

## **UNIT: 3.MAJOR APPROACHES OF TEACHING ENGLISH**

### **Structure**

3.1. Introduction

3.2. Objectives

3.3. Structural Approach

3.3.1. Principles

3.3.2. Aims

3.3.3. Merits

3.3.4. Demerits

3.4. Situational Approach

3.4.1. Characteristics

3.4.2. Merits

3.4.3. Demerits

3.5. Communicative Approach

3.5.1. Characteristics

3.5.2. Merits

3.5.3. Demerits

3.6. Constructive Approach

3.6.1. Principle

3.6.2. Merits

3.6.3. Demerits

3.7. Let us sum up

3.8. Questions for reflection

3.9. Answers of check your progress

3.10. References and Suggested reading

---

### **3.1. Introduction**

---

In the previous unit, we studied about some methods that are used in teaching of English. These methods have been tried out earlier with varying degree of success. The common aspect of these is that certain important features of the methods have been totally absorbed in the pedagogy.

In this unit we will be discussing about some approaches used in teaching of English such as structural approach, situational approach, communicative approach and constructive approach.

---

### **3.2. Objectives**

---

After going through this unit you will be able to

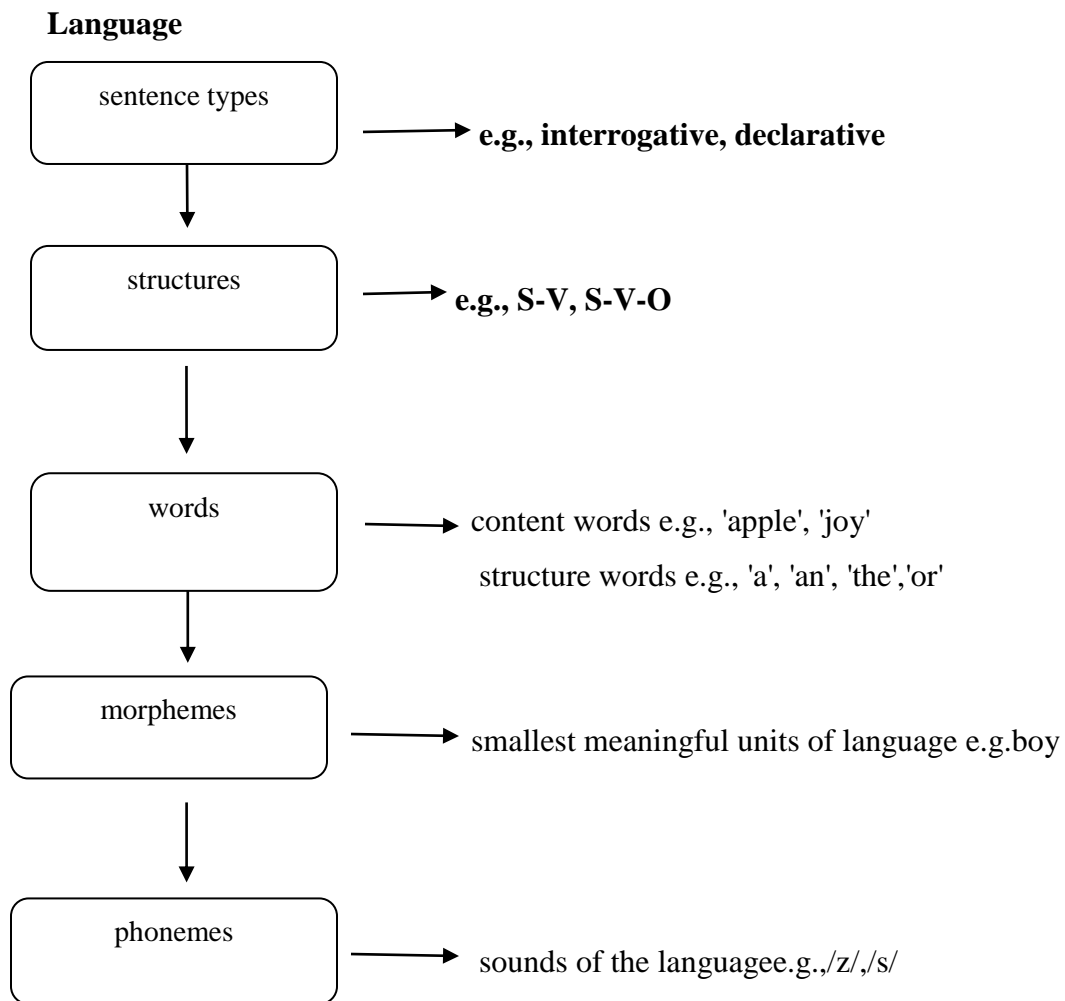
- define different approaches of teaching.
  - explain merits and demerits of different approaches.
  - use different approaches contextually
- 

### **3.3. Structural Approach**

---

It is also known as Aural-oral Approach. Each language has its own pattern of structure. The structural approach is an outcome of the experiments carried out in language teaching in the army campus during World War II. Meaningful words are used in particular order. Every structure embodies an important grammatical point. A sentence needs a grammatical background. The different arrangements or patterns of words are called structures. Here words are used in particular order to convey their sense and meaning. In this way structures are the tools of language and should not be confused with sentences. According to Brewington

"Structural approach is a scientific study of the fundamental structures of the English language, their analysis and logical arrangement". The structural approach to English is teaching the learner certain selected structures in a certain order. The different arrangement or patterns of words are called structures. Structure may be complete patterns or they may form a part of a large pattern. Language is viewed as structurally related elements for the encoding of meaning- the elements being phonemes, morphemes, words, structures and sentence types. It can be diagrammatically represented as:



**\*figure: 2**

(\*Nagaraj, G. 2012.English Language Teaching (second edition).Orient Blackswan.)

In the structural approach there may be four kinds of structures namely; Sentence patterns; Phrase patterns; Formulas and Idioms.Sentence Pattern are the word model from

which many things of the same kind and shape can be made like cars which look the same or shoes made alike all of the same size and shape though perhaps of different colours. A sentence pattern is therefore a model for sentence which will be of the same shape and construction although made up of different words.

Phrase Pattern is a group of words which express an idea without its being a sentence or clause e.g. in the house, on the table, into the tub etc. Formulas are those words which are used on certain occasions e.g. How are you?, Good morning; Thank you; etc. Idioms like 'Rome was not built in a day', 'hit the iron when it is hot', etc. come in this category. These should be taught as a whole.

### **3.3.1 Principles of Structural Approach:**

It is based on three main principles:

- (i) Importance is given to student's activity rather than the activity of the teacher.
- (ii) Importance is given to speech work.
- (iii) Importance is given in developing correct language habits among the students, particularly the habits of arranging words in English in order to replace the sentence patterns of the pupil's mother tongue.

### **3.3.2 Aims of Structural Approach:**

The main aim of structural approach is to teach four fundamental skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. It also enlarges the vocabulary of the student's. It correlates the teaching of grammar and composition with the lesson of the text-book. It improves and corrects pupil's speech habit. It makes classroom environment interesting and natural. It develops student's interest in creating meaningful situations. It lays proper emphasis on the aural-oral approach, active methods and the condemnation of formal grammar for its own sake. It also enables the children to attain mastery over an essential vocabulary of about 3000 root words for active use.

### **3.3.3 Merits of the Structural Approach –**

The merits of this approach are that it can be adopted for all stages of education. It stress habit formation, through intensive drills, the students cultivate the habit of speaking the English language, due to much oral drilling, whatever is learnt in the class remains stable in the minds of the students. It provides enough opportunities to the students to express their ideas and feelings and makes both teacher and students active which is psychologically sound. It puts more emphasis on speech or oral aspects of learning. The students are provided with carefully selected

and graded language material. Making use of this approach the teacher can attend to more or almost all students of his class.

### **3.3.4 Demerits of the structural Approach**

The demerits of this approach are that it is suitable only in lower classes. Only well selected sentence patterns are taught through this approach. It is rarely successful in overcrowded classroom. It neglects reading of all types. This approach does not take into consideration the fact that pupil is a learner. This approach needs specially planned text-books and well trained teachers to create appropriate environment for learning the language.

While teaching through this approach each structure should be repeatedly taught many times with different words. The teacher should care that the students get adequate practice in the use of special words. New words should be introduced gradually and they must be corrected with the structures already taught. Sufficient practice should be given in respect of each structure before the next is introduced. New words at early stages should refer to objects and actions which can be seen and demonstrated in the classroom.

Thus this approach is based on the assumption that language learning is a matter of habit formation, which involves a lot of repetition and conscious drilling of the language items.

#### **Check your progress**

**Note:** a) Write your answer in the space provided after each item.

b) Compare your answers with those given in the end of the unit.

1. What is the basic principle behind structural approach of teaching English?

---

---

---

---

---

---

### **3.4. Situational Approach**

---

Hornby used the term situational approach in the title of a popular series of articles published in ELT (1950). The approach suggests that any language item, whether it is structure or a word, should not be presented in isolation. It has to be introduced and practised in a context or situation. In the situational approach, explanations are discouraged and the learner is expected to apply the language learnt in the classroom to situation outside the classroom. By using situation the use of mother tongue can be avoided. If the language item is given in the meaningful situations the learner can deduce the meaning and context from the situation in which it is used.

The situational approach indicates as to how a teacher should create a real situation in the classroom. Now the question that arises is how these real situations can be created in the classroom? The Situational Approach tries to solve this problem. A particular situation helps the teacher to provide practice to the pupils to explain its meaning. A particular situation may be created in the classroom by use of maps, pictures, various objects, actions or by drawing on the black board. It can thus be realized that to create a relevant situation is practical problem.

According to this approach the English as a second language should be taught by forming links between the new words and the real situations encountered by the child while learning their mother tongue. All the items are learnt by a child in real situations. The situation in which the child learns his mother-tongue are repeated again and again and whatever the child understands or expresses about his experiences of his own life are then in same way connected with the terminology of the English Language. The structure or a word conveys its meaning to the pupil only when it is used in particular situations. This particular situation helps the teacher to familiarize the pupils with the structure. But how a teacher can create a real situation, may be created in the classroom and outside by the use of objects, by the use of pictures, by drawing or displaying maps and sketches, by gestures and by action etc. Conversation is another way to create real situations in the classrooms. The teacher may ask questions also. They may have discussion or extempore etc.

#### **3.4.1 Characteristics of situational approach**

Speech is the basis of language teaching. The new language items and vocabulary items are graded according to their usefulness, frequency and teachability. The language items thus

selected and graded are presented and practised in meaningful situations. Reading and writing are based on items which have already been introduced and practised orally. New words are introduced incidentally in the class. Opportunities are provided to the pupils to associate the meaning of new words with the created situation. Lot of appropriate material is used to create proper and real situations. Examples are given to make the things clear. Teacher gives continuous statements about his actions – He puts before his pupils several questions and answers them himself. The use of mother-tongue is emphasized.

For example – If the teacher wants to teach the parts of a flower. He can show various pictures to the students depicting different parts of a flower. He may also write the names of the parts of the trees on these pictures. First of all he will explain orally only and then the teacher may take the help of the pictures to make his teaching more effective and interesting.

#### **3.4.2 Merits of the Situational Approach**

- (1) It creates interest among the students.
- (2) Emphasis is given on learning by play.
- (3) Action chains make the classroom atmosphere lively.
- (4) Lot of material aid is used to make the learning stable and interesting.
- (5) Lot of examples can be given
- (6) The teacher can make his illustrations clear by using various materials or by pictures etc.
- (7) Stress is given on learning through hearing.

#### **3.4.3 Demerits of the Situational Approach**

- (1) It is suitable only in the lower classes as this approach cannot be made applicable to the senior classes.
- (2) Text books cannot be taught by this method.
- (3) Only well selected sentence patterns can be taught by this approach.
- (4) That minimum makes the classroom dull.
- (5) Trained teachers are required for it.
- (6) Prose, poetry, rapid reader etc. cannot be taught through this approach.
- (7) Sometimes it becomes difficult to relate the statement of the teacher with the created situation.

Situational Language Teaching involves accurate use of vocabulary items and grammar rules in order to achieve a practical mastery of the four basic skills. Learners must be able to produce accurate pronunciation and use of grammar. The ultimate aim is to be able to respond quickly and accurately in speech situations with an automatic control of basic structures and sentence patterns.

**Check your progress**

**Note:** a) Write your answer in the space provided after each item.

b) Compare your answers with those given in the end of the unit.

2. What are the characteristics of situational approach of teaching English?

---

---

---

---

---

---

**3.5. Communicative Approach**

The development of language learning or teaching from form-based to a meaning-based approach, the move towards the eclectic approach from a rigid method, the shift from teacher centered to learner centered classes, are all subsumed under the broad term communicative approach. The communicative approach is the recent and latest approach of teaching English. This approach lays a great emphasis on the use of language. It enables the students to communicate his ideas in a better way. The socio linguists Dell Hymes propagated this approach. According to him the purpose of teaching language is the communicative competence. The following materials are used in this approach; different functions such as requesting, informing, expressing likes and dislikes; notions of time, location and duration etc.; using language to perform different tasks such as solving puzzles, dramatization, role play etc. Teachers have known that their aim is to get students communicating successfully outside the classroom.



Communicative competence not only applies the grammatical rules of a language in order to form a grammatically correct sentence, but also to know when and where to use these sentences- in other words, to use them appropriately.

### **3.5.1 Characteristics of the approach**

The communicative approach aim to make all the learner attain communicative competence i.e. use language accurately and appropriately. The prime focus is on learner and teacher is just a facilitator. It is based upon need analysis and planning to prepare communicative curricular and syllabuses. It is based upon the concept of how language is used and what is functional utility of language. It lays less stress on grammar and emphasis on language in use rather than language as structure. It gives emphasis on the semantic objective of the language which means the meaning of language in real life situation and contexts. The skills of speaking and writing are included in communicative approach. It provides the communicative opportunities where the students may be able to communicate their ideas through dialogue, discussion, debate, literary and cultural activities of the schools.

### **3.5.2 Merits of communicative approach:**

1. The merits of communicative approach is to develop the speech ability among the students.
2. It teaches of different ways of expression.
3. This approach is based on the practical utility.
4. It lays more stress on the functional value of language.
5. It enables the students to communicative their ideas both inside and outside the class-room.

### **3.5.3 Demerits of communicative approach:**

1. This approach ignores grammar and structures.
2. It is not properly and scientifically developed as yet.
3. It is a new approach and it is to be used and tested in our schools for language teaching.
4. Practical utility of this approach is yet to be confirmed.
5. Trained teachers are not available in this approach to teach English language.
6. Students don't get proper environment for communication.

In communicative approach techniques such as information gap tasks are used. An information gap occurs in a situation where one person knows something which other person do

not. Information gap task used in the classroom are language games, role play, retrieving text order etc.

In this approach the teacher is no longer regarded as sole arbiter and controller of what goes in the language classroom. The independent status of learner is fully accepted. The communicative approach has implications for the classroom teacher in terms of their way of teaching and attitude. Thus communicative approach can be the effective way of developing language competence among learners.

**Check your progress**

**Note:** a) Write your answer in the space provided after each item.

b) Compare your answers with those given in the end of the unit.

3. What do you understand by communicative approach of teaching English?

---

---

---

---

---

---

**3.6. Constructive Approach**

This view represents the shift from education based on behaviourism, to education based on cognitive theory. Thus, behaviourist epistemology essence is based on intelligence, domains of objectives, levels of knowledge and reinforcement; however in the case of constructivist epistemology it is the learner who constructs their knowledge on the basis of interaction with the environment. The primary message of constructivism is that active learning enables the students to construct their own knowledge and make their own meaning of what is being thought. According to this approach, acquiring second language will be effective in authentic and complex learning environment or situation. One of the primary goals of using constructivist

teaching is that students learn how to learn by giving them the training to take initiative for their own learning experiences.

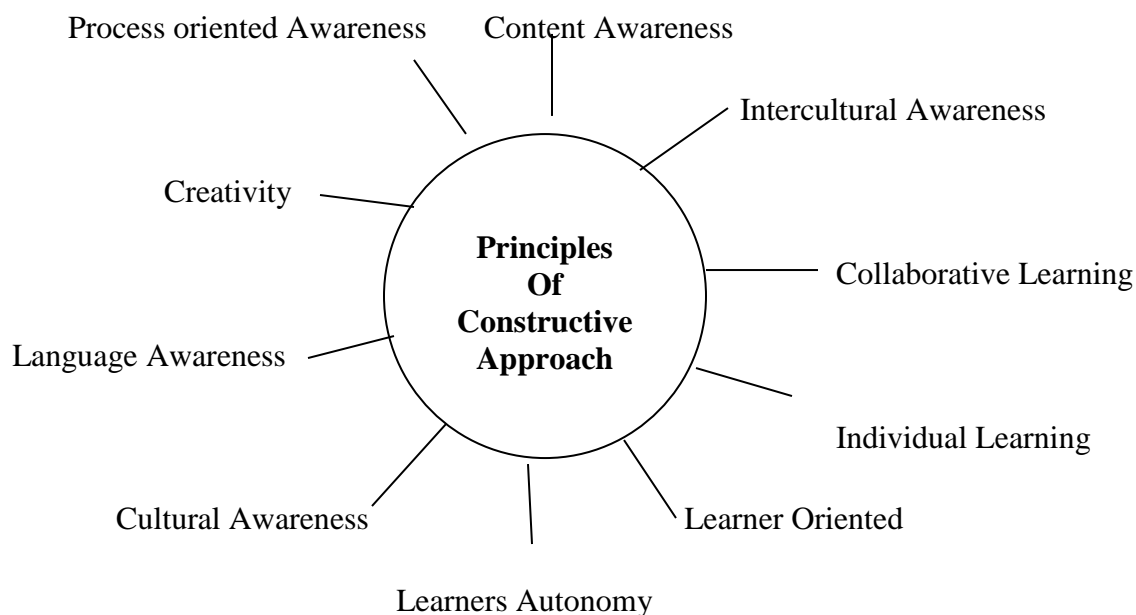
According to Reinfried constructivist language learning should be action oriented where language is learned through collaboration, free creation is praised, and learning is achieved by actively doing projects and self teaching. Constructivist language learning should be learner centred that supports individualization of learning and autonomy. Learner should develop awareness not only for learning but for the language itself and for the intercultural aspect as well. Constructivist language learning is to be holistic with content oriented perspective, authentic and complex learning environment.

### **3.6.1. Principle of Constructive approach**

One of the most important principles in constructivist approach to language teaching is action orientedness. Co-operative learning (such as pair work, group work or any other social forms of learning), creative and active participation in classroom activities, learning by preparing various projects as well as learning by teaching (when the student is asked to take over teacher's role) have been treated as the major tasks referring to the action oriented method.

The second principle in constructive language teaching is individualisation of learning which is centred on the learner. It is the learner who is allowed to decide about the fragments and sections of the materials provided by the teacher during the lesson. This possibility to make choices fosters learner's autonomy, thus it takes into account their preferable style and type of learning.

Another principle of constructive approach refers to holistic language experience which refers to content-oriented language teaching and usually takes place in bilingual classes. Constructive approach to language teaching is based on the foundation that knowledge is constructed not received. It is based on thinking and analysing not memorising. It also lays emphasis on understanding and applying and not repeating.



**Figure: 3 Principles of Constructive Second Language Teaching**

Constructivist teaching involves negotiation and scaffolding. Negotiation is an important aspect of a constructivist classroom. It unites teachers and students in a common purpose. It is important for the teacher to talk openly with the learners about the choice of new information as well as the way of introducing it during classes, and the formal constraints such as obligatory curriculum. Scaffolding is a more systemic approach to supporting the learner, focusing on the task, the environment, the teacher, and the learner. Scaffolding provides temporary frameworks to support learning and student performance beyond their capacities. The concept of scaffolding represents any kind of support for cognitive activity that is provided by an adult when the child and adult are performing the task together (Wood & Middleton, 1975).

Instructional practice in constructivist classrooms values prior knowledge, is context embedded, integrates cooperative group work, multidimensional assessment, integrates language, content, and process.

In the constructivist classroom, the teacher's role is to prompt and facilitate discussion. Thus, the teacher's main focus should be on guiding students by asking questions that will lead them to develop their own conclusions on the subject. Teaching strategies which can be used in this approach is that a teacher can use a picture from students' cultural background. Ask students

to describe as they say the words, and write the words on paper, put words together and look for patterns. Write sentences from the words formed.

Some of the activities that could be involved in constructive classroom while teaching language are role playing, theme and content based, oral presentations, discussions and debates, metaphors, interactive, collaborative, real life examples, portfolio evaluation etc. Students can construct additional knowledge by writing poems, short plays, screen plays, legal briefs, journals, diaries etc.

### **3.6.2 Merits of Constructive Approach**

This method of teaching is effective for students who learn better in a hands-on environment and helps students to better relate the information learned in the classroom to their lives. Children learn more, and enjoy learning more when they are actively involved, rather than passive listeners. Education works best when it concentrates on thinking and understanding, rather than on rote memorization. Constructivism concentrates on learning how to think and understand. Constructivist learning is transferable. In constructivist classrooms, students create organizing principles that they can take with them to other learning settings. Constructivism gives students ownership of what they learn, since learning is based on students' questions and explorations, and often the students have a hand in designing the assessments as well. Constructivism promotes social and communication skills by creating a classroom environment that emphasizes collaboration and exchange of ideas.

### **3.6.2 Demerits of Constructive Approach**

There are also some demerits to constructive teaching. The training necessary, for constructive teaching is extensive and often requires costly long-term professional development. With an average number of students in one classroom, teachers are unable to customize the curriculum to each student, as their prior knowledge will vary. The constructivism curriculum also eliminates standardized testing and grades. It requires more time and energy.

**Check your progress**

**Note:** a) Write your answer in the space provided after each item.

b) Compare your answers with those given in the end of the unit.

4. What are the basic principles of constructive approach of teaching English?

---

---

---

---

---

---

**3.7. Let us sum up**

---

In this unit we have discussed about various approaches of teaching English. We have also discussed the principles and merits as well as demerits of teaching English using these approaches.

Language learning is such a complex process that it is impossible to offer a single solution. Perhaps the best method is the one which works, and this varies from context to context. Any method which creates conditions for learning to take place is good. It should enable the learner to acquire the strategies of learning rather than merely equipping him with knowledge. A classroom of diverse learners with diverse language backgrounds can be a great challenge for a classroom teacher. English Language Learners (ELL) presents a particular challenge to teachers as they represent such a wide range of academic abilities, English language abilities, and academic background. Thus various approaches can be applied while teaching so as to cater the diverse need of the learner.

---

### **3.8. Questions for reflection**

---

1. What is the role of learner and teacher in structural approach?
  2. Does communicative approach share any common features with the traditional method and approaches to teaching English?
  3. Describe situational approach? How can this approach be used to teach students of higher classes?
  4. What are various methods involved in constructive approach to language teaching?
- 

### **3.9. Answers of check your progress**

---

1. The basic principle behind structural approach is that importance is given to student's activity rather than the activity of the teacher; importance is given to speech work; importance is given in developing correct language habits among the students, particularly the habits of arranging words in English in order to replace the sentence patterns of the pupil's mother tongue.
2. Characteristics to situational approach is that speech is the basis of language teaching. The new language items and vocabulary items are graded according to their usefulness, frequency and teach ability. The language items thus selected and graded are presented and practised in meaningful situations. Reading and writing are based on items which have already been introduced and practiced orally. New words are introduced incidentally in the class. Opportunities are provided to the pupils to associate the meaning of new words with the created situation. Lot of appropriate material is used to create proper and real situations.
3. Communicative approach lays a great emphasis on the use of language. It enables the students to communicate his ideas in a better way.
4. The basic principle of constructive approach to teaching English is: it is action oriented. The second principle in constructive language teaching is individualisation of learning which is

centred on the learner. Another principle of constructive approach refers to holistic language experience which refers to content-oriented language teaching and usually takes place in bilingual classes.

---

### **3.10. References and Suggested reading**

---

Krashen, Stephen D. and Tracy D. Terrell. (1983). *The Natural Approach: Language acquisition in the classroom*. Hayward, CA: Alemany Press.

Kulshreshtha, M.S. and Baraulia, A. 2008. *English Language Teaching*. Radha Prakashan Mandir: Agra.

Nagaraj, G. 1996. *English Language Teaching*. Calcutta: Orient Longman.

NCERT(2005). *National Curriculum Framework*. New Delhi: NCERT.

NCERT(2005). *National Curriculum Framework Position Paper National Focus Group on Teaching of English*. New Delhi: NCERT.

NCERT(2005). *National Curriculum Framework Position Paper National Focus Group on Teaching of Indian Languages*. New Delhi: NCERT

Prabhu, N.S. 1987. *Second Language pedagogy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/20567/10/10\\_chapter%203.pdf](http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/20567/10/10_chapter%203.pdf)

[http://www.ehow.com/info\\_8634178\\_advantages-disadvantages-constructivism-teaching.html](http://www.ehow.com/info_8634178_advantages-disadvantages-constructivism-teaching.html)

<https://constructivisminelt.wikispaces.com/Constructivism+and+language+teaching>

Richards J.C. & T.S. Rodgers (1986), 'Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching', Cambridge: CUP, P.72

Nagaraj, Geetha, (1996) reprinted 2006 'English Language Teaching: Approaches, Methods Techniques', Hyderabad: Orient Longman, P.29