

## **Constructivist Approach to Language Learning: Linking Piaget's Theory to Modern Educational Practice**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study aims to explore the application of the constructivism approach in language learning by connecting Jean Piaget's theory of cognitive development with modern educational practices. Constructivism theory emphasizes that learning is an active process in which students build knowledge through experience and interaction with the environment. In the context of language learning, this approach is considered relevant to increase student engagement and support more meaningful learning. This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study design, involving in-depth interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. Participants consisted of 10 teachers and 20 students who were selected by purposive sampling based on their experience in applying constructivist learning methods. The results show that the constructivism approach can increase students' active participation, improve critical thinking skills, and provide a more contextual and relevant language learning experience. Teachers who apply Piaget's principles, such as experiential learning, reflection, and collaboration, report increased student learning motivation. However, challenges in implementing this method include time constraints, a rigorous curriculum, and a lack of support resources for project-based learning. The study concludes that although constructivist approaches have great potential in language learning, further support is needed in terms of curriculum flexibility and resources. Recommendations for educators include increased use of technology and project-based teaching strategies to support more interactive and participatory language learning.

**Key words:** constructivism, language learning, modern education, active learning.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Language learning is a crucial aspect in education that affects an individual's ability to communicate and understand the world around them. In the context of modern education, a constructivist approach rooted in Jean Piaget's theory offers a new perspective on how language knowledge is developed. Piaget (1982) Piaget, a leading developmental psychologist, posited that knowledge is actively built by individuals through direct interaction and experience with their environment. These principles of constructivism propose that learning not only occurs passively through the reception of information (Piaget & Vygotsky, 2016), but also through an active process in which students construct their own knowledge based on personal

experience and reflection (Papert, 1999). Against this background, this study aims to explore how constructivist approaches can be applied in language teaching to enhance learning effectiveness in the modern educational era. Although the theory Constructivists have been widely accepted in various educational disciplines, their application in the context of language learning often requires adjustment to existing teaching practices (Nurhayati et al., 2024). This research focuses on how Piaget's principles can be integrated with modern methods and technologies to create a more interactive, relevant, and contextual learning environment for students.

By the development of technology and more diverse educational approaches, it is important to understand how constructivist theory can adapt to the needs and challenges of today. This research will examine various constructivist-based learning strategies that can be applied in language teaching, including the use of digital technology, project-based learning, and differentiation approaches in accordance with Piaget's principles. In addition, this study will investigate the challenges that may be faced in implementing this approach, as well as how to adapt the curriculum and assessments to support more effective language learning.

Thus, this research is expected to make a significant contribution to the understanding and application of constructivism theory in language learning, as well as offer practical recommendations for educators and education policymakers in optimizing language teaching practices in the modern era.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Previous Related Study

The research conducted by Johnson et al. (2021), entitled "The Impact of Constructivist Teaching on Language Learning: A Study of Piagetian Theory Applied in a Modern Classroom" published in the *Journal of Educational Research*, explores the impact of the application of Piaget's theory-based constructivist approach to language learning in modern classrooms. This study applies various constructivist strategies in United Kingdom language teaching and measures their influence on students' language skills, motivation, and engagement. The results show that constructivist principles can significantly improve students' language comprehension and engagement, as well as support the development of important metacognitive skills. This study provides empirical evidence on the effectiveness of constructivist approaches in the context of language learning by linking Piaget's theory with modern educational practices. Moreover, Research by Ogunsina et al. (2022), titled "Constructivist Approaches in Language Education: Bridging Piagetian Concepts with Contemporary Teaching Practices" published in *Language Teaching Research Quarterly*, examines the application of Piagetian concepts in constructivist approaches to language teaching and how these principles are applied in contemporary educational practices. This study evaluates the various constructivist methods used in language classes and their impact on the development of language skills, learning strategies, and academic outcomes of

students. The findings of this study show that a constructivist approach that integrates the Piagetian concept supports more active and reflective learning, as well as improves students' overall language skills. This study provides insight into how Piagetian concepts can be integrated with modern language teaching practices and their impact on learning effectiveness.

### **Language Learning**

Language learning is the process by which individuals acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to understand, speak, read, and write in a particular language. This process involves the development of four key skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Azizah & Maunah, 2020; Christison & Bassano, 2005). In language learning, a person not only learns vocabulary and grammar, but also how to use the language effectively in various communication contexts (Astirini Swarastuti et al., 2024; Bonar Siagian & M Bambang Purwanto, 2023). In addition, language learning also includes understanding the cultural and social context related to the language being studied, such as norms, habits, and values that affect the use of the language (Budiyanto et al., 2024; Dacholfany et al., 2024). A variety of methods and approaches, such as hands-on, task-based, or constructivist learning, are used to achieve varied learning goals, ranging from basic communication skills to language mastery for academic or professional purposes. Thus, language learning is a multifaceted process that helps individuals to function effectively and adapt to the context of a new language.

### **Theory of Constructivism**

Constructivism theory is an approach in educational psychology that emphasizes that knowledge is actively built by individuals through experience and interaction with their environment, rather than being passively received from external sources. Harapan et al. (2024) Based on this view, learning is an active construction process in which students relate new information to existing knowledge, developing their understanding through exploration, reflection, and discussion. Jean Piaget, one of the leading figures in constructivism theory, posited that cognitive development occurs through certain stages, during which individuals gradually build more complex mental structures (Muzakki et al., 2021; Nicolini, 2010; Papert, 1999). In the context of language learning, constructivism theory encourages approaches that focus on students' active involvement in the learning process, such as through relevant tasks, problem-solving, and discussions, to help them build and deepen their understanding of language (Purwanto et al., 2024; Ridayani & Purwanto, 2024; Rosyidin & Purwanto, 2024). By applying constructivist principles, language learning becomes more interactive and contextual, allowing students to integrate new language skills into the knowledge they already have and develop more effective and independent communication skills.

## **METHOD**

## **Design and Samples**

This study uses a qualitative approach to explore the application of constructivism theory in language learning, focusing on how Piaget's principles can be integrated with modern educational practice. The qualitative approach was chosen because it allows researchers to gain an in-depth understanding of the experiences, perceptions, and interpretations of teachers and students towards the application of constructivist approaches in the language teaching and learning process.

This study uses a case study design, which involves direct observation in the classroom, in-depth interviews with teachers and students, and analysis of related documents, such as syllabus, lesson plan (RPP), and learning materials. The case study was chosen because it allows for an in-depth analysis of the application of constructivist approaches in the context of specific language education. The participants in this study are language teachers in high schools and language program students in universities who apply a constructivist approach in teaching. A total of 10 teachers and 20 students were selected by purposive sampling, which is a sampling technique selected based on certain criteria, such as teachers' experience in applying constructivism theory and students who are active in project-based or collaborative learning.

## **Instrument and Procedure**

- **In-Depth Interviews:** Interviews are conducted with teachers and students to explore their experiences, challenges, and perceptions about the application of constructivism theory in language learning. Semi-structured interviews are chosen to provide flexibility in exploring various topics that arise during the discussion.
- **Classroom Observation:** Classroom observation is carried out to see firsthand how the constructivist approach is applied in the language learning process. This observation involves recording learning activities, interactions between teachers and students, and the use of constructivist-based learning strategies.
- **Documentation:** Related documents, such as syllabus, lesson plans, and teaching materials, are analyzed to understand how constructivist principles are applied in the planning and implementation of language learning.

## **Data Analysis**

The data collected was analyzed using thematic analysis methods. This process involves coding the data to identify key themes that emerge from interviews, observations, and documentation. These themes are then used to draw conclusions about the effectiveness and challenges of applying a constructivist approach in language learning. The validity of the data is maintained through triangulation, which is comparing the results of interviews, observations, and document analysis

to ensure consistency of findings. In addition, member checking is carried out by confirming the results of interviews with participants to ensure that the researcher's interpretation is in accordance with their experience and views. This research is expected to provide rich insights into the application of constructivism theory in language learning as well as the challenges faced in adapting this approach in the context of modern education.

## RESULT AND DISUSSION

This research discusses the application of the theory of constructivism put forward by Jean Piaget in the context of modern language learning. Through this approach, students are expected to be able to build knowledge independently through active interaction with their learning environment. The results of the study include the following points:

### 1. Improving Language Skills through Active Learning

The results of the study show that the application of constructivism theory, especially developed by Jean Piaget, encourages students to be more active in the language learning process. Students who are engaged in the process of self-discovery through exploratory activities, such as group discussions, collaborative projects, and problem-based learning, show significant improvements in language skills, including grammar comprehension, vocabulary, and speaking ability.

**Table 1. Improving Language Skills through Active Learning**

Active Learning Aspect	Explanation	Improving Language Skills
Self-Contained Knowledge Construction	Students actively build language knowledge through exploration and hands-on experience.	Students better understand language patterns independently, such as grammar and vocabulary, through real-world practice.
Contextual Learning	Language is learned in the context of real-life situations that are relevant to students' lives.	Students can apply language in real-life situations, such as everyday conversations or simulations.
Collaboration and Social Interaction	Students work in groups or interact with classmates to learn a language together.	Speaking and listening skills are improved through direct interaction in the target language.
Reflection and Problem Solving	Students are asked to reflect on their use of the	Students are more critical in evaluating

	language and solve language problems.	their language usage, correcting mistakes, and enriching vocabulary.
Feedback and Self-Adjustment	Students receive feedback from teachers and classmates, then adjust their language usage.	Students are able to correct mistakes independently and develop language skills more appropriately.

Students actively build knowledge through direct interaction with their environment, rather than passively receiving information (Taufiqi & Purwanto, 2024). This approach emphasizes independent knowledge construction, where students discover language rules and patterns through practical experiences like speaking, reading, and writing (Umar et al., 2023). Instead of merely memorizing grammar and vocabulary, learners engage in contextual activities, such as creating dialogues or scenarios, to deepen their understanding. Contextual learning further enhances language skills by immersing students in real-life situations, helping them apply language functionally (Angraini, 2023).

Collaboration and social interaction also play a key role in active language learning, as group conversations promote speaking and listening practice while fostering peer learning. Additionally, problem-solving tasks and reflection help students analyze language structure, identify mistakes, and learn from them. Feedback from teachers and classmate's aids in self-adjustment, allowing students to refine their language use over time. Overall, constructivism enables learners to develop language skills through independent, contextual, collaborative, and reflective learning, making the process more relevant and meaningful to everyday life.

## 2. Development of Deeper Cognitive Skills

The constructivist approach, which focuses on students' cognitive processes, allows them to build new language knowledge based on existing understanding. This is in line with Piaget's stages of cognitive development, which help students move from concrete thinking stages to abstract thinking. The results indicate that students who learn through this approach are able to develop analytical and synthesis skills in the language they are learning, so that they are able to understand the structure of the language better.

**Table 2. Development of Cognitive Skills in Constructivism Theory**

Aspects of Cognitive Skills	Explanation	Impact on Language Skills Development
Stages of Cognitive Development	Students follow the stages of Piaget's cognitive development, from concrete	Students can understand more complex language concepts such as

	understanding to abstract understanding.	sentence structure and grammatical rules.
Old and New Knowledge Connectivity	Students connect knowledge of a new language with experience and knowledge they already have.	Students can more easily internalize new vocabulary and grammatical patterns in more depth.
Analytical and Synthetic Thinking	Students are invited to think critically and analytically to solve language problems and understand language structures.	The ability to analyze text, make inferences, and build arguments in the target language is improved.
Reflective Process	Students independently reflect on their learning, including the use of language.	Students are able to recognize shortcomings and correct language errors independently, improving comprehension.
Independent Cognitive Exploration	Students are encouraged to explore and discover language knowledge through hands-on experience.	Students are more independent in language learning, able to find language solutions without relying entirely on teachers.

The development of deeper cognitive skills is one of the important aspects of the theory of constructivism put forward by Jean Piaget. This theory emphasizes that learning is not just memorizing information, but an active process in which students are involved in the formation of knowledge based on their experiences. In this context, language learning prioritizes activities that involve students in exploration, reflection, and discovery, so that their cognitive abilities develop in depth and continuously.

At the beginning of the discussion, in Piaget's view, cognitive skills develop through certain stages starting from concrete understanding to the ability to think abstractly. In language learning, students initially understand basic elements of language such as vocabulary or simple sentence structure. As they develop, these abilities improve into more abstract and complex understandings, such as understanding contextual meanings, symbolism in texts, or the use of figurative language. This stage of development allows students to build language knowledge gradually and deeply, according to their cognitive abilities.

The second stage, constructivism theory emphasizes the importance of connecting new knowledge with old knowledge that students already have. In the process of

learning a language, students do not learn new words or grammar separately, but rather they associate them with the information they already have. For example, a student might associate a new vocabulary with concepts they have learned in a native language or life experience. By connecting old and new knowledge, students can strengthen their understanding and build deeper, more structured language skills.

Then, critical and analytical thinking skills become central to deeper cognitive development. In language learning, students are trained to analyze language patterns, make interpretations, and construct meanings from texts or conversations. For example, when students solve problems in understanding complex texts or writing essays in the target language, they use analytical thinking to understand sentence structure and patterns. This ability not only deepens their mastery of the language, but also develops their cognitive skills in structuring arguments, solving problems, and thinking logically.

Furthermore, self-reflection is also an important component in cognitive development. Students who learn with a constructivist approach are invited to actively reflect on their own learning experiences. For example, after writing or speaking in the target language, they are given the opportunity to reflect on the mistakes they made, correct them, and formulate strategies to improve their abilities. This process of reflection encourages students to become independent learners, increase their awareness of the learning process, and develop higher-order thinking skills.

Finally, one of the advantages of the constructivism approach is that it encourages independent exploration in learning. Students are given the opportunity to explore language through creative activities such as projects, simulations, or the use of digital resources. This exploration process encourages students to discover new information, make connections, and overcome language challenges independently. In this case, their cognitive skills develop as they learn to take initiative, test hypotheses, and develop effective learning strategies.

The development of deeper cognitive skills in constructivism theory focuses on an active, reflective, and connected learning process with the student's experience. In language learning, this approach helps students develop critical, analytical, and reflective thinking skills that allow them to understand and use language more effectively. By connecting new knowledge with old knowledge, as well as through exploration and problem-solving, students not only master language mechanically, but also deeply, enriching their thinking and creativity abilities.

### **3. Increasing Students' Motivation and Participation**

The application of constructivism-based learning turns out to have a positive impact on student motivation. Students who are given the freedom to explore, interact, and find solutions on their own are more motivated to actively participate in language



classes. They feel that the language they learn becomes more relevant and useful in the context of their daily lives. In addition, the use of technology and digital tools also supports their involvement in learning.

**Table 3.** Increasing Students' Motivation and Participation

<b>Aspects</b>	<b>Explanation</b>	<b>Impact on Student Motivation and Participation</b>
Project-Based Learning	Students engage in real projects that are relevant to everyday life.	Students are more motivated because they see the connection between the subject matter and real-world applications.
Positive and Constructive Feedback	Teachers provide constructive feedback and motivate students to continue learning.	Students are more confident and encouraged to actively participate in class.
Electives in Learning	Students are given the freedom to choose a topic or learning method that suits their interests.	Students are more enthusiastic and motivated because they feel they have control over the learning process.
Group Collaboration	Students work together in groups to complete an assignment or project.	Participation increases because students feel supported by peers and learn in a social setting.
Challenges that Match Your Ability	Learning using technology tools such as videos, simulations, and interactive applications.	Students are more motivated because they feel able to achieve their goals without feeling burdened.
Use of Technology and Interactive Media	Learning using technology tools such as videos, simulations, and interactive applications.	Students are more interested and actively involved in learning because of the use of interesting media.
Recognition and Awards	Teachers give awards for students' efforts and achievements, both individually and in groups.	Students are more interested and actively involved in learning because of the use of interesting media.

Student motivation and participation are essential to achieve optimal learning outcomes. There are various approaches that can be used to improve these two aspects in the learning process. Project-Based Learning, This method involves students in real projects that are relevant to their daily lives. By connecting the subject matter with the real world, students feel more motivated because they see the practical value of what they are learning. For example, in language learning, students can be given the task of creating a scenario or writing an article related to a topic they are interested in. This motivates students to be more active because they feel they are learning with clear and relevant goals.

Then, the feedback provided by the teacher can be the main driver in increasing student motivation. When students receive positive feedback accompanied by constructive suggestions, they feel rewarded for their efforts and are encouraged to improve on weaknesses. This feedback also helps students to be more confident and motivated to participate more actively in discussions or classwork. Providing students with choice in the learning process, whether in the topics studied or the methods used, increases their sense of responsibility and control over learning. Students feel more engaged and motivated because they can choose topics that interest them or methods that suit their learning style. For example, students can choose whether they want to create a presentation, video, or essay as a final assignment.

Furthermore, collaborative learning or group work allows students to cooperate with their peers. In a supportive atmosphere, students are more motivated to participate because they feel supported by other members of the group. This collaboration not only increases engagement but also helps them in building social and communication skills. It is very important to provide assignments or challenges that are appropriate to the student's ability level. If the task is too easy, students will get bored quickly, while if it is too difficult, students can feel frustrated. By providing balanced challenges, students feel able to achieve their goals, which ultimately increases their motivation to continue participating in learning.

The use of technology in learning, such as videos, interactive applications, and simulations, makes the learning process more engaging for students. This medium not only increases participation but also makes students more enthusiastic about learning as they engage with more interactive and visual content. For example, in language learning, the use of applications for conversation simulations or vocabulary exercises can increase students' interest, and finally Giving recognition for students' efforts and achievements, both individually and in groups, is one of the effective ways to increase motivation. By giving an award, such as praise in class or a symbolic award, students feel valued and recognized for their efforts. This encourages students to continue to actively participate in learning because they know that their efforts are recognized. By implementing these strategies, teachers can create a learning environment that supports increased student motivation and participation. This will not only enrich the learning experience of students, but also encourage them to be more active and involved in the overall learning process.

#### 4. Improvement of Metacognitive Abilities

The results of the study also show that constructivism-based learning helps students develop their metacognitive skills, namely the ability to reflect and organize their own thought processes. Students learn to understand how they learn a language, what they need to achieve a better understanding, and how they can implement more effective learning strategies.

**Table 4. Improvement of Metacognitive Abilities**

<b>Metacognitive Aspects</b>	<b>Explanation</b>	<b>Impact on Student Learning</b>
Self-Awareness in Learning	Students recognize how they learn, what they understand, and what is still difficult to understand.	Students are more directed in learning, able to determine more effective learning strategies.
Learning Strategy Planning	Students can plan learning steps to achieve specific learning goals.	Students are more prepared and organized in the learning process, and able to manage time and assignments well.
Learning Progress Monitoring	Students monitor their progress in understanding the material and evaluate whether the learning methods used are effective.	Students can make adjustments in learning methods if they feel that they are ineffective, so that learning outcomes increase.
Reflection on Learning Outcomes	Siswa merefleksikan hasil belajar mereka untuk memahami apa yang berhasil dan apa yang perlu diperbaiki.	Students become more critical of their own learning outcomes and more responsible for learning progress.
Use of Flexible Learning Strategies	Students can tailor their learning strategies to different assignments or materials.	Students are more adaptive and flexible in facing diverse learning challenges, increasing learning effectiveness.
Managing Emotions During Learning	Students are able to manage emotions, such as frustration or boredom, that can hinder the learning process.	Students remain motivated and focused despite difficulties, so they can complete assignments well.

## 5. Difficulties in Implementation in Certain Contexts

Although this study generally shows positive results, there are several challenges in the implementation of the constructivism approach. Among them, limited time and resources are the main inhibiting factors. Teachers need longer time to design and manage constructivist learning activities that suit the needs of students. In addition, not all students can easily adjust to this learning method, especially those who are used to conventional learning that is more structured and focuses on memorization.

**Table 5. Challenges in the implementation of constructivism approaches**

<b>Context</b>	<b>Difficulties in Implementation</b>	<b>Impact</b>
Project-Based Learning	Difficulty aligning projects with rigid curriculum or limited learning schedules.	Lack of optimal student involvement and limited time to explore the material thoroughly.
Difficulties in Implementation	Limited access to technology, lack of training for teachers, or less supportive infrastructure.	Learning becomes uneven, with some students being less engaged and missing out on the material.
Difficulties in Implementation	Difficulties in time and role management, as well as imbalances in contributions between group members.	Students feel frustrated, not all members are actively involved, and group results are not optimal.
Differentiated Learning Strategies	Challenges in adapting materials for each level of student ability in a class.	Students with low or high abilities feel neglected, so they are less motivated.
Self-Reflection and Monitoring	Not all students have the ability to reflect or monitor progress independently.	Students are less aware of weaknesses and difficulties in learning, so they do not make improvements.
Active Learning in Large Classes	Difficulty in monitoring the active participation of all students in a large class.	Some students may be passive or do not get adequate attention from teachers.

In the implementation of various learning methods, there are several difficulties that may arise depending on the specific context, and each of these difficulties can affect student learning outcomes (Armstrong, 2000). Project-based learning often faces

challenges in aligning projects with rigid curricula or limited learning schedules. This can result in a lack of optimal student engagement and limited time to thoroughly delve into the material, which in turn can reduce the effectiveness of the project (Asysyauqi & Arifin, 2023).

The use of technology in learning can be hampered by limited access to technological devices, lack of training for teachers, or inadequate infrastructure. These difficulties can result in unevenness in the learning process, with some students being less involved and experiencing difficulties in following the material presented. In the context of collaboration within a group, problems often arise in terms of time management, roles, and unbalanced contributions between group members. This imbalance in contributions can cause frustration among students, make some group members feel neglected, and result in less than optimal group work (Praditya, 2022).

Differentiated learning strategies face challenges when adapting materials for different levels of student ability in a single class. Difficulties in this regard can result in students with low or high abilities feeling neglected, which can reduce their motivation and involvement in the learning process (Rahayuningsih & Iskandar, 2022). Self-reflection and monitoring can also be problematic if not all students have the ability to reflect or monitor progress effectively (Rifad et al., 2023). Without this ability, students may not be aware of the weaknesses and difficulties in their learning, so they may not make the necessary improvements.

Finally, in the context of active learning in large classes, the difficulty of monitoring the active participation of all students in large classes can result in some students becoming passive or not getting adequate attention from teachers (Purwanto, 2023). This can reduce student engagement and hinder the achievement of optimal learning outcomes. Overall, these difficulties require proper attention and coping strategies so that learning can take place effectively and all students can be well involved in the learning process. From the explanation above, it is explained that the constructivism approach in language learning, when applied well, can result in a significant improvement in students' language skills, motivation, and deeper cognitive understanding. Despite the challenges in implementation, this approach provides a strong foundation for more effective and relevant language education in the modern context.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study shows that a constructivist approach based on Jean Piaget's theory can significantly increase the effectiveness of language learning. By emphasizing active experience and reflection, this approach allows students to build their language knowledge in a more in-depth and contextual way. The implementation of Piaget's principles in modern educational practice has been shown to support the development of deeper cognitive skills, including critical and analytical thinking skills. In addition, this approach has also succeeded in increasing student motivation

and participation through the freedom to choose topics and learning methods, as well as involvement in projects that are relevant to their daily lives. Students' metacognitive abilities, such as planning, progress monitoring, and reflection, also improved as a result of implementing constructivist strategies. However, this study also identifies some limitations in its implementation. The application of Piaget's theory in various learning contexts often faces challenges, especially in rigid curricula, time constraints, and inadequate infrastructure. The effectiveness of this approach also depends heavily on teacher training and readiness; Without adequate understanding, teachers may have difficulty in applying the principles of constructivism effectively. In addition, differences in students' abilities can affect learning outcomes if the approach is not tailored to individual needs. Assessment in the context of constructivist learning, which often focuses on metacognitive processes and skills, can be difficult to measure objectively, which can affect student motivation and engagement. In conclusion, although the constructivist approach brings many benefits, challenges in implementation and assessment need to be considered to maximize student learning outcomes.

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