Strategies Used By Local ESL Teachers in Malaysia to Create a Constructivist Classroom

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Abstract— **This paper presents how local ESL teachers in Malaysia create a constructivist classroom to instil higher-order thinking skills in students in the hope that the standard of English can indirectly improve. The aim of this paper is to identify if our local teachers are familiar with the constructivist theory in education; what are the strategies used to implement this theory and; what are the dilemmas faced in attempt to become a constructivist teacher. It is a mixed-mode research where six local secondary school teachers from the Klang Valley need to answer a survey which is linked to the semi-structured interview to find out if they really do understand and apply the theory in the classroom. It is found that despite claiming to use the constructivist strategy, majority of the participants tend to use a more teacher-centred approach as most do not have enough knowledge on the theory itself. This study implicates that students' proficiency level should be taken into account as a dilemma when applying the constructivist approach. This study hopes that the constructivist approach is being focused to vary language pedagogy and to develop programmes for teachers to apply it.**

Keywords-Constructivism theory, Constructivist teacher, strategies, dilemmas

I.   INTRODUCTION

English plays an important part in Malaysia, as every child should be at minimum, have bilingual proficiency. This shows that English is without a doubt important in Malaysia especially for academic and working purposes. However, it is well known that that the level of proficiency in the English language among our citizens is deteriorating albeit being considered as a second language in Malaysia and is supported by Nair, G. K. S., et al. (2012), who agrees that Malaysians English standard is declining in recent years. Take for example in year 2011, only 28% of students were able to achieve a minimum credit for their Cambridge 1119 standards in their SPM English paper (Malaysian Education Blueprint, 2013-2025). Muhammad Kamarul Kabilan (2007) said that in countries where English is not the native language, the teacher has to adopt effective teaching practices to ensure students' success in learning. In spite of this, a study done by Akademi Kepimpinan Pengajian Tinggi (AKEPT) at the

MOHE found out that only 12% of teachers utilised many best-practice pedagogies in their lessons; after observing 125 lessons in 41 schools across Malaysia in 2011 (Malaysian Education Blueprint, 2013-2025). This may imply that the standard of English is declining due to teachers' weaknesses in applying pedagogies to improve students' learning.

One of the ways to tackle this problem is by making sure we have "quality" teachers as Nair, G. K. S., et al. (2012) mentioned that many researchers, practitioners, policy makers and general public agrees that one of the best strategy to improve education is by improving teacher quality. The Malaysian Education Blueprint (2013-2025) supports this as it is mentioned that quality teachers who can use pedagogical approaches that are in line with international best practices are important.

Before the 21st century, behaviourism theory was used as a pedagogical approach and was ineffective for teaching in classrooms even after many years as teachers could have provided all the right behaviours according to the theory but students were still unable to develop an in depth understanding (Jones, et al., 2002). Which is why in the past few decades, educational theory is making a shift from a teacher-centred to a more student-centred approach where students become more active in their learning. This paradigm shift wants students to actively construct knowledge by themselves within the given learning environment and educators think the most suitable theory for this shift to happen is through constructivism theory (Liu & Matthews, 2005). This is in line with the Malaysian Education Blueprint's (2013-2025) aim where every student should have an inquisitive attitude and learn how to continue acquiring knowledge throughout their lives and to create knowledge. Constructivism can also help students to acquire important skills like communication, collaboration, critical thinking and creativity for them to become a 'whole-person' and more efficient when working in the future. Due to these reasons, it seems that the Constructivism pedagogical approach is one of the best

approach to be used in order to improve the standard of English in Malaysia.

Thus, it is important for "quality" teachers to be aware of what Constructivism is all about and what are the behaviours or strategies needed to become an efficient constructivist teacher. Applefield, et al. (2001) supports this by highlighting the importance of teachers understanding what constructivism means so that it can be used knowledgeably and effectively.

This is why in this paper we will first identify if teachers are familiar with the constructivism theory and find out how the concept is turned into practice so that the characteristics of teacher strategy in a constructivist classroom can be listed out for future references by other teachers who would like to adopt the constructivist concept. This paper would also like to know what are the common dilemmas faced by teachers when adopting this theory.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Overview of Constructivism

Before the study can go through what are the strategies needed to become a constructivist teacher, it is important to know what constructivism is all about. Constructivism based on Savery and Duffy (1995) is a philosophical view on how we understand or know after learning something new. This theory states that learners construct their own knowledge through experience and by reflecting on their background knowledge (Hein, 1991; Jones, et al., 2002; Gilbert, 2010).

In the Malaysian Education Blueprint (2013-2025), it was mentioned several times for students to have a higher-order thinking skills in the 21st century. This makes constructivism perfect as Lefoe (1998) shared that constructivism sees learning as an active process of constructing rather than acquiring knowledge. When students are able to construct their own knowledge and learn to understand, they will subconsciously use higher-order thinking skills like problem-solving, analysing, reasoning, synthesizing and much more. The use of constructivism to teach English language is also supported by Mvududu and Thiel-Burgess (2012) who mentions that despite the various approaches to teach English, constructivist approach seems to be most compatible for different kind of students with a diverse language background. This is why Malaysian English teachers should start using constructivism often as pedagogy to teach.

However, Jones, et al. (2002) noted that constructivism has few philosophical meanings of constructivism for example Cognitive Constructivism, Social Constructivism, Radical Constructivism, and Constructivist Epistemologies. This causes the word "constructivism" in language teaching and learning to be unclear as to which constructivism to use. Luckily it is already mentioned that in the constructivist education theory, only two main theories are used which are: cognitive and social constructivism (Mvududu & Thiel-Burgess, 2012; Gilbert, 2010; Kaufman, 2004). The combination of these two main theories to create a constructivist classroom gives advantage when teaching language as students are not only in charge of processing and organizing their thoughts but also able to communicate with peers and teachers to discover meaning and value (Gilbert, 2010).

Constructivist approach is also achievable for Malaysian classrooms as Gilbert (2010) examined the constructivist theory in both its cognitive and social forms through the context of a second language classroom. He found that overall, the teacher has to create an environment where students can experience meaningful situations to allow knowledge construction. This can be done by doing more collaborative learning, using authentic materials, and shifting roles in the classroom effectively.

B. Cognitive Constructivism

Cognitive Constructivism was developed by Jean Piaget who believes that learners must cognitively and actively construct their own meaning and process the information. One of Piaget's key concepts is about schematas. McLeod (2009) says that schema is a few mental ideas of the world that are associated with each other and are used to understand and respond to situations. These schematas are then formed through a process of assimilation and accommodation. Assimilation happens when the learner brings in new information and adds it to their existing schemata which is made within the learner. When a new information could not fit in to any of the learner's existing schemata, the learner will change the schema to adjust to the new information. This process is called accommodation. These two processes come hand in hand for learners to construct their own meaning. Gilbert (2010) mentions that the processes are done cognitively within the learner before it is socially expressed. As learners continue to assimilate and accommodate knowledge, equilibration comes in. Bhattacharya & Han (2001) says that equilibration is needed because as learners grow older, schemas also grow larger and learners need a balance between applying for assimilation to accommodating for new knowledge.

The key concepts in this theory are consistent with the Malaysian Education Blueprint's (2013-2025) aim where "every student are needed to master a range of important cognitive skills: creative thinking and innovation; problem-solving and reasoning; and learning capacity" (p.66). This is true because when language is

learned through context, students need to use their background knowledge (schema) to make sense of the information. As the student grow, the language input would become richer in terms of construction, vocabulary, grammar and so forth, hence equilibration is needed to retain all of these informations. Then only the student can use the knowledge of language in their writing and speaking more effectively to achieve the cognitive skills needed within the classroom context.

C. Social Constructivism

Social Constructivism was developed by Lev Vygotsky and McLeod (2007) said that this theory stresses on the role of social interaction in cognitive development. Which is supported by Vygotsky as cited by Gilbert (2010), who said that information are embedded with social elements which is why learners have to learn with or from other people. This shows that social learning comes before cognitive development. There are two main principles which determine the cognitive development of a learner: the More Knowledgeable Other (MKO) and the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). According to McLeod (2007), MKO refers to someone who has a higher ability level than a learner in a task, process or concept. The MKO could be teachers, parents, peers or even non-living things like an electronic tutor. The difference between what the learners can do independently and what the learner is capable of doing with help determines the Zone of Proximal Development. According to McLeod (2010), when teachers assist students appropriately when they are at the ZPD of a task, the "boost" is enough for them to achieve the task. This is supported by Liu and Matthews (2005) who states that learners are more interested with instructions that are within their ZPD because it represents the next logical step they can take for their skill development.

Communicating is important when teaching and learning language as it is developed from experience when students express their feelings, concerns and ideas. Which is why this theory is good as teachers can promote cooperative learning where students need to interact with each other to build up their knowledge. By doing so, teachers can have various activities to let students experience the English language differently. For example it can be done in groups or pairs for discussions, brainstorming, peer assessment, presentations, games and activities. For students who are less proficient in the language, the MKO and ZPD come in hand for teachers to apply in the classroom as well as their lesson plans.

D. Becoming a Constructivist Teacher

ESL teachers in Malaysia have a heavy responsibility ensuring students are well-developed and proficient in English to reach today's educational goals. In order to do so, teachers have to be effective themselves and know what kind of strategies to adopt for students to

be able to construct knowledge by themselves. Based on Marlowe and Page (2005, p.7-9) as cited by Gordon (2008, p.325), constructivist teachers will typically follow four principles as formulated below:

1. Constructivist learning is about constructing knowledge, not receiving it.
2. Constructivist learning is about understanding and applying, not recall.
3. Constructivist learning is about thinking and analysing, not accumulating and memorizing.
4. Constructivist learning is about being active, not passive.

However, these principles lack of detailed instructions on how to create a constructivist classroom (Windschitl, 2002). Applefield, et al. (2001) had similar thoughts saying that even though the concept of constructivism has been adopted for almost 30 years by teachers all over the world, it is often not fully understood. This causes teaching and learning in the classroom to be ineffective especially for language teachers as constructivism in education focuses more on science and mathematics (Kaufman, 2004). Malaysian teachers may have this very same problem since a study conducted by Thang (2001, 2003 & 2005) as cited by Thang and Azarina (2007) found that undergraduates of the National University of Malaysia tend to adopt a more teacher-centred environment when teaching in schools. Thang and Azarina (2007) further mentioned in their findings that their study suggests that a majority of UKM, UPM and OUM respondents are more teacher-centred. This shows that Malaysian teachers may have a weak understanding of the constructivism concept or are unsure on how to implement the pedagogy because according to Ryan and Cooper (1998) as cited by Rosnani Jusoh (2012), teachers who are weak in their pedagogical knowledge are more inclined to adopt the traditional method of teaching.

Although the constructivism approach may cause difficulty due to lack of instruction, Brooks and Brooks (1993) have developed 12 strategies on how constructivist teachers should behave. Below, the strategies are summarized into five points:

1. **Teachers must know that a student's point of view is always valuable.** When a constructivist teacher knows what their students are thinking, it is easier to plan lessons and use different medium of instructions to cater to their needs and interest.
2. **Students' thoughts and responses should be challenged.** When a constructivist teacher does this, it forces students to adapt their background knowledge and think in a different way. Once the knowledge is constructed, learning will happen. It can be done by asking a series of questions and assisting students in putting the thoughts together.

3. **Lessons should taught in context** because when students see relevance in the topic, their interest can grow.
4. **The learning cycle model is applied** where students are exposed to the concept as a whole first, before defining it based on their understandings from the activities and exercises given.
5. **Teachers should assess their students' learning continuously in the classroom** and not as separate events. Teachers should always take note of students' intelligence, creativity, responsibility and knowledge in different aspects to understand their learning needs better.

By having a guideline as such, it might make teachers more open to the idea of adopting the constructivist approach after learning and understanding about the theory more deeply. Yet, Normazidah et al. (2004) suggest that teachers might still refuse to use constructivism as one of the implication to the teaching pedagogy were how teachers focused more on how well students can perform in their examinations by using rote-learning and the mastery of specific language skills. Nevertheless, based on the education's goals today, the constructivist pedagogy is best suited for Malaysian's ESL classroom as it can build students' cognitive skills (Gilbert, 2010) and is compatible for students with a diverse language background (Mvududu & Thiel-Burgess, 2012).

Besides the strategies suggested, a constructivist teacher should also opt to apply information and communication technology (ICT) in their classrooms as it could help with students' knowledge construction by doing more research through the internet for a better understanding (Kaufman, 2004). This constructivist element is also in line with the Malaysian Education Blueprint's (2013-2025) aim to integrate ICT as much as possible in the education line as it may play a significant role in language learning, (Amelia, A. Rahman Sidek., & Melor Md Yunus, 2012) where the technology has innovated the students' learning styles (Melor Md Yunus, et al. 2009).

E. Dilemmas in becoming a Constructivist Teacher

Since the application of constructivism comes with a lot of ambiguity, it is important to take note of teachers' dilemmas to know what is preventing teachers from becoming a constructivist teacher. Brooks and Brooks (1993) said that some teachers are not keen with the constructivist approach due to three reasons: they are comfortable with the current teaching approach, worry if the approach is unsuitable for students' learning and fear that the classroom cannot be controlled. However, there are many different types of dilemmas or difficulties faced which is why it is important to know what may hinder Malaysian ESL teachers from adopting the constructivist approach.

In order to cover all of the possible dilemmas, Windschitl (2002) built four frames of dilemmas when practicing constructivism. The aim of his study was to find a connection among the main dilemmas to help teachers understand what kind of strategies are used to resolve dilemmas in one category by tackling other dilemmas. The first frame is conceptual dilemma where teachers are unable to fully understand the philosophical, psychological and epistemological of constructivism. Next frame is pedagogical dilemma where teachers find the approaches as difficult to be used when planning curriculum and adapting it in teaching. Third is cultural dilemma where there is uncertainty in classroom roles and expectations between teachers and students. Last is the political dilemma where teachers may be resisted from the participants in the educational enterprise like other teachers, school board members, administrators and others.

However, these dilemmas are aimed for constructivism as a whole and not specifically in language classrooms; thus there may be more dilemmas to cover. This is important to take note as most Malaysian classrooms are somewhere in between TESL and TEFL context (Saadiyah Darus, 2010) which may cause the dilemmas to be different than language classrooms in the western countries.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Participants

The participants are six ESL teachers from five different local secondary schools (SMK) within the Klang Valley in Selangor. The participants are from various ethnic backgrounds: Malay, Indian and Singh. They go by pseudonyms of Fasha, Nani, Kiran, Shamani, Samantha and Zaidah. They are aged from 24-60 years old with a minimum of two years of teaching experience. This is to ensure they have adopted several teaching strategies in their classrooms so that they are familiar with some of the strategies needed to become a constructivist teacher.

B. Research instruments

The first instrument is a questionnaire adopted by Brooks and Brooks (1993) on strategies used by constructivist teachers. Participants only need to tick for strategies they have applied in classrooms before. The teacher does not need to know about the constructivism theory as the strategies are explained with examples so that teachers may recall if they have used the strategies before.

The second instrument is a semi-structured interview. This instrument is used to know more in depth about participants' knowledge on constructivism theory; how they used the strategies from the previous questionnaire; what are their perceptions on strategies which they have not adopted before; and what are the dilemmas faced when using the constructivist approach. The main aim of the interview is meant to find

common constructivist strategies that are really used in the classroom and what are the dilemmas faced while adopting it.

C. Research Procedure

The researcher does both instruments with the participants individually. The researcher first let participants answer the questionnaire and did not mention anything about constructivism theory so that the participants will not feel pressured to tick most of the strategies. After the questionnaire is done, the researcher will proceed with the semi-structured interview which is meant to answer all of the research questions by using the questionnaire and a set of questions.

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

From the questionnaire and interview done by the participants, the findings are explained in detail below.

A. Familiarity with the Constructivist Theory

During the interview, each participant are asked if they have any knowledge on constructivism theory. Four out of six participants claimed that they knew what the Constructivism theory is about. These four participants also claimed to know the differences between Cognitive and Social Constructivism. However, when asked to explain further, Fasha was the only one who was able to explain about the theory. This is what the others had to say:

"Oh, I can't tell you exactly word for word what it is about. It's been so long since I last studied about all this." This was said by Samantha. Shamani also said something similar. On the other hand Kiran had an inkling what the theory is about:

"I think it is a theory on teaching strategies. Like, how to make it more about the students. I know the Social [Constructivism] is about communication and the other more about the way you learn or something..."

This shows that the majority of the participants are not knowledgeable enough about the constructivism theory. From here, it can be deduced that majority of the teachers will also have a tendency to adopt a more teacher-centred approach as they have a weak pedagogical knowledge (Rosnani Jusoh, 2012).

Fasha knows a lot about the theory because as a postgraduate student, she comes across this term a lot from journals, articles and books. The other participants however have not done any research on the theory. Zaidah even mentioned that,

"The government always introduces new concepts. It's so hard to keep up with all these new ideas so most of the time we just teach as we know and learn from each other to improve ourselves."

Based on the Malaysian Education Blueprint (2013-2025), teachers should teach using pedagogies that are at par with international standards; thus this response show ineffective teaching because majority of the participants may not prepare an instruction within the students' Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). This in turn will make students demotivated and discouraged to use the English language as it will seem unachievable (Liu & Matthews, 2005). Lack of familiarity with the theory may also trigger a lot of problems

to set the constructivist culture within the classroom as teachers are unsure of their roles (Windschitl, 2002).

B. Strategies Needed to Become a Constructivist Teacher

Next is to discuss about the teaching strategies used before in classrooms by the participants. When given the questionnaire, participants were not aware that these strategies are needed to become a constructivist teacher until the interview started. For this discussion, the results will be deduced from both questionnaire and interview.

TABLE I. NUMBER OF RESPONSES FROM THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Strategies that has been adopted by Malaysian ESL participants in classrooms before	Options	Number of responses n = 6
1. Encourage and accept student autonomy and initiative	Yes	5
	No	1
2. Use raw data and primary sources, along with manipulative, interactive, and physical materials	Yes	6
	No	0
3. Use terminologies such as "classify", "analyse", "predict" and "create" in lessons	Yes	4
	No	2
4. Allow students' responses to drive lessons, shift instructional strategies, and alter content	Yes	4
	No	2
5. Inquire about students' understandings of concepts before sharing your own understandings of those concepts.	Yes	3
	No	3
6. Encourage students to engage in dialogue, both with the teacher and with one another	Yes	6
	No	0
7. Encourage student inquiry by asking thoughtful, open-ended questions and encouraging students to ask questions of each other	Yes	5
	No	1
8. Seek elaboration from students' initial responses	Yes	3
	No	3
9. Engage students in experiences that might engender contradiction to their initial hypothesis and then encourage discussion	Yes	4
	No	2
10. Allow wait time after	Yes	5

posing questions.	No	1	
11. Provide time for students to construct relationships and create metaphors.	Yes	4	
	No	2	
12. Nurture students' natural curiosity through frequent use of the learning cycle model.	Yes	5	
	No	1	

After participants are done with the questionnaire, the researcher interviewed and asked if they knew what are the strategies needed to become a constructivist teacher. Four participants claimed that they knew and are using them in their daily lessons. The other two participants said they still used some of the strategies without knowing they are meant to create a constructivist classroom.

Based on the findings from the questionnaire, this may be true as all of the strategies that are needed to become a constructivist teacher have been adopted before by the participants. Although not all participants adopted all of the strategies above, four strategies were used by five participants while two strategies were used by everyone. This means that half of the strategies mentioned are being used by majority of the sample. This shows that the approach is indeed achievable. However, the effectiveness may not be achieved due to lack of knowledge (Gilbert, 2010).

This can be seen in Table I when although all participants claimed to teach more towards student-centred, only half of them inquire about students' understandings of concepts before sharing their own understandings of those concepts. By doing so, half of the participants are actually adopting the traditional method of teaching thus their initial claim of using a student-centred approach might be untrue. This also means that the learning cycle method may not be used in a ratio of 5:1 as shown in table 1. From the results, it seems that students are not able to use English to respond to situations thus the information cannot be accommodated and be part of their schema (McLeod, 2009; Gilbert, 2010); which is why the standard of English is dropping.

There is also another case of discrepancy where participants' answers from the questionnaire and in the interview are different. For example, four participants said they provided time for students to construct relationships and create metaphors in the questionnaire. Yet, three participants actually provide the metaphors for the students instead of the other way round as said clearly by Zaidah:
"Yes, yes, I will give them metaphors that are related with their own lives. I try to put everything in context so that they can relate better." When explained that the students were to create the metaphors themselves, all three participants said that the students do create the metaphor, but only after they give the example first as said by Samantha:
"The students do create it but I need to give the examples first because if not they won't understand." Although a constructivist teacher should teach in context, it is equally important for students to express their thoughts despite giving wrong answers (Brooks & Brooks, 1993).

What's more, when asked further, this statement is an assumption as she never really let them create the metaphor or construct relationships by themselves first; even for students that has high proficiency in English. Through this finding, it can be said that the half of the participants did not value students' point of view which causes students to become passive and only receive the information; this shows that majority of the participants are not able to become a constructivist teacher (Brooks & Brooks, 1993; Applefield et al., 2001; Gordon, 2008).

This also clearly shows a difference in perception between what the teachers think and what the teachers actually do. This is not a unique case because there was a study done between schools and JNJK to know what constitutes good teaching and learning. 63% of schools rated themselves as having good or excellent teaching and learning practices when in fact, school inspectors only agreed with 13% of the schools (Malaysian Education Blueprint, 2013-2025). This implies that teachers might think they already become a constructivist teacher, when in reality the pedagogy used is still very traditional. This could happen due to lack of pedagogical knowledge as discussed before by Windschitl (2002) and Rosnani Jusoh (2012).

Shamani and Nani mentioned something that is worth highlighting as shown below respectively:
"These strategies all I use a lot. As an experienced teacher, this all comes naturally over time but not all are used all the time in my lessons. Example, I cannot always ask my students to be independent in their learning. Sometimes I need to be in charge to make sure they really understand so that they can do well in their exams."
"Some strategies are not suitable with my students because of their proficiency level. So it's not that I <u>don't</u> use it but more because I <u>cannot</u> use it." Both participants are implying that even though they are aware some strategies are needed to become a constructivist teacher, not all strategies can be used all the time due to certain dilemmas faced. When asked further, four teachers admitted that sometimes rote-learning is easier to see how much students have learned to estimate how well they can do in their exams. Therefore, the implication by Normazidah et al. (2004) proved to be true who said that teachers wanted students to perform well in their examinations by using teaching pedagogies like rote-learning and the mastery of specific language skills. This situation is may also happen as suggested by Brooks and Brooks (1993) where teachers are comfortable with the current teaching approach.

Despite many flaws, all participants encourage their students to engage in dialogue, both with the teacher and with one another through activities like conversation, jigsaw reading, drama skits, presentations and so on. Fasha said that communication is important because,

"To me I don't like to tell my students everything because they should have a preconceived notion of what is going on so I always get them to talk about it with their friends first, meaning I want them to find out about a certain topic that I'm teaching before I actually explain. For example if you look at grammar, instead of looking at the grammar point, I will actually deduce from them in a sense giving them examples and get them to come up with the answer first before I explain the forms of it." All teachers also agreed that to make students communicate more, small group tasks are usually applied as an activity. This is supported by Vygotsky as cited by Gilbert (2010) who said that communicating is crucial in learning as informations are embedded with social elements. This shows that teachers favour the Social Constructivism more than the Cognitive Constructivism in their teaching which is wrong as both theories come together to become the constructivism used in education (Mvududu & Thiel-Burgess, 2012; Gilbert, 2010; Kaufman, 2004).

When asked how they encourage student inquiry, Kiran gave an interesting take on this matter.
"I always try my best to make them ask questions. Like when I tell a story, I'll only say it halfway. Or I try to make a statement that is untrue or not very clear so that they are forced to ask. But unfortunately, not all will. Only the same students will ask. The others will look quite annoyed actually. I guess this maybe a culture here. The students would rather listen to us talk than them participating." This is supported by Samantha and Nani who said that they need to prompt students so much to make them ask questions until sometimes they give up and just continue with the lesson. Zaidah also tried to challenge students' responses but most of the time as she put it, the challenge is not accepted. Brooks and Brooks (1993) suggested that constructivist approach is not often used, as teachers worry it is unsuitable for students' learning style. This may be true as Kiran mentioned, it is not the culture here for students to always talk more than the teacher making the execution of the approach harder. This is supported by Saadiyah Darus (2010) who said that non-western countries cannot follow western pedagogies blindly as the context may be different. However, based on the literature review, constructivist approach seems to be the best pedagogy to realise all of the education's goals. Especially since this approach may be suitable for different kind of students with a diverse language background (Mvududu and Thiel-Burgess, 2012). This shows that the approach is suitable for the Malaysian classroom, where majority is in between TESL and TEFL context (Saadiyah Darus, 2010).

As for sources meant for teaching, all participants use a variety of sources but most of them settle for exercise books and reference books that are close to the syllabus. Occasionally, articles or newspaper cuttings are used to manipulate context. This should not be the way as Gilbert (2010) said that drill exercises does not count as authentic material when teaching language. Applefield, et al. (2001) mentioned that one of the ways for easier access to authentic materials is through ICT. Sadly, all participants does not use ICT very often; thus students are unable to innovate their learning styles through the technology (Melor Md Yunus, et al., 2009). This also shows a disadvantage as ICT plays a significant role in language learning (Amelia A. Rahman Sidek & Melor Md Yunus, 2012).

C. Dilemmas Faced in Becoming a Constructivist Teacher

In terms of conceptual dilemma, it can be said that 5 out of 6 participants face disconnections between the theory and practice as mentioned previously. This comes back to the factor of weak pedagogical knowledge as suggested by Windschitl (2002) and Rosnani Jusoh (2012). Based on the interview done, majority of the participants' perception of student-centred learning is through group work, where most of the lesson time is given for students to be engaged in an activity. Yet, the activities lack in making students think for themselves. Thus, social constructivism is being used quite often in lessons but cognitive constructivism is not being applied as it should to create a real constructivist learning environment (Mvududu & Thiel-Burgess, 2012; Gilbert, 2010; Kaufman, 2004).

Pedagogical dilemmas are also faced as explained by Windschitl (2002). The interview found out that out of the four participants who claimed to know the theory, only one always tried to adopt the approach while the others only tried sometimes. The reason why these three participants only adopted it sometimes is because of time constraint. Furthermore, two participants were unsure if students understood what is being taught because the participants were not able to give the answers directly as usual. Two participants also feared that only the same students would participate while the others do nothing. Only one teacher feared that students might not participate in the activities properly.

From these four participants, only one admitted that sometimes the constructivist approach is not very effective in realizing the learning outcomes. The reasons given are: students did not participate very much in the activities; only a few students participated while the others kept quiet; students kept on asking for the answer instead of thinking or finding it by themselves and before the students are able to achieve the learning outcomes, the time has ended. It can be deduced that this approach may be unsuitable as described by Saadiyah Darus (2010). However, for most, this approach does help in realizing their learning outcomes as Fasha said:
"Definitely it does because if you do it in a more teacher-centred way you want them to be shaped according to you which is challenging because sometimes the learning outcome won't come out the way you want it to be. Plus I'll actually see the ability of my students beforehand and I try to apply according to the proficiency level so I do not think it is a challenge to realize the outcomes."
The usage of ICT is also a pedagogical dilemma among participants. Four out of six participants say they do not know how to use the ICT at all what more to integrate it in

lessons. This proves to be a disadvantage as ICT can be of great help to teachers who wants to adopt the constructivist approach. As cited in Melor Md Yunus, et al. (2013), Mullamoa (2010) remarks that, ICT is being implemented because it is not viewed as a conventional method but as an inventive method of teaching which could activate learning among students.

Cultural dilemma is also a problem where four out of six participants always find it a bit challenging to set the constructivist culture in the classroom. While interviewing Kiran, who claimed to know the theory and strategies needed, towards the end she admitted,
"Sometimes even though I know the theory roughly, it's hard to manage students' participation. Some batch are quiet no matter what. So when they are too quiet, I won't really know what to do except to give the answer straight."
This is also true for Zaidah who said that sometimes the approach is not very effective because she is unsure of how to continue the student-centred characteristic if students were not able to give the appropriate response to the topic taught. Still, this problem may surface as teachers lack knowledge of this approach or are not experienced enough to use this theory effectively (Brooks & Brooks, 1993).

From all the data gathered, the researcher noticed that political dilemma was not an issue among the participants. However, it should be noted that another dilemma is faced which is students' proficiency. This dilemma should be taken into account in language classrooms as it plays a big role on teachers' flexibility to teach using any pedagogy. Four out of six participants say that the constructivist approach cannot be applied all the time due to this dilemma. Five out of six participants say that this approach is more suitable for students with a high level of proficiency. This is true because in order for students to construct their own knowledge, they must have the schema to do so. The schema for language can only be obtained through constant communication which can only be applied for students with a strong English background within their community. Thus, students who are exposed to a community with weak foundation in English, may find constructivist approach difficult to adapt making learning also difficult. This was the incongruity discussed between western and non-western countries when using western pedagogies (Saadiyah Darus, 2010).

V. CONCLUSION

Feedbacks from the teachers showed that majority of the participants were not familiar with the constructivism theory causing teaching and learning to be ineffective. Participants think they are applying it but their behaviour is more towards teacher-centred strategie as they only focus on students completing tasks or activities from drill exercises. They think that by doing so, they are making the classroom student-centred without realizing that the core of becoming a constructivist teacher was not achieved.

Even though all strategies has been used before, most are executed unsuccessfully due to lack of knowledge and experience in using the approach. Participants especially do not know how to prompt students to find answers by themselves. This may be because participants did not prepare instructions that are within students' ZPD due to lack of knowledge. Since the ZPD and MKO element is missing, students may feel difficulty to take the next step in developing their skills). This could cause students to be less participative, making participants stump on what move to take next. Although participants do try to teach within the context, the activities given usually lack students' own innovation causing the learning capacity to be weak.

Once the problems in the strategies are identified, the dilemmas faced by teachers become clearer. Here are some of the dilemmas faced:
- Disconnection between the theory and practice
- Time constraint
- Unsure if students understand what was taught
- Problem with students' lack of participation
- Students are not used to constructing their own knowledge
- Unable to integrate ICT in lessons
- Unable to set the constructivist culture in the classroom

Based on all of the findings, despite having negative results, constructivist approach is still the best pedagogy to achieve the 21st century education. It is also clear that the main dilemma which cause all of the ineffectiveness is the disconnection between theory and practice. Thus it is suggested that all existing and soon-to-be-teachers to undergo a programme on how to use the constructivist approach. They are to learn and understand the theory and experience it first hand before learning how to apply it. Although the results of this study may be significant, it is limited to a number of factors such as sample population, design and instruments. Therefore, for further studies, these limitations should be taken into account.

Besides all that, the researcher would also like to suggest a new dilemma which is consistent with the language classroom needs: proficient level dilemma. This dilemma seems to affect participants in teaching as it could cause teachers to run out of time and unable to elicit responses needed from students to achieve the learning outcome. This dilemma may also cause the confusion whether or not this approach is suitable with our students' learning styles.

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