved in the learning process which can be provided by collaborative work in the classroom. However, it is important to know the extent to which the Algerian EFL classroom is appropriate for such a strategy which was the purpose of the current question. All the teachers expressed the same view maintaining that the Algerian EFL classroom does not provide a supportive climate for collaborative activities due to the large numbers of pupils in each classroom and the lack of space for such practices.

***Question Eighteen: Availability of ICTs in the EFL Classroom***

A constructivist environment is technology-supported. Thus, through asking this question we attempted to know if the Algerian EFL classroom (or even the school) is equipped with technology tools. The results revealed that there is no EFL classroom equipped with ICTs though three teachers reported that their school is equipped with some materials such as a data-show and computers which are not under their service, however.

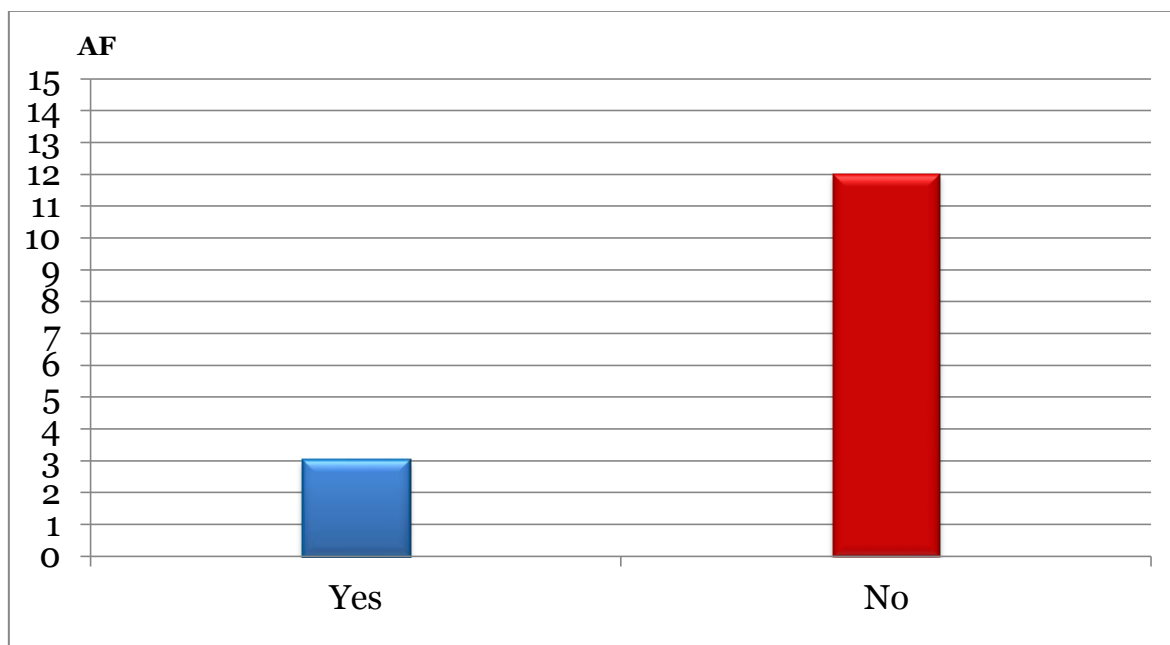


Figure 3.12 Availability of ICTs in the Algerian EFL Classroom

*Question Nineteen: Teachers' Views about the Current Situation of the EFL Classroom*

The purpose of this question was to investigate teachers' general views on the current situation in the Algerian EFL classroom, and to what degree it is constructivist. Twelve teachers had the same impression and provided a similar viewpoint asserting that the Algerian EFL classroom is far from being constructivist and it is still far away from that stage. While two teachers did not answer the question, a female teacher expressed a deep dissatisfaction maintaining that the Algerian EFL classroom is functioning according to the Grammar-Translation and Direct methods rather than CLT or the CBA.

*Question Twenty: Teachers' Suggestions for Implementing Constructivism in the EFL Classroom*

Although the emphasis is put on the learner as the central figure by constructivists, the teacher remains a cornerstone in the whole educational enterprise. Thus, teachers were asked to express their propositions and suggestions

to implement constructivism in the Algerian EFL classroom. Broadly speaking, secondary school teachers propose that much effort should be devoted to:

- ✓ Prepare teachers on constructivism and on how to put it into practice.
- ✓ Promote learner autonomy and self-reliance by teaching the pupil how to learn independently.
- ✓ Stop top-down decisions made by political and educational authorities and move to bottom-up models by engaging teachers and learners to decide on the syllabuses, curricula, and textbooks.
- ✓ Stop importing ready-made and imposed syllabuses from abroad and apply it in the educational system with no careful studies.
- ✓ Give teachers and learners the chance to work freely without being inhibited by administrative and institutional norms and authoritative values.
- ✓ Find solutions to problems of crowded curricula, low coefficient and restricted time allotted to English courses.
- ✓ Equip the school and the classroom by sophisticated and necessary materials and language laboratories.
- ✓ Encourage collaboration between teachers, learners, parents, administrators, and educational authorities.

### **3.4.2 Interpretation**

Ten years after the educational reform witnessed by Algeria, the EFL classroom seems to be far away from constructivism and learner-centeredness. This situation was clearly reflected in teachers' responses to the questionnaire. Indeed, Secondary school teachers of English still have a strong commitment to their conception of what learning and teaching are and what they entail. These teachers hold traditional views of teaching and learning anchored on principles of observable change in behaviour and information memorisation rather than on understanding and knowledge building. What experiences they should provide for their learners and what roles they should perform in the classroom are thus affected by their conceptualisation of learning and teaching.

Moreover, the great majority of teachers are in favour of their old roles and as such “some teachers see themselves as unique fountains of knowledge not to be questioned” (Miliani, 1991: 70). In fact, teachers are convinced that their pupils are not autonomous and do not deserve the opportunity to be active participants in the learning process, instead pupils should express obedience to rules and instructions without having the opportunity to decide on any actions in the classroom. This authoritarian behaviour reflects a dilemma in teachers’ education since they did not receive any kind of preparation on constructivism as a learning theory which guides the CBA. This contributes in teachers’ lack of understanding or misunderstanding of the rationale behind the implementation of some constructivist methods and strategies such as collaborative-work, project-work, and informal evaluation which are neglected and regarded useless by many teachers.

However, teachers are not the only ones responsible for this frustrating situation; learners do not show readiness to handle their learning process and be independent and autonomous by taking the burden off from their teachers’ shoulders. Learners are not motivated as they are supposed to be and their main concern is to have marks and move to the next stage whatever the means are. This, indeed, spots light on teachers’ reluctance to ask pupils preparing project works because they are almost sure that stealing from the net will be the only effort they will invest, if any.

Furthermore, the Algerian EFL classroom does not support practices informed by a theory like constructivism; “The problem of large and crowded classes is recurrent in Third World Countries widening the possibility of individual differences among learners, creating discipline problems and demanding more efforts from the teacher” (Medjahed, 2011: 76). In crowded classrooms with crowded curricula and lack of materials, the teacher will be concerned with classroom discipline more than creating an effective environment for learning to take place. In addition, most of the Algerian secondary schools and classrooms are

not equipped with the necessary tools and materials which can support learners' construction of knowledge and their move towards autonomous learning.

### **3.5 Classroom Observation**

The classroom observation conducted in this case study took place in Colonel Abd Elhadi secondary school. This educational institution is located in the daira of Telagh, 50 Kilometers far from Sidi Bel-Abess. The school opened its doors for pupils for the first time during the school season 1980/1981, within an area of 19220 square-meters. The school contains twenty (20) classrooms and four (04) laboratories for Physics and Science, another room is equipped with sixteen (16) computers, a library, a restaurant for semi-resident pupils, a stadium, and multi-sports space. In addition to the Head of School, forty-six agents are responsible for the administrative management. As the teaching staff is concerned, forty-one teachers are employed including four teachers who are in charge of English. The whole school staff is required to meet the demands of five hundred and twenty-two (522) pupils enrolled at the three levels: first, second, and third years. However, to achieve the purposes of this work, our classroom observation was conducted in two separate third year literary classrooms as it was mentioned previously.

#### **3.5.1 Results**

During classroom observation which lasted for two months (fifteen sessions in all), the researcher obtained the results from using a rating scale and note taking. The classroom observation was divided into three parts: one for learners' behaviour, the second for teachers' behaviour and the last one for the classroom setting. However, this does not mean by any way that there is no interaction between these aspects.

The results of the first part which was devoted to learners' behaviour in the classroom were represented in Table 3.11 with frequencies of event repetition in percentage (%):

	Always (%)	Often (%)	Sometimes (%)	Rarely (%)	Never (%)
Learners choose where to sit					100
The lesson's objectives are discussed with learners					100
Learners prepared the lecture at home				15.38	86.67
Learners choose how long to spend on each activity					100
Learners choose which materials to be used					100
Learners are interested	6.67	6.67	13.33	26.67	46.67
Learners are motivated	6.67		13.33	26.67	60
Learners participate	6.67	13.33	13.33	33.33	33.33
Learners ask questions			6.67	13.33	80
Learners work collaboratively			6.67	13.33	80
Learners interact with each other			13.33	26.67	60
Learners are disruptive				20	80
Error correction is made by	The teacher	100			
	The learner			13.33	
	Peers			13.33	
Learners work on the project					100

Table 3.11 Learners' Behaviour in the EFL Classroom

During the first session, the researcher could observe that learners were not active participants in the learning process to the extent that they were sitting on their desks which they never had the opportunity to choose. Moreover, throughout the fifteen sessions the teacher was the one who cleaned the board and wrote on the date and the title of the unit or lecture. Along the researcher's presence in the



classroom, learners never decided neither on the objectives of the lesson, nor on the teaching materials or the time to be spent on each task or activity. In fact, the learners seemed uninterested in most sessions and they were rarely participating except for two pupils who showed interest and motivation to learn rather than their colleagues who did not even prepare their lectures at home. Surprisingly, most of the pupils in both classes did not bring their textbooks and they took it as an excuse so not to work with it when necessary. Moreover, these pupils were not motivated to participate or ask questions which were almost absent during all the classroom observation (80%). The same thing was observed concerning interaction between pupils and collaborative work was minimally used. Indeed, what was observed is that learner-learner interaction and even learner-teacher interaction was carried out with learners' native language which was not prohibited by the teacher. In addition, learners' errors were always corrected by the teacher (100%) whereas a learner corrected her mistake only twice and she corrected the mistake of her peer twice as well. As far as the project work is concerned, the pupils were not working on it simply because their teacher did not mention that they were required to prepare a project by the end of the unit. Indeed, he did not mention the project work neither in the beginning of the unit, nor at the end.

Generally speaking, the pupils in both classrooms did not show any attempt to take charge of their learning process, they were passively sitting on their desks waiting the teacher to spoon-feed them. Only few learners (around six) were trying to be more autonomous and in most cases the teacher's lectures were for their sake and they were done with them.

Throughout the whole classroom observation, the teacher and his behaviour were also observed and the results were summarised in Table 3.12 as follows:

		Always (%)	Often (%)	Sometimes (%)	Rarely (%)	Never (%)
The teacher gives learners control over the classroom						100
The teacher accepts learner initiatives				33.33	40	26.67
The teacher gives time for thinking				33.33	26.67	40
The teacher uses cognitive terminology				26.67	33.33	40
The teacher encourages autonomy					26.67	73.33
The teacher encourages discussion					13.33	86.67
The teacher encourages learner-learner interaction					6.67	93.33
Peer teaching is allowed					20	80
The teacher accepts errors				33.33	13.33	53.33
The teacher plays the role of	Controller	100				
	Manager	6.67	13.33			
	Guide	6.67	6.67	20	33.33	33.33
	Assistant	6.67	13.33	26.67	20	33.33
	Creator of an effective environment			20	20	60
The teacher uses ICTs						100
Assessment is interwoven with teaching						100
Activities and experiences are	Authentic			40	26.67	33.33
	Differentiated				26.67	73.33
	Useful in real life		13.33	20	33.33	33.33

Table 3.12 Teacher's Behaviour in the EFL Classroom

The first impression that the researcher had from the first session being observed was the fact that the classroom was teacher-centered dominated by a traditional transmissive model of teaching. Indeed, the teacher was the sole authority in the classroom who never (100%) gave his pupils the opportunity to take charge of their classroom or their learning process. throughout the classroom observation, the teacher did not give the pupils the opportunity to take any decisions performing the controller's role in all the cases and under different conditions and situations including the two classrooms. The teacher did not encourage or teach his pupils how to take charge of their learning process and how to work collaboratively believing that the new approach, i.e., the CBA portrayed the teacher as 'nothing' to use the teacher's expression word for word. Thus, learner initiatives and questions were rarely accepted if to be accepted at all. The same thing can be said about discussion and collaboration which were almost neglected unless the textbook which was the partner of the teacher dictated him to use such strategies. Learner-learner interaction was reduced to the minimum as it was the case with peer teaching for example. Paradoxically, the teacher commented in one of our discussions that he was totally aware of innovations in the field of education and teaching including project-work, portfolios and journal writing though none of it was observed in his classroom. Furthermore, the teaching experiences seemed to be unauthentic, non-individualised, and useless in the pupils' real life outside the school.

Additionally, the teacher did not rely on any kind of formative evaluation but only on formal assessment in the form of short-term tests (for instance, the pupils sat for a test during the researcher's presence on February 6<sup>th</sup>, 2013) and trimester exams. It is also worth noting that the use of ICTs was absolutely neglected in the learning and teaching processes.

The third part of the classroom observation was devoted to the Algerian EFL classroom and its appropriateness for constructivism. The results were represented in Table 3.13 below:

		Yes (%)	No (%)
The classroom is organised		100	
The classroom is	Over-crowded		
	Large		
	Normal	100	
	Small		
The classroom is equipped with ICTs		100	

Table 3.13 the Classroom Setting

Unexpectedly both classrooms (Literary and Philosophy and Foreign Languages) were not crowded; however, the teacher maintained that this was an exception in their secondary school because all the other classrooms are over-crowded. Additionally, there was no classroom equipped with ICTs though there was a separate room where there exist 16 computers (one for teachers and fifteen for pupils) but it was not used by any teachers except of those in charge of technical subject matters like physics.

### 3.5.2 Interpretation

The classroom observation conducted in this case study showed that the Algerian EFL classroom was still teacher-centered with traditional and knowledge transmission models of teaching and learning. All the players took their fair share in this situation including the teacher, the pupils, and the classroom setting itself. The pupils showed a great lack of responsibility and autonomy in their learning process and they were unable to take any decisions in the classroom whatever its nature because they were not trusted by their teacher. Indeed, their lack of responsibility and motivation made them over-reliant on the teacher who saw no embarrassment to spoon-feed them all the time as long as his authority over the classroom was not threatened. The pupils did not bother themselves to do any effort either in preparing

the lectures or by being active participants in the learning process though they are supposed to sit for the baccalaureate exam by the end of a few coming months. Indeed, the baccalaureate exam and other standardised tests represented another reason for such situation because the pupils felt that they were obliged to learn not for improvement but to have good marks whatever the means. In fact, “regular testing... is an integral part of the Algerian system of education... and therefore students are indirectly forced to learn, not for the sake of learning, but rather to secure passing marks. It is clear that within such an educational framework, the learner is passive recipient of knowledge” (Lakehal, 2008: 416-417). Actually, this pushed the teacher to focus on grammar and vocabulary items rather than his learners’ understanding and building of their own hypotheses and conclusions.

It was clear that the teacher lacked the rationale behind using the CBA or the PBM in his classroom due to many reasons. First of all, his concepts of learning and teaching were intelligibly traditional and based on ontological and epistemological principles which are distant from the one acknowledged by constructivism. Moreover, the teacher was lacking the enthusiasm to move from a traditional model of teaching to a constructivist one as he did not show any interest to encourage his pupils to handle their learning process or to lose some of his authority on the classroom. The latter, did not allow for the implementation of constructivism and moving towards a more learner-centered environment as it missed some conditions such as ICTs which are useful in engaging, motivating, and making learners more self-reliant.

### **3.6 The General Inspector’s Interview**

A structured interview (see Appendix D) with a General Inspector of English was carried out in March, 2013 in his office after a long frustrating and demanding process to meet him. The purposes behind this interview were to explore the readiness of both learners and teachers for constructivism in addition to the appropriateness of the Algerian EFL classroom for this new orientation in education.

**3.6.1 Results**

The answers of the general inspector of English were of great importance to this work due to his long experience and regular visits to EFL classrooms where he could be closer to teachers and learners.

***Question one: The Educational Reform's Notion of Learning***

First of all, the general inspector of English was asked about the notion of learning the Algerian authorities rely on as a platform for reforming the educational system. Among the three proposed definitions reflecting behaviourist, information-processing, and constructivist views the last one was acknowledged by the general inspector asserting that learning is a process of knowledge construction based on learners' previous knowledge and experiences.

***Question Two: The Educational Reform's Concept of Teaching***

In accordance with the previous question the general inspector was asked about the concept of teaching which better fits the reform. His answer was that teaching is to create a learning environment which facilitates and helps an individual to build his own knowledge and work collaboratively with other learners.

***Question Three: The General Inspector's Definition of Constructivism***

The purpose of this question was to draw out the informant's understanding of constructivism. Indeed, the General Inspector preferred to define constructivism in very simple words maintaining that constructivism is a theory of learning that assumes knowledge construction on the part of the learner himself.

***Question Four: Teachers' Reliance on Constructivism in the Classroom***

To elicit information on whether or not constructivism is taking part in the Algerian EFL classroom this question was asked. The general inspector reported that constructivist principles were barely applied in the EFL classroom as only a

few teachers rely on it in teaching through the use of PBM and collaborative work. However, the great majority of teachers keep relying on old practices to the extent that they still work with the Grammar-Translation Method.

***Question Five: The General Inspector's View on Learner Readiness for Autonomy***

This question aimed at exploring the extent to which EFL learners can handle their learning process and be autonomous as required by constructivism. The interviewee believed that learners in secondary school were to a large extent reliant and dependent on the teacher who spoon-feeds them. Moreover, secondary school pupils were not really motivated and willing to take responsibility over their learning because they saw the teacher as the one who should take this responsibility. However, teachers themselves were responsible for not encouraging their learners to be more autonomous since they did not help them or taught them how they can work independently. Nonetheless, the interviewee drew our attention to the fact that learners lack autonomy in the classroom but they show more responsibility in other life domains and situations outside the classroom because they do not find what they learn in English sessions interesting or relevant.

***Question Six: The General Inspector's Views about Teacher Readiness for Constructivism***

The general inspector's visits to teachers make him more knowledgeable about their readiness to move towards constructivist teaching. Thus, this question seemed unavoidable. In fact, the interviewee reported that EFL teachers are not yet ready to move to constructivism and they are still relying on traditional views of teaching. He explained this by referring to many reasons and obstacles; for instance, teachers' lack of professional and self-development were largely quoted in addition to teachers' resistance to change because of their fear of losing authority over the classroom. Teachers often misunderstand the CBA and PBM in the sense that they do not know how to apply them appropriately. Indeed, teachers show resistance to this approach (CBA) because they feel that it was imposed on them without having

a clear picture on why and how to apply it and make it beneficial. Moreover, the pupils who are not motivated and less autonomous are likely to make the teacher dissatisfied and therefore relying on his personal decisions and judgments in the learning process.

***Question Seven: Constructivism and Teacher Education***

The purpose of this question was to explore if constructivism is included in teacher education programmes. Indeed, the interviewee asserted that constructivism is not included in teacher education programmes in a direct manner though constructivist practices are included without being related to this theory. To elicit more information, the interviewee was asked why constructivism is neglected while preparing teachers for the new approach (CBA). The inspector expressed that teachers need only practices whereas theories and theoretical frameworks are useless. Moreover, teachers are not supposed or obliged to know about these theories which are the concern of researchers not teachers.

***Question Eight: Constructivist Principles in Teacher Education***

The aim behind introducing this question was to draw out the informant's view on the appropriateness of the Algerian EFL classroom in particular and the EFL context in general for creating constructivist environments. The interviewee expressed a deep dissatisfaction in addressing this issue arguing that the Algerian EFL classroom does not provide appropriate conditions for constructivism and PBM. In fact, there are several handicaps and obstacles such as the problem of crowded classes in addition to lack of equipment and materials including ICTs and laboratories. Moreover, in large classes it becomes so difficult for a teacher to rely on collaborative activities because learners are disruptive and there is less space for interaction and movement. Additionally, he mentioned the problems related to the whole Algerian educational context such as the crowded curricula, the imposed syllabuses and the inadequacy of textbooks for the different cultural backgrounds existing in Algeria.



*Question Nine: Suggestions for Successfully Implementing Constructivism in the EFL Classroom*

At the end of the interview and rather than being asked, the interviewee was provided with the opportunity to propose some suggestions to move towards constructivism and learner-centeredness in the Algerian EFL classroom. The general inspector of English made the following suggestions:

- ✓ Before all, policy-makers should let educational experts work without imposing on them what to do and how to do things.
- ✓ The syllabuses and textbooks should be redesigned to avoid the many unclear points in them.
- ✓ The textbooks should be reviewed to provide learners with more individualised, realistic, relevant, authentic, and interesting experiences.
- ✓ Provide teachers with adequate and sufficient education.
- ✓ Make teachers' acceptance tests more honest and objective.
- ✓ Teachers should make the learner share responsibility and decisions in the classroom and show him that he is the core of the learning process.
- ✓ Teachers should rely on formative and informal assessment in the form of self-assessment, peer-assessment, and evaluation of portfolios, journals, and projects to make the learners realise that their efforts are important than the marks and passing exams.
- ✓ The classroom should be equipped with ICTs and the number of pupils in classes should be reduced.

**3.6.2 Interpretation**

Our interview with the general inspector of English uncovered the gap existing between the theoretical frameworks and the pedagogical practices in the Algerian EFL classroom. On the one hand, learners are not ready to handle their learning process and be autonomous. Moreover, secondary school pupils in general and EFL learners in particular keep relying on the teacher as the only source of

knowledge. In fact, learners in our educational system are less motivated due to their inability to draw clear links between the experiences encountered inside the school or 'school knowledge' in Barnes' terms (1986), and what they actually experience in their real lives outside the school or 'action knowledge'. On the other hand, teachers do not encourage their pupils to be more responsible for their learning as they do not rely on constructivism in their teaching simply because they did not receive any kind of education on such a theory and its pedagogical implications in teaching. Indeed, though the Algerian educational system was reformed in advantage to constructivism, this theory is totally neglected in preparing teachers for their job; the focus is on practice without paying attention to the rationale behind those practices which makes teachers misunderstand the meaning and importance of the methodology and approach to be applied. Additionally, the fear of losing authority in the classroom pushed teachers to stick to their old domineering roles and their traditional teaching practices.

Another issue for both teachers and learners is the EFL classroom itself which lacks the necessary conditions for constructivist learning and teaching. The problem of crowded classes prevents teachers from using activities where learners become disruptive and their disciplining takes much of the teachers' energy and time. In addition, the classroom lack of technology materials is another reason for not moving towards constructivist learner-centered environments.

### **3.7 Discussion of the Main Results**

By the rise of the twenty first century, the Algerian educational system was reformed adopting the Competency-Based Approach guided by constructivist learning theory. This general review of the Algerian educational system aimed at allowing the Algerian society to take part in prosperity and modernity by graduating creative and responsible, decision-makers, problem solvers, and autonomous learners to meet the challenges of globalisation. Accordingly, the aim of this study was to explore the readiness of both learners and teachers for constructivism in the Algerian EFL classroom.

The analysis and triangulation of the collected data revealed that moving towards constructivist learner-centered education remains an ambition on papers rather than a practical reality. Indeed, the results of this work unveiled the large lacunae and the many contradictions existing between the theoretical underpinnings upon which the educational system was reformed and its pedagogical practice resulting in feelings of dissatisfaction and frustration among learners, teachers, educational authorities, and society at large.

On the one hand, the results of the questionnaire addressed to third year literary pupils in Colonel Abd Elhadi secondary school showed that these learners are over-reliant on their teacher who symbolised a fount of knowledge to them and who should be responsible for their learning process as was the case for all decisions in the classroom (answers to questions five and seven). This over-dependency to the teacher was highly linked to the pupils' beliefs of their inability to take more responsibility in the classroom and which is supposed to be the teacher's duty along their learning process (answers to questions four and five). Additionally, these pupils were not trusted by their teacher to take any kind of decisions in the classroom because they did lack the necessary skills and strategies for autonomous learning (answers to question eight), the fact that was reinforced by secondary school teachers' responses to the questionnaire (answers to questions one and two in teachers' questionnaire). Indeed, teachers believed that their pupils are not ready to take greater responsibility for their learning and thus they should be followers of instructions and recipients of knowledge which were beliefs and behaviour that contributed to learners' over-reliance on the teacher (answers to question nine). A similar view was pictured during the whole classroom observation where learners' reliance on the teacher was the most noticeable event as they were over-dependent on him in all classroom decisions and actions with no initiatives or attempts to take an autonomous standpoint for their learning. The same picture was portrayed by the general inspector's interview where he asserted that our EFL learners are over-reliant on and dependent to their teachers whose job was to spoon-feed the pupils with pieces of ready-made information to be digested and retrieved

later in official exams (answers to question five). Indeed, learners' lack of motivation was another persisting problem since most learners were not intrinsically motivated to learn the language; instead, their main concern was to have better grades and marks in the Baccalaureate exam. This concentration on marks pushes both learners and teachers to share one sole method to achieve their goals, that is rote memorisation rather than understanding and reflecting on experiences and knowledge construction. It is also crucial to mention that pupils' lack of motivation and concentration on marks was due to the crowded curricula and the inappropriate textbooks and experiences designed for them. All the informants and the classroom observation revealed that what learners experienced in the classroom did not meet their needs and interests since the content is not interesting, authentic, relevant to their lives, and above all not too much realistic. These results obtained from all the research instruments corroborate each other and come down to the side of our first hypothesis holding that Algerian EFL learners are not autonomous and do not show readiness to handle their learning process which impede the move towards constructivist learning in the Algerian EFL classroom.

On the other hand, data collected from the different instruments used in this case study revealed that teachers were perpetuating the way they were taught so many years ago where objectivism was dominant and traditional views of learning and teaching were at the forefront. Indeed, teachers' questionnaire showed that secondary school teachers had strong commitment to traditional assumptions and perceptions of learning and teaching which contributed directly to their neglect or misuse of constructivist activities and strategies including project-work, group-work, pair-work, and portfolios to mention only few due to their lack of a rationale behind such practices (see answers to questions three, four, five, six and seven). In fact, the results showed that constructivism did not take part in any teacher education initiative and that it was underestimated by educational authorities while reforming the educational system (see answers to questions thirteen, fourteen and fifteen). This situation led teachers to feel more secure with what they already know and master; they spend more time and energy resisting change rather than reviewing

their previously acquired beliefs and attitudes towards teaching and learning and therefore to open the door for new opportunities of change. Still, teachers' resistance to change was linked to overwhelming conceptual and pedagogical barriers; secondary school teachers showed resistance to constructivism because of the need to develop new expertise on constructivist learning and teaching, in addition to the demanding nature of constructivist practices in terms of energy and time. Moreover, teachers' resistance to change and their lack of adequate and sufficient education on constructivism led them to rely on traditional teaching and more authoritarian attitudes in the EFL classroom as it was expressed by the pupils in the questionnaire addressed to them while inquired about their teacher behaviour. Pupils' responses showed that the teacher did not give them the opportunity to take decisions in the classroom nor to be active participants in the learning process (see answers to the second rubric's questions). Similarly, classroom observation results showed that the two observed classrooms were highly teacher-centered relying on traditional views of teaching and learning as the teacher was the central figure in the classroom performing the role of controller while learners were treated as empty vessels waiting for his knowledge to be poured into their heads. The classroom observation revealed that constructivist strategies and methods like PBM and collaborative work were almost totally neglected and were replaced by rote memorisation of rules and contents. In fact, teachers' faithfulness to traditional views of teaching and their inability to rely on constructivist practices were clearly articulated by the general inspector of English who explained this situation by many reasons but mainly by teachers' feeling of being forced by educational authorities to adopt a new vision of learning and teaching (answers to question six). Indeed, Constructivist learner-centeredness relies heavily on the notions of autonomy and one taking free actions for himself. Yet, the interview showed that teachers do not have the chance to act independently from rigidly imposed syllabuses, curricula, and textbooks (answers to question eight). This is what was highlighted by Bouabdesslam (2001, qtd. in Medjahed, 2011: 75) who claimed that "the educational system is still highly centralized, although several suggestions have been voiced by skilled teachers, and are still being attempted towards

decentralization. In vain, the general educational system is ultimately decided at the top". This centralisation of decision-making encouraged the creation of a close circle of authority exercising where everyone imposes on the ones under his control in a hierarchy. Obviously, both teachers and learners lost confidence over their ability to be responsible for what and how to do things due to political, sociocultural, and institutional imposed roles. Indeed, teachers' resistance to change which was driven by many reasons in addition to their lack of education on constructivism led them to be unready to rely on its principles in their teaching practices in the EFL classroom (answers to question seven). Then, all the previously mentioned results seem to confirm the second hypothesis which assumes that Algerian EFL teachers are not enough ready to rely on constructivism in their teaching practices.

The Algerian EFL classroom is the only place where pupils and their teachers meet to learn and practise the language. However, the pupils' responses to the questionnaire showed that their real life setting was not similar to the classroom setting especially when it came to the use of computers and ICTs which were cornerstone in their lives outside the school (answers to question sixteen). Secondary school teachers took this position as well holding that the classroom and the school in general do not support the learning/teaching process since there is a lack of materials and equipment (see answers to question eighteen). Additionally, the problems arising from crowded classrooms and the large number of pupils creating discipline problems were the most quoted obstacles by secondary school teachers to the extent that it was their alibi for not relying on constructivist practices such as collaborative work for example. Additionally, the large numbers of pupils in the classroom decreased their opportunities in individualised and differentiated instruction that suits their personal needs and mental abilities (answers to question seventeen). The classroom observation on the other hand revealed the classroom's lack of necessary materials and ICTs which are of paramount importance in creating constructivist environments where learners can develop their autonomy, creativity, and better powers of communication and problem solving. Another critical issue

was the absence of sufficient space for constructivist activities that require interaction and movement the view that was emphasised by the general inspector of English (see answers to question eight). In fact, the results of the interview showed the existence of several barriers that impede the creation of constructivist learning/teaching environments in the EFL classroom (answers to question eight). Besides, the whole Algerian educational context does not support the creation of constructivist learning/teaching environments which require autonomy and independent action due to the external sociocultural forces and the imposed decisions that teachers and learners may face along the educational process (answers to question eight). The triangulation of the above mentioned results confirmed the third hypothesis put forward so far by the informant's general agreement on the fact that the Algerian EFL classroom is far from being appropriate for creating constructivist learning/teaching environments.

**3.8 Conclusion**

The present chapter is devoted to the quantitative and qualitative analyses of data which were collected through several instruments from different sources. In fact, the analysis of pupils' questionnaire, teachers' questionnaire, classroom observation, and the general inspector's interview and the triangulation of results revealed that third year literary pupils and secondary school English teachers are not ready for constructivism. Pupils are not ready to handle their learning process and take an autonomous action for themselves as long as the learner is the heart of constructivist education and he should take charge of his learning process by being an active agent in knowledge construction. Secondary school teachers are not ready in their turn for constructivism as they showed lack of education on such a theory of learning which affected their teaching practices. At another level, the results showed that the Algerian EFL classroom is far from being appropriate for creating constructivist learning/teaching environments. However, the ambition to move towards constructivist learner-centered education in Algeria may come true if appropriate solutions are undertaken. Accordingly, the following chapter represents an attempt to provide some suggestions for better implementing constructivism in the Algerian EFL classroom and achieve valuable goals.



# **Chapter Four**

## **Suggestions and Recommendations**

### **4.1 Introduction**

### **4.2 Preparing Learners for Constructivism**

- 4.2.1 Promoting Learner Autonomy
- 4.2.2 Strategy-Based Instruction
- 4.2.3 Strategies for Motivating and Engaging Learners
- 4.2.4 Strategies for Collaborative Work
- 4.2.5 Scaffolding Strategies

### **4.3 Preparing Teachers for Constructivism**

- 4.3.1 The Relevance of Educational Psychology to the Teacher
- 4.3.2 Strategies to Overcome Teacher Resistance to Change
- 4.3.3 The Role of Constructivist Teacher Education
- 4.3.4 Reflective Approaches for Sustaining Professional Development

### **4.4 Preparing the Algerian EFL Classroom for Constructivism**

- 4.4.1 Learning and Teaching within a Sociocultural Locus
- 4.4.2 Classroom Physical Conditions for Constructivism

### **4.5 Conclusion**

**4.1 Introduction**

Throughout the previous chapter, the results revealed that both learners and teachers did not show readiness to move towards constructivist education. On the one hand, learners were not ready to handle their learning process and, therefore, to be autonomous as a prerequisite for constructivist learning. On the other hand, teachers did not show readiness to move towards constructivist informed practices. They were unable to create constructivist environments for learning to take place due to many reasons including the inappropriateness of the Algerian EFL classroom for such a theory and its pedagogical implications.

Accordingly, the present chapter aims at providing and highlighting some general guidelines and solutions to this situation. These suggestions would probably help and contribute in making learners and teachers move together towards constructivist education and to become co-partners in creating an appropriate environment for constructivism to take part in our educational system.

**4.2 Preparing Learners for Constructivism**

Constructivism is a learning theory that puts high emphasis on the learner and challenges him to handle his learning process; autonomy in language learning is commonly regarded as a prerequisite. However, our EFL learners are not ready to be autonomous and are not prepared to take charge of their learning process. Indeed, promoting learner autonomy in the EFL classroom is of paramount importance if constructivism is to take its real place in our educational system.

**4.2.1 Promoting Learner Autonomy**

Throughout this exploratory case study of learner and teacher readiness for constructivism in the Algerian EFL classroom, it was found that secondary school learners are not ready to be autonomous and therefore to handle their learning process as a prerequisite for constructivist learning and, thus, teaching.

Among the several reasons that were unveiled and which contributed to this situation are pupils' beliefs and attitudes towards responsibility over the learning process and decisions in the classroom that are greatly perceived as teachers' duty. Indeed, "a learner-centered approach is based on a belief that learners will bring to the learning situation different beliefs and attitudes about the nature of language and learning and that these beliefs and attitudes need to be taken into consideration" (Nunan, 1991: 178). Thus, before initiating any effort to enhance learner autonomy in language learning and teaching, teachers need to start altering their learners' negative beliefs and attitudes. "Attitude change is assumed to be brought about through exposure to a persuasive communication between the teacher and the learners" (Wenden, 1998: 126).

In a persuasive communication, a teacher will be, implicitly or explicitly, presenting his pupils with information and arguments in a discussion in order to change a learner's evaluation of a given topic, situation, task, and so on. With the existence of firmly held fears and beliefs which contribute to the preclusion of the learner to engage in the learning process, the role of persuasive communication is to spot light these hindering factors and to identify their underlying causes (Thanasoulas, 2000). Moreover, Wenden (1998: 126) asserts that "the communication comprises facts that show what learners can do to attain autonomy and that those learners who do so are successful".

The basic principle guiding this approach or strategy of altering learners' beliefs and attitudes is that while presenting learners with convincing information about a topic or situation for example, "they can be led to re-examine existing evaluations they hold about it and revise or change them completely" (Wenden, 1998: 127).

Referring to the Algerian EFL context, secondary school teachers need to open windows and opportunities for discussing and persuading pupils about their real and expected responsibilities and roles in the learning process and in their lives

outside the school as future citizens who will be supposed to solve complicated problems in various domains.

Even so, it is worth mentioning that learners' beliefs and attitudes are to a great extent affected by their teachers' beliefs and attitudes towards the nature of learning and teaching as well as their roles in the classroom. In a constructivist learner-centered environment, teachers' beliefs and attitudes would differ from those we may observe in more traditional teacher-centered environments. Hence, if teachers are to promote their learners' autonomy and give them more responsibility in the process of learning they are recommended to check, evaluate, re-examine and then change those negative beliefs and attitudes they already have about learning and teaching and what does it entail. Brandes and Ginnis (1992) suggest the following grid (Table 4.1) for evaluating teachers' attitudes in a continuum of traditional teaching and constructivist teaching.

Traditional Attitudes	My Attitude		Constructivist/Learner-Centered Attitudes
I have all the information.			The syllabus, the exam, and the information are here for us to share.
It is my job to transmit knowledge to you.			I am not the fount of knowledge.
I am responsible for your learning.			You are responsible for your learning.
It is my job to make sure that you work.			I am here to facilitate your learning by providing resources and support.
I have the expertise to make the right judgements and decisions about your learning.			I trust that you want to learn and take responsibility for your own learning.

Table 4.1 Teacher Attitudes' Evaluative Grid (Adapted from Brandes and Ginnis, 1992, qtd. in Scharle and Szabo, 2000: 6)

However, even if teachers have positive attitudes and beliefs that are consistent with constructivism, the task of assigning more responsibility to learners and moving towards learner-centeredness in the Algerian EFL classroom remains hard and time-demanding since “people do not normally wake up to a fine day and find that they have become responsible overnight. More likely, they go through a slow, gradual process as they are approaching adulthood” (Scharle and Szabo, 2000: 9). Thus, teachers need to be aware of this gradual process in developing learner responsibility since any sudden attempt to promote responsibility would rather generate negative attitudes towards autonomous learning. To reach their end in developing responsibility hence autonomy among their learners, teachers may follow the process summarised in Figure 4.1:

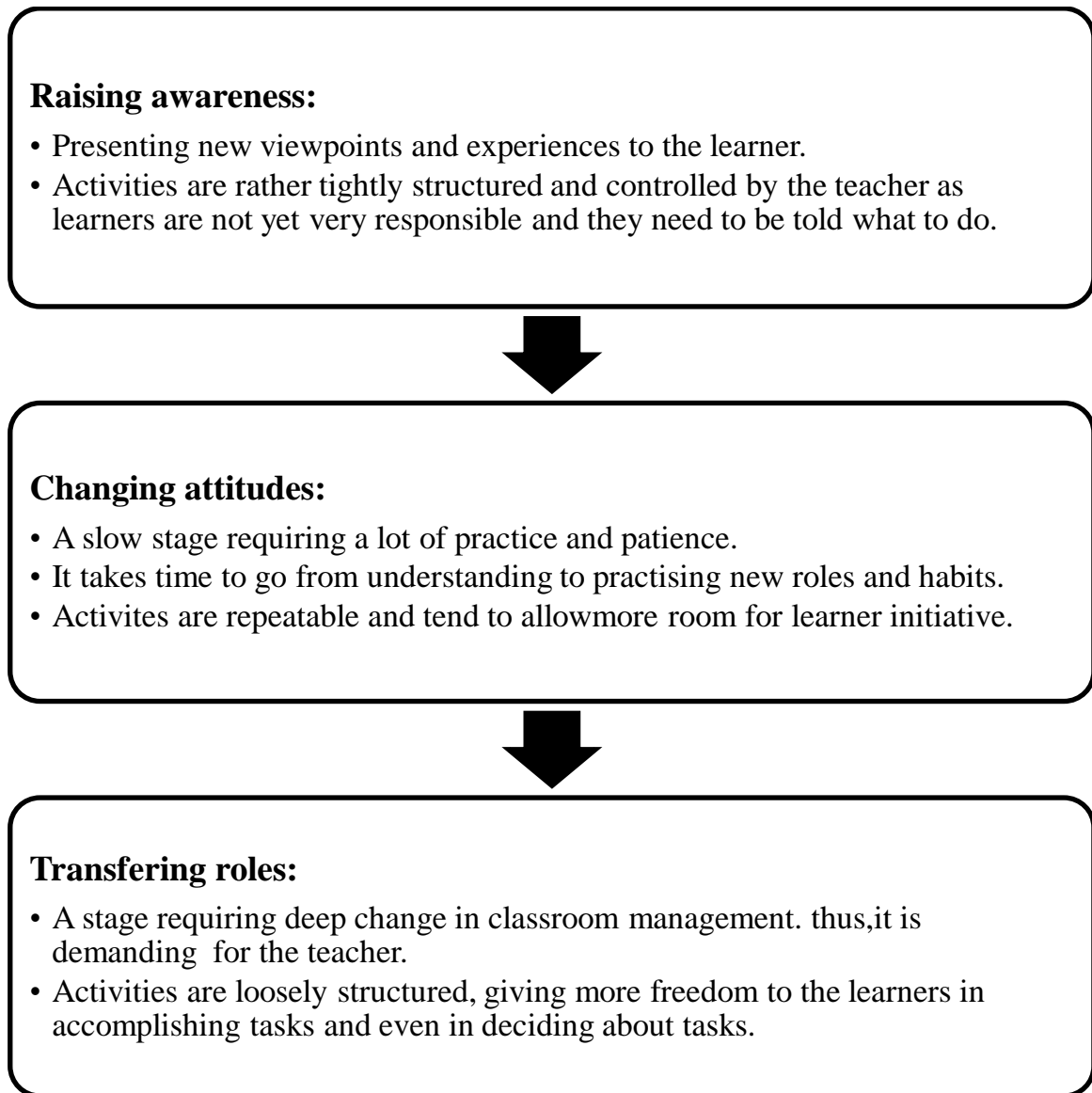


Figure 4.1 Stages to Developing Learner Responsibility (Adapted from Scharle and Szabo, 2000: 9)

While it seems that the lion's share in developing learner responsibility and autonomy in the Algerian EFL classroom is ascribed to secondary school teachers, learners themselves are requested to take part in changing their attitudes and behaviour from ones who are spoon-fed and passive to ones who are active participants in the learning process. This can be achieved through encouraging them to keep self-reports, diaries and evaluation sheets which indeed help teachers and learners alike to think and reflect on the problems encountered along the learning process and therefore to suggest appropriate solutions and remedies.

Wenden (1998) argues that introspective self-reports represent an effective strategy for collecting data on how learners tackle a given task. Furthermore, this kind of self-report raises learners' awareness of their strategies as they report what they are thinking of during performing a task. For Wenden (1998: 81), the introspective self-report in this sense reflects a "verbalization of one's stream of consciousness". On the other hand, in retrospective self-reports, learners are asked to retrospect or think back on their learning. Retrospective self-reports may take the form of a semi-structured interview or a structured questionnaire to elicit information on how learners feel towards particular skills like reading, listening, or problems they encounter and techniques they used to deal with such issues in learning, their view on optimal strategies or ways to acquire specific skills or to deal with learning tasks (Thanasoulas, 2000). Self-reports raise learners' awareness of learning strategies without which "learners will remain trapped in their old patterns of beliefs and behaviours and never be fully autonomous" (Wenden, 1998: 90).

Diaries and evaluation sheets serve as tools to plan, monitor, evaluate the learning process, identify problems and provide solutions for learners. Through writing diaries learners can greatly benefit from reporting and evaluating their expectations from a lesson and its outcomes. Moreover, writing diaries and evaluation sheets helps learners to manage their learning more effectively by being aware of their strategies as teachers are "showing them that their putative failures or shortcomings can be ascribed to a lack of effective strategies rather than a lack of potential" (Thanasoulas, 2000: 9).

Alongside this work it was found that third year literary pupils were not ready to handle their learning process and take an independent action for themselves because their lack of understanding as well as the use of appropriate strategies. The next section highlights some key points in helping learners know how to use learning strategies through Strategy-Based Instruction (SBI henceforth).

### 4.2.2 Strategy-Based Instruction

One quality of constructivist self-regulated learners is their ability to adopt and use effective strategies to reach their goals. It is therefore significant for Algerian secondary school teachers to recognise that their role is not to transmit factual knowledge to the heads of their learners; rather they are required to empower their learners by assisting them acquire the knowledge, skills, and strategies they need to become autonomous learners.

Recent research and practice suggest that learning strategies are basically defined as the “specific methods of approaching a problem or task, modes of operation for achieving a particular end, planned designs for controlling and manipulating certain information” (Brown, 2000: 113). These strategies are of paramount importance in foreign language learning and teaching. In fact, “language learning will be facilitated if learners become more aware of the range of possible strategies that they consciously select during language learning and teaching” as noted by Cohen (1998: 65).

Strategy-Based Instruction is widely recognised as a learner-centered approach emphasising learning strategies in language teaching, aiming at creating and promoting learner autonomy and increasing proficiency among learners (Cohen, 1998). Moreover, SBI aims at fostering the development of learner autonomy and increasing the development of learning skills and skills in learning how to learn (Nunan, 1991).

Yang (2003) explains that a number of models were developed over the years to guide SBI (O’ Malley and Chamot, 1990; Oxford; 1990; Weinstein and Underwood; 1985; Grenfell and Harris; 1999). These models differ in some steps and principles; however they commonly share the following general procedures as it is summarised by Yang (2003: 296):



- ✓ *Diagnosis*: at this first level, the teacher is required to identify and assess his pupils' learning strategies through the use of observation, interviews, questionnaires, diaries, or think-aloud procedures.
- ✓ *Preparation/ Awareness-raising*: the teacher assist in raising his learners' awareness of different learning strategies; explaining the concept and importance of learning strategies; developing goals for strategy use and affective control for individuals and the entire class.
- ✓ *Instruction*: the teacher provides direct and informed instruction on learning strategies through explanation, modeling, practice, and integration; providing different practice opportunities with varied learning tasks and contents.
- ✓ *Evaluation*: the teacher helps learners in evaluating their own strategy use through an evaluation of the whole process and revising it if necessary.

However, McIntyre and Noles (qtd. in Brown, 2000: 131) maintain that learners will benefit from SBI only if they:

- ✓ Understand the strategy itself;
- ✓ Perceive it to be effective; and
- ✓ Do not consider its implementation to be overly difficult.

Furthermore, teachers need to ensure that SBI is not limited to teaching an approved set of strategies; instead, learners need to be taught how to use those strategies flexibly, appropriately and independently to become more autonomous (Benson, 2001). However, learner autonomy and SBI would remain ineffective unless learners are engaged and motivated in the learning process. Thus, the following part provides some strategies to engage and motivate learners.

### 4.2.3 Strategies for Motivating and Engaging Learners

Constructivism places the learner at the heart of the learning process; thus any attempt to introduce new practices in the Algerian EFL classroom would remain fruitless without having learners motivated to take part in the learning process. In this vein, Palmer (2005: 1855) asserts that:

Motivation would therefore be required to initially arouse students to want to participate in learning, and it would also be needed throughout the whole process until knowledge construction has been completed. Constructivist theory thus implicates motivation as a necessary prerequisite and co-requisite for learning.

In order to motivate learners, a teacher may follow some strategies as suggested by Palmer (2005: 1863):

- ✓ Challenge learners by setting tasks at a moderate level of difficulty so they can regularly experience success;
- ✓ Use novel or discrepant experiences to arouse curiosity;
- ✓ Increase the meaningfulness of content and tasks by relating them to the learners' lives (authentic, realistic, interesting and relevant);
- ✓ Use a variety of different types of activities and tasks;
- ✓ Allow learners to be active participants in the lesson;
- ✓ Allow learners a realistic level of choice in work partners, activities and task formats;
- ✓ Allow learners to work individually or collaboratively in situations that do not encourage competition;
- ✓ Provide assessment feedback, and use praise that rewards effort and improvement (these are given privately, to avoid social comparison);
- ✓ Model enthusiasm, thinking, dealing with errors, and dealing with challenge; and
- ✓ Be supportive, reassuring, and attentive to the learners.

As it was mentioned earlier, constructivism acknowledges learners' participation in taking decisions in the learning process. Indeed, learners can be motivated and engaged in a given task by making them participate, discuss and negotiate their objectives and outcomes. A strategy was proposed by Clarke (2001) which allows for learners' participation and therefore engagement in the learning process. This strategy is based on making learners identify learning objectives, learning outcomes and the rationale behind learning something new as it is represented in the following table (Table 4.2):

<b>WALT</b>	We are learning to...	<b>Learning Objectives:</b> Explicit statements of the skills, competencies and understanding that will occur during the lesson.
<b>WILF</b>	What I'm Looking for...	<b>Learning Outcomes:</b> Observable or assessable outcomes of the learning activities. Making these statements explicit supports teacher assessment, self-assessment and peer-assessment.
<b>TIB</b>	That is because...	<b>Learning Rationale:</b> It gives the learner a reason for doing something and helps him to identify alternative routes to achieving the learning outcomes.

Table 4.2 Engaging Learners through WALT, WILF and TIB (Adapted from Clarke, 2001, qtd. in Pritchard and Woollard, 2010: 62).

Learners can also be motivated by engaging them in collaborative work which needs to be part of constructivist learning/teaching environments.

**4.2.4 Strategies for Collaborative Work**

Collaborative learning is an integral part of constructivist pedagogy and constitutes an essential steppingstone towards both interaction and language use. Yet, among the issues that were expressed by many secondary school teachers is the difficulty to rely on group work which seems to them demanding and time consuming. Pritchard and Woollard (2010: 63) suggest a model for promoting collaboration grounded on a number of skills, knowledge, understandings and attitudes as it is summarised in Table 4.3:

	<b>Resources</b>	<b>Curriculum</b>	<b>Structures</b>
<b>Learners' skills</b>	Knowing how to use the resources (e.g. specific software, information sources, etc.)	Possessing the prerequisite experience to place them in the ZPD.	Being able to fulfill the role by having the necessary skills for the role expected of them.
<b>Learners' knowledge</b>	Knowing what resources are available.	Knowing the goals, outcomes or success criteria of the activity (WALT and WILF).	Knowing what role they have within the group and the responsibilities they have for the activity.
<b>Learners' understanding</b>	Understanding concepts of suitability, efficiency and appropriateness with regard to choosing resources	Understanding the rationale for the activity (TIB).	Understanding roles and responsibilities within group work.
<b>Learners' attitudes</b>	Respecting property and readiness to share, loan and hire resources.	Wanting to learn and being motivated by the subject matter.	Wanting to participate and contribute to the group.

Table 4.3 Aspects of Group Work (Adapted from Pritchard and Woollard, 2010: 63)

For achieving a high degree of success and effectiveness from the aspects mentioned in the previous table (Table 4.3) and to attain the objectives of

collaborative work, teachers may follow some strategies like the ones proposed by Pritchard and Woollard (2010: 65):

- ✓ Assigning names to groups to give a sense of identity and responsibility;
- ✓ Celebrating a learner's achievements as a member of a group;
- ✓ Creating a group noticeboard or display area in order to promote identity and to highlight achievements;
- ✓ Dividing duties and tasks like scheduling or directing one person per group for each activity such as collecting resources, handing in work, etc.;
- ✓ Physically dividing the class in groups;
- ✓ Designing a seating plan so that consistency of location is maintained and activities completed jointly in the previous lesson can be continued;
- ✓ Creating starters by setting some activities that can be completed in pairs.

Actually, a crucial role should be attributed to pair work since it is the cornerstone in forming strong and effective groups. Teachers are therefore required to intervene in forming pairs on the ground of a number of criteria which define why these two pupils should work together or not. A teacher may ask two persons to work in pair because they share a common interest, they have the same need, or one of them needs support or scaffolding from the other. Scaffolding can also be provided by the teacher to foster learner self-reliance as it will be illustrated in the next part.

#### **4.2.5 Scaffolding Strategies**

Scaffolding represents a crucial element in constructivist learning and teaching, yet it was noticed throughout this work that secondary school teachers are not aware of its significance and importance in the whole developmental process of their pupils within and beyond their ZPD. However, scaffolding does not mean that teachers would provide their pupils with answers but to support them in developing knowledge and understanding by themselves. This support indeed can take different forms ranging from explanations, giving cues, constructive questioning and

feedback, sorting information into an appropriate sequence, modifying a task by limiting the amount of information, modeling and so forth (Pritchard and Woollard, 2010).

Scaffolding in general can be divided into two types: planned and opportunistic. The latter is also labeled ‘ad hoc intervention’ which is characterised by its difficulty since it relies on interactions between the teacher and his learners within a given situation. The former is also called ‘planned intervention’ and it may be provided through teacher simplified instructions and explanations, or personal attention from the teacher (Pritchard and Woollard, 2010). Indeed, a teacher can plan for scaffolding by posing a number of questions as it is represented in Figure 4.2:

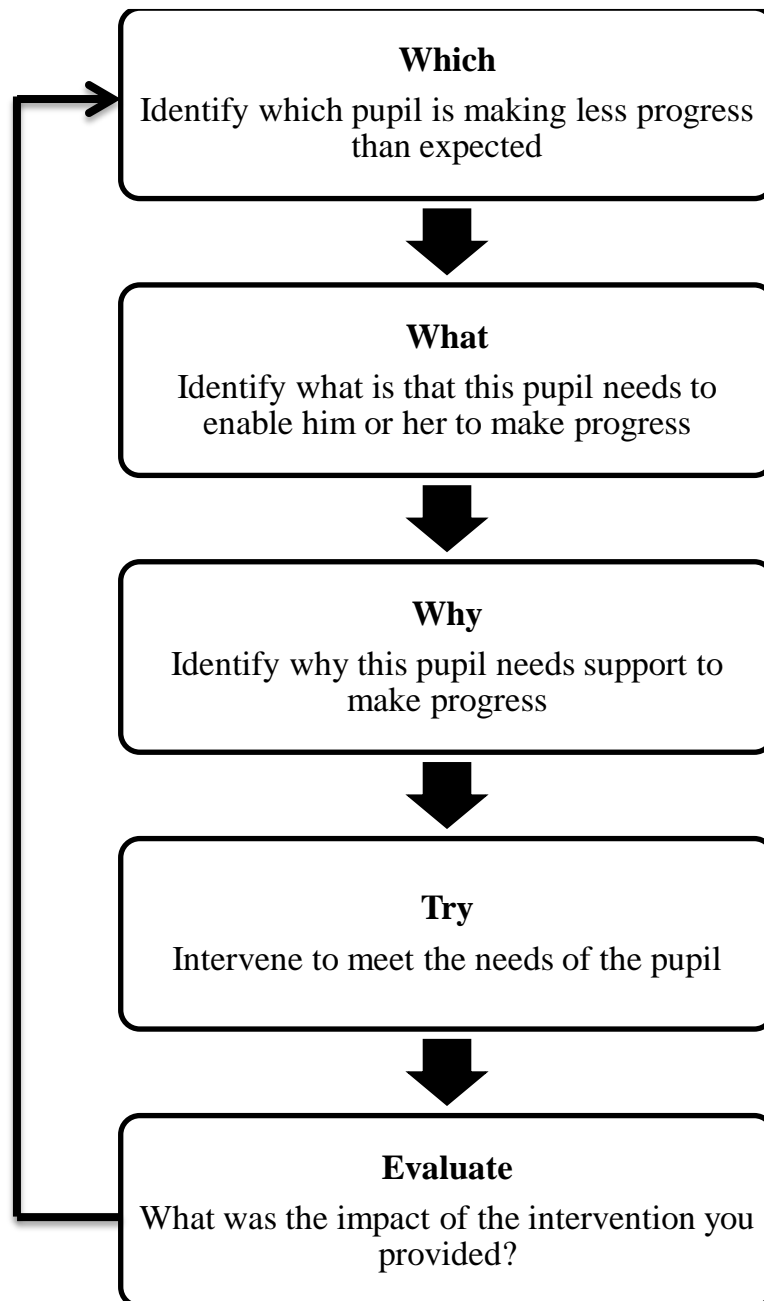


Figure 4.2 Planning for Intervention (From Pritchard and Woollard, 2010: 39)

The previous suggestions concerning preparing learners for constructivism through promoting their autonomy seems ambitious; however, its effectiveness remains in the hands of teachers whose beliefs, attitudes, behaviour, and knowledge need to be adapted and adopted to constructivist principles. Thus, the next section will provide some suggestions on how to make that wish comes true in the EFL classroom and the Algerian educational system as a whole.



### 4.3 Preparing Teachers for Constructivism

It is commonly argued among researchers and practitioners that constructivism is a learner-centered theory favouring learner-centered approaches in teaching, yet the role of the teacher and his importance in such a context cannot be ignored or be underestimated. Indeed, the teacher plays a crucial role in creating constructivist environments where learners are called to be active and take greater responsibility and control of their learning. In this line of thought, Feiman-Nemser (2001: 1013) acknowledges the fact that:

The quality of our nation's schools depends on the quality of our nation's teachers. Policy makers and educators are coming to see that what students learn is directly related to what and how teachers teach; and what and how teachers teach depends on the knowledge, skills and commitments they bring to their teaching and the opportunities they have to continue learning in and from their practice.

Thus, our EFL teachers need to be well educated on how to do their jobs in the most appropriate way. This can be achieved through the adequacy of teacher education with the demands and requirements of teaching within new contexts dominated by constructivist and progressive epistemologies. In addition, teachers may benefit a great deal from the discipline that concerns itself with learning theories and their pedagogical practice: educational psychology.

#### 4.3.1 The Relevance of Educational Psychology to the Teacher

For constructivism, a teacher is no longer seen as a 'sage on the stage' but a 'guide on the side'; however, this movement from teacher-centeredness to learner-centeredness needs deep understanding and knowledge of the nature of teaching and learning that goes beyond the linguistic mastery of the target language and linguistic theory. For instance, a teacher may benefit from educational psychology as a discipline which can supply him with knowledge of different learning theories and other related topics such as the ones of autonomy, motivation, and learning strategies.

Educational psychology is a vast landscape and a field of inquiry that draws its roots from psychology and directs itself to understanding the processes of learning and teaching within educational settings. Its relevance in teaching and learning were speculated for many centuries ago and long before its emergence as a separate field during the twentieth century (Berliner, 1993). Indeed, “the knowledge of educational psychology and its applications is very helpful in making the teaching-learning process interesting, inspirational and affective” (Aggarwal, 2005: 15).

Some years before, Blair (1947, qtd. in Aggarwal, 2005: 17) argued that the success of the teacher lies in his ability to be a specialist who can understand his learners, their growth, development, learning and adjustment. Moreover, he is recommended to be a diagnostician in discovering their particular difficulties and in providing them with appropriate remedies. Blair (1947) went further to argue that someone who has no training in psychology would not accomplish the tasks and expectations that teachers are supposed to handle.

Educational psychology provides the teacher with a holistic picture of his learners who differ from one another. In fact, every teacher faces a classroom where learners differ in their capacities, personalities, cultural and social backgrounds, and at many other levels. Thus, a teacher is supposed to meet his learners’ varying needs and he must have the knowledge of John and Latin as it has been put by Sir John Adams.

According to Aggarwal (2005), educational psychology helps the teacher in understanding the following:

- ✓ Whom to teach: the learner is to be taught and the teacher needs to understand his learners’ abilities, needs, and interests.
- ✓ Who is to teach: the teacher is to teach and he must understand himself in terms of behaviour, attitudes, feelings...etc.

- ✓ What to teach: the teacher needs to know how to organise and present the content, experiences, and activities in a way that suits the learner's mental and intellectual level.
- ✓ How to teach: educational psychology provides the teacher with necessary knowledge of teaching approaches, methods, and techniques.
- ✓ When to teach: this point revolves around psychological and motivational aspects since educational psychology helps the teacher to identify if his learners are motivated or not, and whether they are ready to learn.

Additionally, educational psychology contributes in teaching in the sense that most of research and interest are devoted to questions of how people learn as it is embedded in the formulation, testing, and reformulation of learning theories and the study of its pedagogical implications and applications. Indeed, learning theories attempt to explain the nature of human learning and the mechanisms involved in the learning process. Furthermore, a learning theory will provide the teacher with a view of how learning takes place and how it is affected by the internal and external factors of the learner so that he takes it into account while teaching. In vein with this, Palmer (2005: 1853) emphasises that “classroom teaching practice is likely to be more effective when it is informed by an understanding of how students learn”. Yet, Brooks and Brooks (1993) took this idea even further as they propose that teaching should start from how learners learn not from how teachers teach, the principle which was strongly adopted by constructivists who made the focus of education turns away from teaching to learning and brought to the scene new changes and challenges on the conceptions of learning and teaching.

It is of the essence within this context to call for the introduction of educational psychology while preparing teachers who showed high degrees of resistance to change. In fact, reforming the Algerian educational system needs to be planned around the axe of implementing deep changes at the social, cultural, political, institutional, and personal levels rather than introducing change and new

orientations without preparing soil for seeds through following some strategies that help in overcoming teacher resistance to change.

### **4.3.2 Strategies to Overcome Teacher Resistance to Change**

Teachers play a crucial role in defining the success or failure of any attempt to introduce change and or reform in educational systems. In fact, many teachers may show resistance and reluctance to accept change and adopt new pedagogical orientations for several reasons. In such a case and as a first step, it is necessary to identify why change is resisted and by whom it is resisted (Duke, 2004) since moving towards change can be hindered by its initiators who are required therefore to show openness to change and understand the process of change as something related to them personally not only as a process of change in teachers' understanding, attitudes, and behaviour.

The second step towards change is to develop a clear view on and understanding of teachers' attitudes towards change without neglecting the social and cultural norms of the school or the educational institution (Kennedy and Kennedy, 1986). Indeed, a new culture of shared decision-making should be established where teachers are part of the process of change from its beginning and a space where decisions are taken through bottom-up and top-down processes simultaneously (Duke, 2004). Within this new culture and by giving the opportunity and the chance to participate in making decisions, teachers will find a meaning for what they do as it has been acknowledged by Lambert (2003: 11) who asserts that "meaningful participation is cornerstone of professional and school communities –a stone that we often leave unturned". Moreover, creating such an atmosphere encourages teachers to be problem solvers and critical thinkers who would take risks and be open and willing to try new ideas and strategies (Short and Greer, 2002 in Zimmerman, 2006).

Another critical factor in overcoming teachers' resistance to change, according to Zimmerman (2006), is to enhance their self-efficacy by supporting and

helping them believe that change and control over new situations are possible. Actually, through promoting self-efficacy among teachers their willingness and motivation to take risks and adopt new roles and strategies will be increased as they learn how to perceive change as a source of interest or challenge not as a threat or obstacle (Bandura, 1997, qtd. in Zimmerman, 2006).

Another useful strategy in overcoming resistance to change is grounded on encouraging and supporting those persons who show interest in change or are actually trying to adopt change in their understandings, attitudes and behaviours. This kind of encouragement or reward is likely to push other teachers to try new ideas and practices in their classrooms. Hence, this kind of support should also be given to those teachers and other agents involved in the process of change when they express their opinions and worries about change and the reasons behind its resistance which may help in understanding covert reasons (Duke, 2004).

Pellert (2009, qtd. in Attard et al., 2010: 18) suggests the following strategies to overcome resistance to change:

- ✓ Teachers' fear of learning something new must not overbalance their fear of what is going to happen by not opting for change.
- ✓ Teachers and all those engaged in the process of change need to realise that the status quo is no longer successful.
- ✓ All information concerning change which may create a sense of insecurity should be made transparent, convincing and accessible to everyone.
- ✓ Teachers need to understand that nothing is going to happen at their level unless they learn something new.
- ✓ Communication, participation, support, dialogue and cooperation are essential in the success of change.

Among the reasons that contribute to teachers' resistance to change and hinders them to adopt a constructivist standpoint go back to the difficulty to bridge the gap between constructivism as a theoretical framework and its pedagogical

practice in the classroom reflecting a lack of teacher education on such new orientation in learning and teaching. The following section, therefore, tries to highlight some guidelines on how to make teacher education in harmony with constructivist principles.

### **4.3.3 The Role of Constructivist Teacher Education**

Before proposing any interventions or highlighting some crucial points in this section, it is worth considering the nature of some concepts such as teacher training, teacher development, continuous professional development and teacher education and explaining some of their similarities and dissimilarities. While these concepts have been and are used interchangeably by many researchers, some others argue that these concepts may overlap in their definitions or may differ entirely from one another.

In Mann's view (2005), teacher development is a bottom-up, continuous process guided by teachers themselves in their attempt to understand the kind of interactions existing between their internal and external worlds. However, teacher development is not an equivalent of continuous professional development which is planned and delivered by institutions aiming at career requirements rather than teacher personal values as the case in teacher development (Elliott, 2009).

At another level, teacher training according to Roberts (1998) is a top-down process based on knowledge imparting and transmission. Teacher training which is compulsory and product-oriented is regarded by some researchers (mainly constructivists) as having connotations derived from behaviourism and its principles of animal training. Teacher development on the other side is more democratic and more reliable in enhancing autonomy, empowerment and self-determined long-life learning.

Still, Elliott (2009) argues that teacher training may be a component of teacher development but not vice versa. In addition, Head and Taylor (1997) claim that

teacher training and teacher development are “complementary components of fully rounded teacher education” (1997: 9). Indeed, and for our purposes, Elliott’s position (2009: 435) is taken as reference considering “any activity in which teachers participate in order to learn to teach or improve their teaching is Teacher Education”.

However, it was asserted by many researchers and educationalists that teachers teach the same way they were taught; a similar conclusion has been achieved through this work. Bearing this in mind, it has been recommended by those researchers that teacher education should be consistent with what is supposed to be a constructivist orientation in newly designed educational systems. In other words, if secondary school teachers in Algeria are to be constructivists in their orientation and if they are to help and assist in pupils’ constructivist, self-regulated and autonomous learning they need to be educated in a constructivist fashion.

In line with this premise and to emphasise the urgent need to move towards constructivist teacher education, Beck and Kosnik (2006: 8) argue that “constructivism is not an interesting theoretical idea; it can help significantly with challenges and tensions we face in teacher education today”. Tatto (1998) goes further to contend that the influence constructivist teacher education has on teacher education students will be greater than that of traditional and transmissive ones.

Wood (1995: 336) spotlights the idea that “the alternative perspective that constructivism offers by defining learning as a process of personal construction of meaning offers a potentially powerful way to rethink teacher education”. In Algeria for instance, assessing, redeveloping and redesigning teacher education programmes is becoming a must more than any time before. However, among the questions that may arise in one’s mind is that of what are the characteristics and the principles of constructivist teacher education?

Richardson (1997) distinguishes two forms or views of constructivist teacher education. The first tradition focuses on enhancing teachers’ understanding of

constructivism and its pedagogical implications and applications. The second view takes a constructivist standpoint and applies constructivist principles and methods in preparing teachers for constructivist practices. Indeed, both practice and theory are important in constructivist teacher education with one informing the other as it will be discussed later.

In constructivist teacher education the relevance of teachers' personal beliefs and prior knowledge is acknowledged (Lortie, 1975). Moreover, prospective teachers "should build their own theory and practice based on their experiences and observations, rather than just applying the findings and principles of university-based researchers" (Beck and Kosnik, 2006: 17).

Generally, constructivist teacher education in the twenty-first century is characterised by the following (Borg, 2011: 216):

- ✓ A movement away from a 'training perspective' to an 'education perspective';
- ✓ Recognition that effective teaching involves higher-level cognitive processes, which cannot be taught directly;
- ✓ The need for teachers and prospective teachers to adopt a research orientation to their own classrooms and their own teaching;
- ✓ Less emphasis on prescriptions and top-down directives and more emphasis on an inquiry-based and discovery-based approach to learning (bottom-up);
- ✓ Less dependence on linguistics and language theory as a source discipline for second language teacher education, and more of an attempt to integrate sound, educationally-based approaches;
- ✓ Use of procedures that involve teachers in gathering and analysing data about teaching; and
- ✓ A focus on devising experiences that require the student teacher to generate theories and hypotheses and to reflect critically on teaching;



This final aspect of constructivist teacher education, i.e., reflective practice is receiving wide currency nowadays especially in maintaining and sustaining teacher professional development.

#### **4.3.4 Reflective Approaches for Sustaining Professional Development**

Since the introduction of the notion of ‘reflective practice’ to the literature of language teacher education by Wallace (1991), its importance and effectiveness in promoting and maintaining professional development has been reported by many researchers and practitioners. Reflective approaches foster the development of new conceptual knowledge and understanding instead of habitual practices (Thompson and Zeuli, 1993). In fact, Jaddallah (1996: 83) asserts that “knowledge about teaching and learning is constructed and reconstructed through the effective analysis of experiences”.

Reflective approaches engage teachers in an ongoing process of critical thinking, examination and evaluation of their understandings and actions for the purpose of promoting them (Elliott, 2009). Indeed, Barlett (1990: 203) asserts that:

If we want to improve our teaching through reflective inquiry, we accept that it does not involve some modification of behaviour by externally imposed directions or requirements, but that it requires deliberation and analysis of our ideas about teaching as a form of action based on our changed understandings.

Throughout the history of reflective approaches to professional development, a number of models were proposed and have contributed to the effectiveness of teaching and therefore learning. Table 4.4 provides some models and activities that were collected by Richards and Farrell (2005: 14, qtd. in Elliott, 2009: 438) for sustaining professional development.

Individual	One-To-One	Group-Based	Institutional
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Self-monitoring</li> <li>▪ Journal writing</li> <li>▪ Critical incidents</li> <li>▪ Teaching portfolios</li> <li>▪ Action research</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Peer coaching</li> <li>▪ Peer observation</li> <li>▪ Critical friendships</li> <li>▪ Team teaching</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Case studies</li> <li>▪ Action research</li> <li>▪ Journal writing</li> <li>▪ Teacher support groups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Workshops</li> <li>▪ Action research</li> <li>▪ Teacher support groups</li> </ul>

Table 4.4 Activities for Teacher Professional Development (Richards and Farrell, 2005, qtd. in Elliott, 2009: 438)

To avoid teachers' subjectivity while reflecting on their teaching, we suggest among the previous models, a Peer Coaching Model from which Algerian EFL teachers can benefit a great deal. Indeed, such a model implies two teachers reflecting, thinking critically, and giving feedback on the other's and one's personal practice which can help them to determine the strengths and weaknesses in their teaching. In addition to its reliability in giving an overview of how one's teaching looks like, peer coaching increases and promotes the effectiveness of teaching. Moreover, it helps in making appropriate changes and adopting new ideas and strategies within a safe and supportive environment built as a result of teachers working collaboratively with each other (Murray and Christison, 2011).

Following Murray and Christison (2011: 204), peer coaching permits teachers to:

- ✓ Develop skills with a new teaching strategy;
- ✓ Provide opportunities for checking performance;
- ✓ Give accurate, specific, and non-evaluative feedback to another teacher;
- ✓ Encourage mutual examination of appropriate new teaching strategies;
- ✓ Transfer new information into effective classroom practice;
- ✓ Reorganise materials;

- ✓ Teach learners to respond to new strategies;
- ✓ Teach learners a new process; and
- ✓ Bring teachers together in collaborative problem-solving sessions.

Constructivist teacher education programmes and reflective approaches to professional development may bring deep changes in the current Algerian educational system and it may facilitate the move towards constructivist and learner-centered education. However, these attempts “often ignore or give minimal attention to such issues as programmatic structure, institutional context, and change strategies” (Tom, 1997: 113). In fact, teachers’ willingness to create constructivist learning/teaching environments may be hindered, as it was revealed by this work, by many obstacles which need to be given specific attention and studied carefully to overcome any possible issues including the inappropriateness of the Algerian EFL classroom for constructivism.

#### **4.4 Preparing the Algerian EFL Classroom for Constructivism**

The results of this case study revealed that the current Algerian EFL classroom is not appropriate for and does not support the creation of constructivist learning/teaching environments at different levels which are mainly affected by the sociocultural and the physical conditions of the EFL classroom itself.

##### **4.4.1 Learning and Teaching within a Sociocultural Locus**

Constructivism and constructivists strongly advocate the sociocultural environment within which learning and teaching will take place. As Figure 4.3 shows, learning and thus teaching may be affected by the wider context of an educational system which goes beyond the classroom or the school. The learner does not come in a vacuum, and he does not live in an island of isolated features and characteristics. Rather, “every function in the child’s cultural development occurs twice: first, on the social level, and later on the individual level” (Vygotsky, 1978: 57).

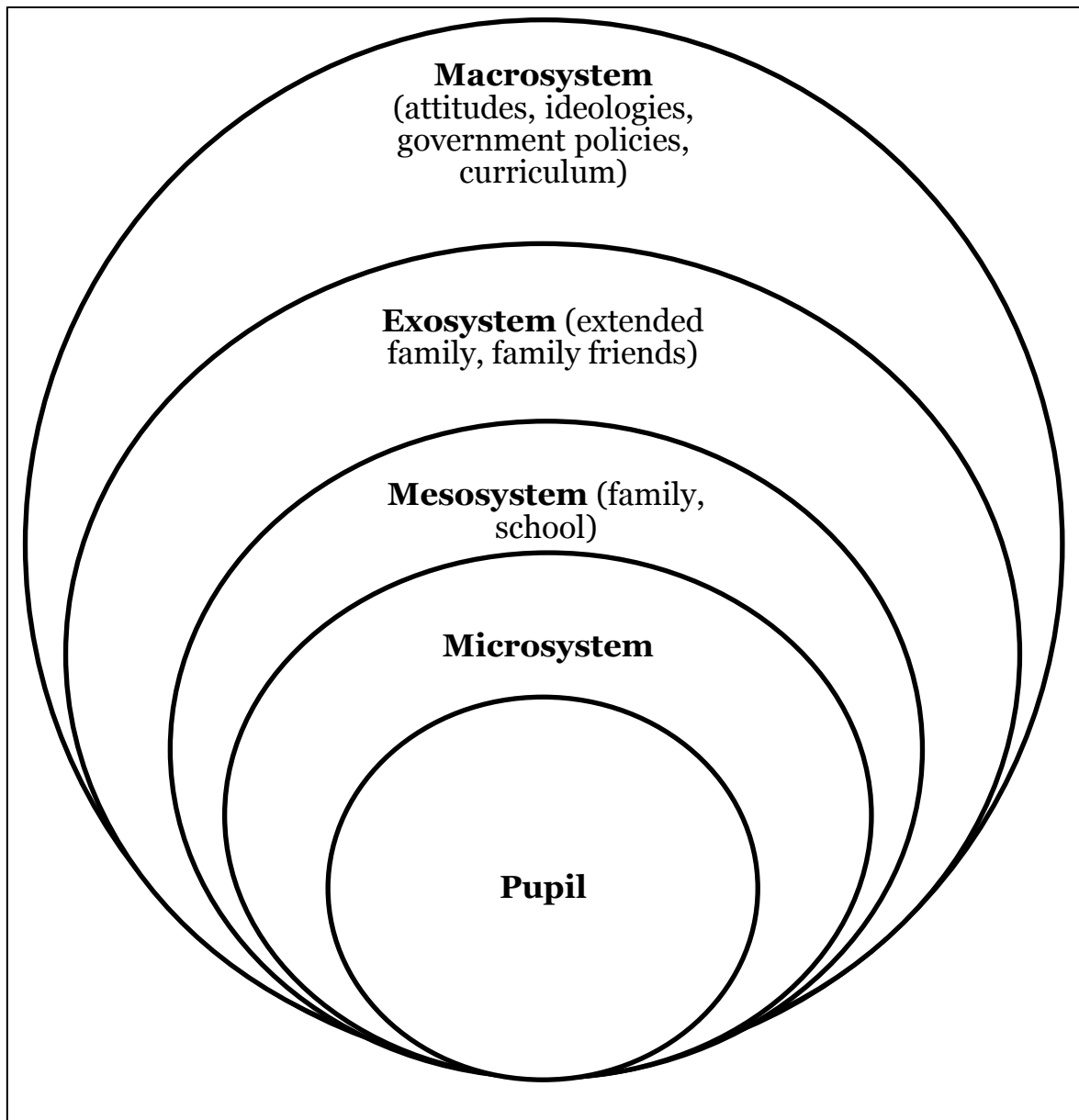


Figure 4.3 Ecosystemic Model of Learning (Adapted from Bronfenbrenner, 1989, qtd. in Ireson, 2008: 72)

While an eminent role was given to constructivist teacher education in the previous sections, it is also important to “recognize that the problem of reform has political and institutional roots, not just intellectual and conceptual ones. Change is also needed in our work settings, in the way the schools and universities are linked, and a variety of other arenas” (Tom, 1997: 2). While considering the school as an institution where learning and teaching are intended to take place and the context

within which reform is to be implemented, it is high time to consider and understand the forces that shape learning and teaching processes.

Creating appropriate conditions for constructivism as a learning theory which acknowledges and honours learner autonomy and responsibility and which favours teachers' roles as guides and facilitators should be rooted in the wider circles affecting the school or the classroom. We argue that careful, non-stereotyped, objective, empirical research and studies on the factors mentioned in Figure 4.3 and Figure 4.4 should be carried out before any attempt to introduce any new educational theory and its pedagogical practice.

If constructivism is to inspire our teachers' pedagogical practices and if schools are to graduate autonomous learners, a safe, trustful, supportive, and non-authoritarian environment should be created in the larger community and inside schools allowing teachers and learners alike to express their views, share ideas, negotiate and discuss issues and above all feel free from any kind of imposed decisions which have political and sociocultural roots instead of educational and pedagogical purposes.

Thus, community with all its players including policy-makers, educational authorities, schools' staff, and parents are called to work collaboratively to ensure that the purposes of newly adopted approaches are achieved. Indeed, each person is required to contribute in developing the sense of autonomy, responsibility, and life-long learning among our children.

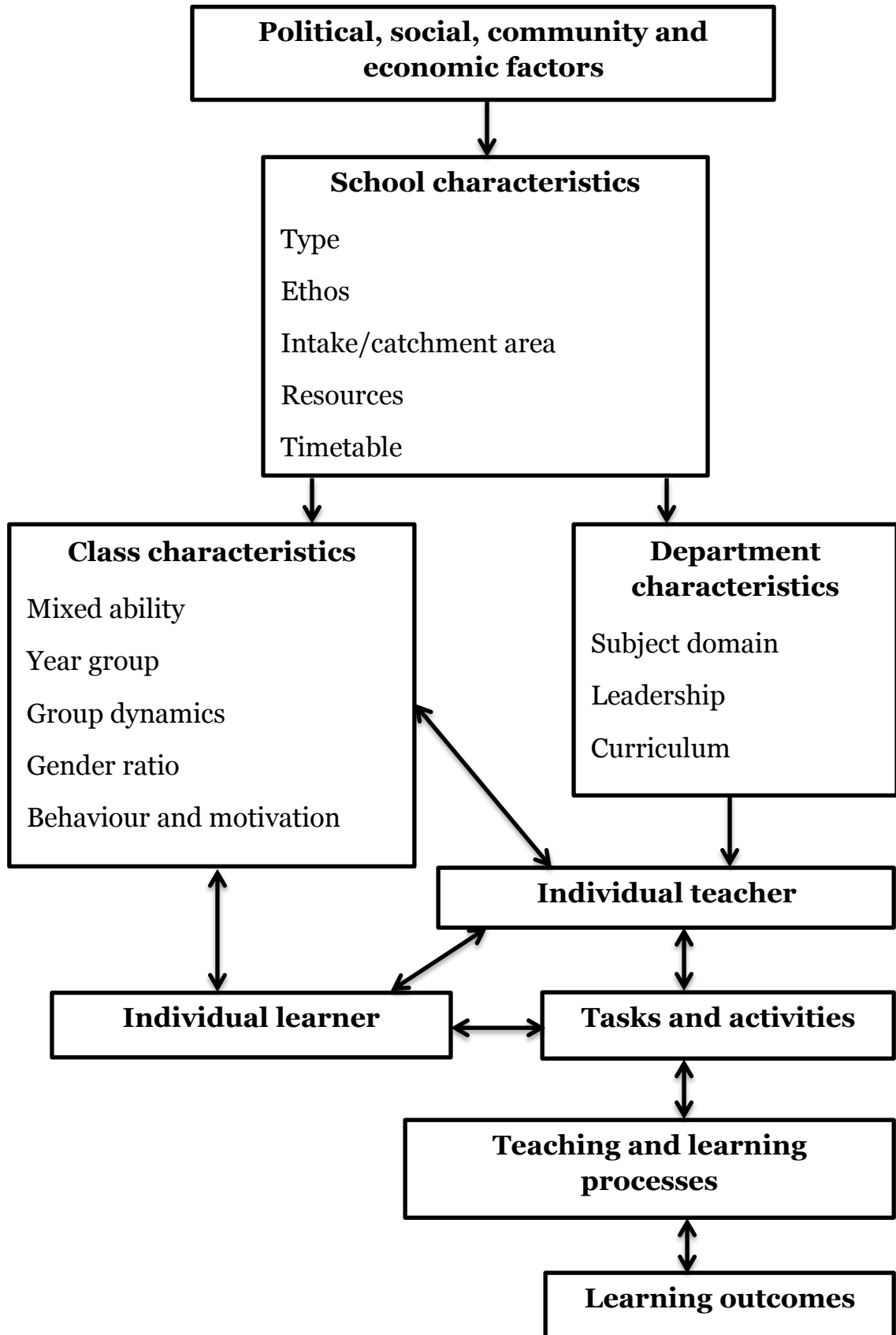


Figure 4.4 Influences on Secondary School Learning (Adapted from Hallam and Ireson, 1999: 70, qtd. in Ireson, 2008: 76)

At another level, the physical conditions of the Algerian EFL classroom needs to be refined to support constructivist learning and teaching which is deeply reflected in collaborative and project work.

#### **4.4.2 Classroom Physical Conditions for Constructivism**

The results obtained from the different instruments used in this case study, mainly those of classroom observation, showed that The Algerian EFL classroom is far from being appropriate to create constructivist learning/teaching environments where learners can engage in problem-solving, inquiry and collaborative work; thus, affecting teachers' attempt to introduce new pedagogical practices like the one advocated by constructivism on the one hand, and learners' achievement and outcomes from the other. This goes in harmony with Earthman's view (2004: 18) who argues that "there is sufficient research to state without equivocation that the building in which students spend a good deal of their time learning does in fact influence how well they learn". Moreover, the physical environment is regarded by some educationalists as a third teacher which can improve comfort, wellbeing, and hence attitude to learning, ultimately improving achievement (Walker, 2007; Lippman, 2010).

Siegel (1999, qtd. in McGregor, 2004: 347) goes further to argue that "the arrangement of space has immediate and far reaching consequences for teacher's ability to effectively and efficiently accomplish daily activities, the formation of social and professional relationships, and the sharing of information and knowledge". Besides, schools and classrooms may represent something beyond its nature as a place to learn in by acquiring an emotional significance to the learner as educators play a crucial role in constructing schools and classrooms, and hence learners' identities (Ellis, 2005).

With many researchers and practitioners assuming that the physical conditions of the classroom have an impact on learners and teachers alike, the Algerian EFL classroom should be prepared to support and enhance learners' and

teachers' directedness towards constructivist learning and teaching. Furthermore, the classroom should provide the necessary conditions which facilitate teachers' and learners' efforts to achieve their goals, "to provide different levels of distance or intimacy, different sizes of groups and different types of task" (Walker, 2007: 27).

The results of this work revealed that many teachers' efforts to rely on group and pair work are impeded by the large number of pupils in the classroom creating discipline problems and issues in space management. Thus, it is necessary to reduce the number of pupils per classroom; otherwise, teachers would probably continue their loyalty to traditional and authoritarian attitudes to keep order and discipline.

Another crucial factor is that the classroom should contain clearly defined spaces with clearly defined purposes which guarantee that learners will know the appropriate behaviour or demands of a given area. Indeed, a classroom should provide for example spaces for individual work, pair work, group work, learners with special needs, personal desks or rows (Quinn et al., 2000; Walker and Walker, 1991) without creating any kind of disturbance for the teacher, learners or other teachers coming next to teach the same class.

In addition, the classroom should provide teachers with the opportunity to have a clear view of all learners to make sure that eye contact, feedback, scaffolding, explanations and instructions are directed to all pupils without exception. Besides, the teacher will have the chance to observe who is working and contributing in a given task from the one who is doing nothing especially in group and project work. The way round is true; all pupils should have a clear view of their teacher (Quinn et al., 2000).

Motivating both teachers and learners and giving them meaning to what they do can be achieved through engaging them in the design of their schools and classrooms. While this seems difficult and far reaching, "initiatives which aim to encourage young people to actively participate in the design process are enacting



citizenship rather than teaching it through transmission, and are opportunities to re-engage students with learning” (McGregor, 2004: 357).

Recently, researchers emphasise that “learning opportunities can be woven into the structure of a school, making it an active space rather than passive space housing a disarray of ‘things’” (Keep, 2002: 1). The school building indeed should contain all what contributes in the development and construction of knowledge by learners. This includes language laboratories, sophisticated libraries, information systems and ICTs.

However, it is of paramount importance for secondary school teachers to receive education on how to use these technologies in their classrooms and how to make it beneficial in the learning process.

**4.5 Conclusion**

The current chapter provides some suggestions and recommendations on how to make constructivism take its real place in the Algerian educational system in general and the EFL classroom in particular. Indeed, the chapter emphasises the importance of preparing learners for constructivism through promoting their autonomy and responsibility and through showing them how to learn as part of SBI. On the other hand, teachers are required to be aware of the importance of learning theories in their teaching practices. Moreover, teacher education needs to be consistent with constructivism to give them necessary understanding and strategies for implementing constructivist approaches and methods in their classrooms. The EFL classroom should provide a space for constructivist learning and teaching as it relies on pair, group, and project works. The classroom should also be equipped with sophisticated and appropriate materials which are needed in a globalised world characterised by the large use of ICTs in individual's daily lives.

*General Conclusion*

## General Conclusion

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Globalisation continues to impose new demands on nations at all levels: economic, scientific, political, technological, and personal. In this new era, it is highly recognised that the purpose of education goes beyond enabling learners to memorise de-contextualised information and retrieve it later for use; rather, education empowers the learner with the necessary tools, skills, and competencies that allow him to face challenges of real life situations and to be active, effective and productive citizen.

For the sake of reaching these objectives, the Algerian educational system was reformed on the ground of constructivism as a learning theory that aims to make learners constructivist by taking more responsibility for their learning process and be autonomous. Their teachers are also supposed to rely on constructivism in their pedagogical practices. However, it is noticed that the educational system is failing the job since learners are relying on their teachers along the learning process and teachers are on the other hand unable to abandon their old practices in advantage of more constructivist teaching.

This research was a contribution to the current popular and academic debate surrounding reform in the Algerian educational system through the researcher's attempt to answer the following questions:

1. Are Algerian EFL learners autonomous and, therefore, ready to handle their learning process as required by constructivism?
2. Are Algerian EFL teachers ready to rely on constructivism in their teaching practices?
3. To what extent is the Algerian EFL classroom appropriate for creating constructivist learning/teaching environments?

The above questions led the researcher to formulate the following hypotheses:

## General Conclusion

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1. Algerian EFL learners do not seem to be autonomous and do not show readiness to handle their learning process.
2. Algerian EFL teachers are not enough ready to rely on constructivism in their teaching practices.
3. The Algerian EFL classroom is far from being appropriate for creating constructivist learning/teaching environments.

Therefore, the research was divided into four chapters; the first one dealt with theoretical considerations on constructivism. In the second chapter, the research gave a bird's eye view on the Algerian situation as it relates to constructivism and its practice in the EFL classroom. In addition to the situation analysis, necessary data were collected and then analysed in the third chapter. The last chapter provided some suggestions and solutions to overcome the drawbacks and shortcomings revealed in the previous chapter.

Through designing and conducting an exploratory case study, and after the analysis and triangulation of data gathered from different sources using a set of research instruments (a questionnaire for learners, a questionnaire for teachers, classroom observation, and an interview with a general inspector of English), the three hypotheses put forward were confirmed. The results revealed that third year literary pupils were not autonomous and therefore unready to handle their learning process as a pre-requisite for constructivist education. Learners were unable to get rid of their over-reliance on and over-dependency to their teachers who were the founts of knowledge for them. In their turn Algerian EFL teachers did not show enough readiness to rely on constructivist principles in their teaching practices due to several reasons. Indeed, they were unable to abandon their traditional roles and beliefs about the nature of teaching and learning due to a lack of education on such theory of learning and thus keeping their old practices by resisting change. On the other hand, the Algerian EFL classroom itself contributed to this resistance to change by teachers and learners alike. In fact, the results showed that the Algerian EFL classroom was far from being appropriate for creating constructivist

## **General Conclusion**

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learning/teaching environments; it was an over-crowded place where discipline problems impeded teachers to rely on constructivism in addition to the lack of equipment like ICTs which are integral components in constructivist learning/teaching environments.

This research seems to endorse the notions of constructivism and learner autonomy in the Algerian EFL classroom in particular and the educational system in general. Our argument is attached to the belief that understanding the rationale underpinning the CBA and learner-centeredness would probably provide teachers and practitioners with the necessary knowledge to choose among a wide set of teaching strategies and methods to ensure the effectiveness of our teaching practices and therefore attain the goals of educational reform. In fact, preparing teachers, learners, and the EFL classroom are integral components to this research and constitute a steppingstone to enhance constructivist and autonomous education in Algeria.

This research, which was a humble trial to contribute to the current debate surrounding constructivism and its role in guiding and shaping reform in the educational system, remains insufficient and incipient as the researcher has only skimmed superficially to the issue under investigation. Indeed, investigating a specific situation or phenomenon in the Algerian EFL context represented a high challenge due to the obstacles the researcher was trapped to; exploring the readiness of learners and teachers for constructivism in the EFL classroom was in some instances a daunting task for several reasons. The bureaucracy of administrations and schools was the most frustrating factor in this study as the researcher was excessively obliged to cope with an authoritarian attitude to have access to the place where the case study was conducted. In addition, the general inspector's interview was almost a dream due to the restrictions imposed on them against the idea of being interviewed which posed a number of questions about the extent to which educational authorities are ready to open the door for serious and fruitful discussions to overcome the issues our educational system suffers from.

## General Conclusion

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It is ethical to mention, however, that this research had limitations and that many aspects were neglected either because the researcher's unawareness of such issues as part of his non-perfectionist human nature or for some objective reasons. One should bear in mind that there are many factors which could contribute to the limitation of data, including the nature of the topic being tackled, the choice of the research method, the instruments, the sample population, and the context of the study. Indeed, constructivism is a diverse, dynamic, and difficult concept to define in only a few words, terms, and entities as it is governed by a variety of principles provided by several researchers in this area of investigation, and as it is the case, this research could not probably cover each and every single aspect in this multidimensional topic. Besides, the limitation of data was also attributed to the research method and the sample population being chosen; case study research is criticised by the fact that generalisations are not easily concluded especially when the sample population is approximately small. In fact, a sample of twenty-four pupils and fifteen teachers does not guarantee any attempt to generalise the findings to include a larger population like the one of Algerian EFL teachers and learners. In addition, observing one EFL classroom does not ensure that the same practices are common in other classes around the nation. Nonetheless, the results obtained gave insights into the teaching practices inside the EFL classroom and unveiled the cover on the obstacles and issues that secondary school teachers and learners face day-to-day. In fact, this research would spark another nationwide debate on how to make our educational system more efficient to graduate active, creative and productive citizens. The findings that the researcher came across, through this case study, revealed some of the major lacunas that existed before and during the whole process of reforming the Algerian educational system.

Constructivism is still a disputable term with many opponents who would remain faithful to their beliefs and attitudes which are in one way or another based on some educational theories and principles. Thus, what is the impact of constructivism on learners and teachers, what constructivist principles are more suitable for the Algerian sociocultural particularities, which ones are to be decided

## **General Conclusion**

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at bottom or top, what criteria policy-makers and education authorities in Algeria acknowledge whenever an educational reform is to be conducted are other issues that need to be investigated.

To conclude, one might argue that the educational reform, whatever its principles and motives are, is likely to be effective when it is grounded on double-way (top-down and bottom-up) collaboration amongst all the agents in a community where shared visions are to orchestrate their efforts to construct the road to the future.



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# *Appendices*



# Appendices

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## Appendix A: Pupils' Questionnaire

*Dear pupils,*

It would be a great pleasure if you can answer the present questionnaire which aims at collecting information about your readiness for constructivist learning. It also tries to investigate how your teacher's behaviour and the classroom setting may affect your move towards constructivist and autonomous learning.

*Please tick the appropriate answer which best fits your opinion (you can choose more than one answer) or answer freely.*

**Age:**      years

**Gender:**    Male                   Female

**Stream:** Literary and Philosophy     Literary and Foreign Languages

### I. Learners' beliefs about their readiness for autonomous learning

1/ Do you think learning English is?

Important                           Not important

why?.....  
.....  
.....

2/ what you learn in English sessions is:

Interesting      Yes       No

Relevant        Yes       No

Realistic        Yes       No

Authentic       Yes       No

3/Do you prepare your lectures at home?

Yes                   No

why?.....  
.....  
.....

## Appendices

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4/ Do you think you are able to study English by yourself?

Yes  No

If no, is it because:

The teacher knows better than you

You used to rely on your teacher

You don't know how to study by yourself

Your teacher does not give you the opportunity to study by yourself

5/ According to you, who takes more responsibility in the learning process?

The learner

The teacher

Both

6/ Do you think you are:

Able to prepare a project work

Not able to prepare a project work

why?.....  
.....  
.....

7/ which of the following decisions are you able to take in the classroom?

Deciding on the objectives of the lesson

Deciding on the time spent on each activity

Deciding on the learning materials (textbook, computers...) to use in the classroom

Deciding on the way of evaluation (tests, self-evaluation, peer-evaluation)

## Appendices

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### II. Teachers' behaviour in the classroom

8/ Did the teacher give you the opportunity to decide on any of the previous actions?

Yes  No

If yes, which one(s)?

.....  
.....  
.....

9/ Do you choose your sitting place in the classroom?

Yes  No

If no, who does.....

10/ in the classroom, do you have the opportunity to discuss about the lesson with your peers?

Always  Often  Sometimes  Rarely  Never

11/ Does the teacher give you time to think when he asks a question?

Always  Often  Sometimes  Rarely  Never

12/ Does the teacher accept your questions?

When you need clarification Yes  No

When you need explanation Yes  No

13/ Does the teachers accept your initiatives?

Proposals Yes  No

Comments Yes  No

Extra information Yes  No

Extra work (presenting something for example) Yes  No

## Appendices

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14/ when you make a mistake, who corrects you?

You correct yourself

Your classmates correct you

The teacher corrects you

15/ Does the teacher encourage you to prepare a project work?

Yes

No

### III. The appropriateness of the EFL classroom

16/ in the classroom, do you like to learn using:

Textbooks

Computers if they were available

Explain?.....  
.....  
.....

*Thank you for your collaboration*

# Appendices

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## Appendix B: Teachers' Questionnaire

Dear teachers,

You are kindly asked to answer the following questions which are designed to gather information on the readiness of both teachers and learners for constructivism in the Algerian EFL classroom as well as the appropriateness of the Algerian EFL classroom for constructivism.

Please tick the answer which best fits your opinion (you can choose more than one answer) or answer freely.

Gender: Male  Female

Age:

Teaching experience:

### I. Teachers' beliefs about learners' readiness for autonomous learning

1/ Do you think your pupils are ready to handle their learning process (be autonomous)?

Yes  No

Why?.....  
.....  
.....

2/ Do you think your pupils are:

Able to take decisions in the classroom

Not able to take decisions in the classroom

Why?.....  
.....

### II. Teachers' readiness for constructivism

3/ what do you think learning is?

An observable change in an individual's behaviour as a result of a given stimulus

The individual's to process and reorganise the given knowledge in his mind

## Appendices

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A process of active knowledge building based on previous knowledge and experiences

4/ what do you think teaching is?

To enable an individual to acquire the desired behaviour through shaping his behaviour with various reinforces and stimulus

To help the individual acquire various cognitive skills through pre-specified activities designed in a particular sequence

To create a learning environment which facilitates and helps an individual to build his own knowledge and work collaboratively with other learners

5/ which learning activities are present in your classroom?

Journal writing

Debates

Role playing

Creative activities (creating a slogan, a poem, a story, a song...)

Other (please specify).....  
.....

6/ in the classroom, do you rely on:

Group-work

Pair-work

Individual-work

Why?.....  
.....

7/ Do you rely on project work?

Yes

No

If no, why? .....  
.....

8/ what is (are) your role(s) in the classroom?

Controller

Manager

Guide

Assistant

Creator of an effective learning environment

## Appendices

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Other (please specify).....  
.....

9/ what roles do you assign to your students in the classroom?

Followers of your instructions and lectures

Active participants in the learning process

10/ Do you use ICTs (Information and Communication Technologies) in your classroom?

Yes  No

If no, why?

.....  
.....

11/ How do you evaluate your students?

Formal evaluation at the end of a lesson or unit

Evaluation during the learning process (journal assessment, peer-assessment, self-assessment...)

Other (please specify).....  
.....

12/ According to you, what is constructivism?

.....  
.....

13/ did you receive education on constructivism?

Yes  No

14/ If yes, give a percentage of the amount of that education in comparison to the whole teacher education programme:

Less than 5%

Between 5% and 25%

Between 25% and 50%

More than 50%

## Appendices

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15/ what are the main constructivist principles you have been educated on?

.....  
.....

16/ which one(s) among those principles you rely on in your classroom?

.....  
.....

### III. Teachers views about the appropriateness of the Algerian EFL classroom for constructivism

17/ According to you, the Algerian EFL classroom is:

Appropriate for collaborative learning

Not appropriate for collaborative learning

Explain.....  
.....

18/ is your classroom (or school) equipped with technology materials:

Yes  No

If yes, which one(s) .....

19/ Do you think the present Algerian EFL classroom is functioning according to constructivist principles?

.....  
.....

20/ what do you propose to implement constructivism in the Algerian EFL classroom?

.....  
.....

*Thank you for your collaboration*



## Appendices

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### Appendix C: Classroom Observation

Place: Colonel Abd Elhadi Secondary School

Class:

Date:     /     /2013

Time: from     to

Observation: 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup>/

#### I. Learners' Behaviour in the EFL Classroom

	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Learners choose where to sit					
The lesson's objectives are discussed with learners					
Learners prepared the lecture at home					
Learners choose how long to spend on each activity					
Learners choose which materials to be used					
Learners are interested					
Learners are motivated					
Learners participate					
Learners ask questions					
Learners work collaboratively					
Learners interact with each other					
Learners are disruptive					

## Appendices

Error correction is made by	The teacher					
	The learner					
	Peers					
Learners work on the project						

## II. Teacher's Behaviour in the EFL Classroom

		Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
The teacher gives learners control over the classroom						
The teacher accepts learner initiatives						
The teacher gives time for thinking						
The teacher uses cognitive terminology						
The teacher encourages autonomy						
The teacher encourages discussion						
The teacher encourages learner-learner interaction						
Peer teaching is allowed						
The teacher accepts errors						
The teacher plays the role of	Controller					
	Manager					
	Guide					
	Assistant					
	Creator of an effective environment					

## Appendices

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The teacher uses ICTs						
Assessment is interwoven with teaching						
Activities and experiences are	Authentic					
	Differentiated					
	Useful in real life					

### III. The Classroom Setting

		Yes	No
The classroom is organised			
The classroom is	Over-crowded		
	Large		
	Normal		
	Small		
The classroom is equipped with ICTs			

## Appendices

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### Appendix D: The General Inspector's Interview

1/ what is the definition of learning upon which the Algerian educational system has been reformed?

An observable change in an individual's behavior as a result of a given stimulus

The individual's to process and reorganise the given knowledge in his mind

A process of active knowledge building based on previous knowledge and experiences

2/ / what is the definition of teaching upon which the Algerian educational system has been reformed?

To enable an individual to acquire the desired behavior through shaping his behaviour with various reinforces and stimulus

To help the individual acquire various cognitive skills through pre-specified activities designed in a particular sequence

To create a learning environment which facilitates and helps an individual to build his own knowledge and work collaboratively with other learners

3/ According to you, what is constructivism?

4/ Do you think constructivist principles are applied in the Algerian EFL classroom?

✓ Why?

✓ How?

5/ Do you think our EFL learners are ready to handle their learning process (be autonomous) as required by constructivism?

✓ Why/ why not?

## **Appendices**

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**6/** Do you think teachers are ready to take the move towards constructivist classrooms?

**7/** is constructivism included in teacher education programmes?

**8/** if yes, which principles are emphasised?

**9/** Do you think the Algerian EFL classroom is appropriate for creating constructivist learning/teaching environments?

**10/** what do you suggest for constructivism to be successfully applied in Algeria?

## ملخص

شهدت المنظومة التربوية الجزائرية مع مطلع القرن الواحد والعشرين حركة اصلاح واسعة تم من خلالها تبني منهجية المقاربة بالكفاءات والتي تستلهم مبادئها من النظرية البنائية للتعليم. بناء عليه، تمثل هدف هذا العمل الذي أخذ شكل دراسة حالة في استقصاء مدى استعداد كل من المتعلم والمعلم لهذه النظرية في أقسام اللغة الانجليزية كلغة اجنبية (الأقسام النهائية للشعب الأدبية أنموذجا). أفضى تحليل المعلومات المستقاة من وسائل جمع المعلومات (استبيان للتلاميذ، استبيان للأساتذة، ملاحظة صفية، ومقابلة مع مفتش التعليم الثانوي للغة الانجليزية) الى أن كلا من المتعلم والمعلم لم يظهر استعدادا للنظرية البنائية. إضافة إلى ذلك، أقسام اللغة الإنجليزية لا توفر الشروط الملائمة لخلق بيئة بنائية تتطلب وتشجع استقلالية التلميذ أثناء العملية التعليمية. على أساس هاته النتائج تم اقتراح بعض الحلول لتجاوز المشاكل والعقبات التي تم اماطة اللتام عنها من خلال هذا العمل.

*الكلمات المفتاحية: النظرية البنائية، المقاربة بالكفاءات، استقلالية المتعلم، تكوين المعلم، قسم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية.*

## Summary

By the rise of the twenty first century, the Algerian educational system was reformed adopting the Competency-Based Approach inspired from constructivist learning theory. Thus, the aim of this work was to explore, through a case study design, the readiness of both learners and teachers for constructivism in the Algerian EFL classroom (3<sup>rd</sup> year literary classrooms). The analysis and triangulation of the data obtained from a set of research instruments (learners' questionnaire, teachers' questionnaire, classroom observation, and the General Inspector's interview) revealed that Algerian EFL learners and teachers are not ready for constructivism. Moreover, the Algerian EFL classroom is not appropriate for creating constructivist learning/teaching environments that require and encourage learner autonomy. On the ground of these findings, some solutions and suggestions were proposed to overcome the issues and obstacles unveiled by this work.

*Key words: Constructivism, CBA, learner autonomy, teacher education, EFL classroom.*

## Résumé

Au début du vingt et unième siècle, le système éducatif Algérien a été réformé adoptant l'Approche par Compétences qui est inspirée de la théorie d'apprentissage constructiviste. Ainsi, le but de cette recherche est d'explorer, à travers une étude de cas, si les élèves ainsi que les enseignants d'Anglais sont prêts pour l'application du constructivisme. L'analyse et la triangulation des données obtenues des instruments de recherche (questionnaire des élèves, questionnaire des enseignants, observation de classes, et interview de l'inspecteur général) ont révélé que les élèves et les enseignants ne sont pas prêts pour le constructivisme. En plus, la classe d'Anglais comme Langue Etrangère est inapproprié pour la création d'un environnement d'apprentissage/enseignement basé sur le constructivisme et l'autonomie de l'apprenant. Sur la base de ces résultats, certaines solutions et propositions ont été suggérées pour remédier les questions posées dans cette recherche.

*Mots clés: Constructivisme, approche par compétences, autonomie de l'apprenant, formation des enseignants, classe d'Anglais langue étrangère.*