

# Constructivism in language pedagogy

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## RESEARCH ARTICLE

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### ABSTRACT

This paper highlights the concept of constructivism that underpins the theory and practice of foreign language teaching. The dominance of this pedagogical movement in the second half of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century has been particularly important for the study and understanding of digitally supported forms of learning. Constructivism can provide a response to the analysis and practice of new forms of learning: it is based on the premise that knowledge transfer and the role of the teacher are undergoing intense change. Its implications in the classroom define and influence the pedagogical models and traditions of our time. The paper traces the emergence and dimensions of constructivism in today's digitally infused education, providing a theoretical and literature overview.

### KEYWORDS

constructivism, knowledge transfer, classroom environment, digital pedagogy

## INTRODUCTION: WHAT IS CONSTRUCTIVISM?

By the end of the 20th century, communicative language pedagogy had accumulated a plethora of methodological trends in language pedagogy. It is often described by practitioners as the most idealistic and constructivist method (Brooks, 2002; Brooks & Brooks, 1999; Suhendi & Purwarno, 2018; Wheatley, 1991). The constructivist approach is primarily rooted in mathematics and science classroom settings and curricula (Duffy & Jonassen, 1992; Steffe & Gale, 1995).

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The main reason for this is that the constructivist theory argues that education should support problem-based learning processes as opposed to the conservative tradition of frontal teaching (Kaufman, 2004). The nature and character of science subjects can provide an intensive training ground for testing and spreading the constructivist approach: mathematical and computational thinking and lessons not only enabled but also required student involvement and engagement in the classroom (Driver, 1983; Forman & Kuschner, 1977; Gabel, 1994).

The most important characteristic of a constructivist approach to pedagogy is that it can be adapted to the ever-changing teaching and learning habits of the 21st century. According to constructivist theorists, knowledge is a network that learners actively construct and interpret based on their experiences. This leads to the view that the learner is not a 'blank sheet' to be filled with knowledge, but an individual who acquires and constructs knowledge (Can, 2009). Perkins takes this further, emphasising in his analysis that in the process of learning, the learner encounters conflicting facts, information and experiences that help him to reconstruct his knowledge (Perkins, 1991). According to theorists of constructivist pedagogy, the most effective learning process can only take place in an appropriate context (Duffy & Jonassen, 1992) and as a result of action and involvement (Nahalka, 1998; Pálvölgyi, 2015). The constructivist approach is also reflected in language pedagogy innovation.

This article aims to highlight the most relevant and important issues in the relationship between constructivism and foreign language learning: the approach is rather theoretical and provides a generally systematic overview of the most influential papers in this field. Both international and Hungarian sources are listed and cited accounting for the regional aspect of the literature review. The article provides a general understanding of the definition of constructivism, then the term is dissected in the classroom, from the teachers' perspectives, from a language teaching methodology point of view and finally offering a plausible interpretation of its digital implications.

## CONSTRUCTIVISM AND COGNITION: HOW DO WE UNDERSTAND IT IN EDUCATIONAL THEORY?

In his theoretical summary, Driscoll (2000) explains that the roots of constructivism can be found in psychology and philosophy, in Piaget's (1954) developmental psychological theory, and in the writings of Vygotsky (1962), Bruner (1961) as well as Gardner (1979). When comparing the major studies and writings of constructivist theorists, Perkins' arguments (1991) become evident: the learner actively constructs meaning by unpacking and experiencing a number of schemas and mental structures before arriving at a version that suits him. For Vygotsky, meaning-making is nothing more than social interpretation (Vygotsky, 1978). Several researchers have worked on constructivist pedagogy and on defining Vygotsky's intellectual legacy in educational, pedagogical, and psychological perspectives (Feketéné, 2002; Maturana, 1994; Monoriné, 2009; Szabó, 2021). They all point to the cognitive roots of constructivist pedagogy as its most defining feature. The new approach to learning focuses on the individual. Neurophysiological research suggests that human beings are structurally determined beings: they have cognitive and emotional structures (Monoriné, 2009). According to Feketéné, "These structures (or this structure) are formed by previous life experiences, learning experiences, and determine our further thinking, actions and reactions" (Feketéné, 2002: 37). Consequently, we can talk



about so-called subjectivisation, which researchers believe can be applied to both training and curricula.

In Monoriné’s reading, one of the major outcomes of the constructivist learning theory is “reframing”: “It means abandoning familiar interpretations and ways of behaving and developing new knowledge, while new ways of seeing, new frames of reference are to be acquired, which one then sees as a reference point, a framework of evaluation for oneself. It is also called a conceptual shift, the need for which increases with age.” (Monoriné, 2009: 53). In this respect, theorists agree that there are interactions between individuals, even from a group dynamic perspective, that can affect each other’s cognitive and emotional structures. Feketéné emphasises that people remember not only actual encounters and relationships, but also other ‘meta-level experiences’ (Feketéné, 2002).

According to Kaufman, the phenomenon of constructivism in education and educational theory is rooted primarily in the theories of cognitive and social constructivism (Kaufman, 2004). Piaget’s work is inescapable when it comes to the study of the concept of meaning making (Piaget, 1954). Piaget, with his background in cognitive psychology, interpreted development as a holistic process: children construct meaning along schemas based on his theory of cognition. His theory of knowledge originated from his stage theory of development, however, while his approach and outlook supports the notion of constructivism, recent research has turned away from Piaget’s relatively rigid stage theory and, while acknowledging that learning is a process, believes it to be a much more flexible system than Piaget envisaged. Taking Piaget’s theory a step further, Nahalka argues that children are able to draw logical conclusions, understand metaphors and work with abstract concepts before they reach school age, but always on condition that they formulate tasks in a context that is familiar to them (Nahalka, 1998).

MAPPING CONSTRUCTIVISM IN THE CLASSROOM

Brooks and Brooks (1999, pp. 114–140) summarise the characteristics of the constructivist classroom environment by comparing the two paradigms (Table 1):

Table 1. Traditional classroom environment vs constructivist classroom

Traditional classroom environment	Constructivist classroom environment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• following the core curriculum is recommended (or even mandatory)</li><li>• teaching/learning relies heavily on textbooks</li><li>• students are "blank sheets" on which the teacher writes</li><li>• a didactic teaching model, where the teacher conveys information</li><li>• summative assessment is separate from teaching and most often takes the form of tests and exams</li><li>• characterised by frontal teaching</li><li>• students work on their own in class</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• supports students in asking questions and posing problems</li><li>• uses databases, creative and curriculum-related materials that encourage students to become independent thinkers</li><li>• the teacher takes an interactive role, mediating between the students and the curriculum</li><li>• uses alternative assessment methods integrated into the teaching process: student self-assessment, peer assessment and student portfolios</li><li>• cooperative or group work</li></ul>



Having looked at the two types of classroom environments, it is clear that a classroom with a constructivist approach helps to meet learners' needs and develop learner autonomy, often in a cooperative way. Furthermore, it supports independent thinking rather than ready-made answers, shifts the focus away from the teacher, promotes and develops learning strategies. Kaufman points to the growing body of literature and case studies of constructivist approaches from the 1990s to the present. The constructivist approach is typically a meeting point of interdisciplinary fields: sociological, methodological, theoretical, linguistic, psychological, and cognitive theories. One of the main aims of this paper is to review the most prominent representatives of constructivism and its literature in language pedagogy (Kaufman, 2004).

Johnson, Johnson, and Holubec (1984) analyse cooperative work in the classroom in their work *Circles of Learning*. The authors' interdisciplinary approach can be explained by the fact that they come from the fields of psychology and education. Their book attempts to provide answers and a change of perspective on the educational and social problems of the time: the presence of disadvantaged people in education, the prevalence of juvenile delinquency in educational institutions, poor performance in national science assessments, the breakdown of traditional family structures and its effects on students. The authors recognise the need for not only alternative teaching methods but also a renewal of the student-student and teacher-student relationship. They take a constructive approach and stress that peer relationships must be based on 'care, commitment, support and encouragement'. The co-operative school and classroom environment was seen as necessary in the face of worrying social phenomena: students who are highly disadvantaged due to family tragedies, substance abuse and lack of motivation to study need support and role models from their low-risk peers. It is important to note that Johnson et al. (1984) proposed a constructivist approach to classroom change primarily because of social difficulties.

They theorise that the following principles are the key objectives of a constructivist, cooperative classroom environment:

- positive reciprocity between classmates, where learning objectives should involve all members of the community
- clear individual feedback and assessment within the group, as this is the only way to make it clear to the rest of the group what kind of intervention and help they need
- inclusive, heterogeneous class/group community
- shared responsibility
- the most important goal is to ensure that everyone gets the most out of the learning process, while remaining in constant contact with the rest of the group
- students consciously acquire social skills in a cooperative classroom environment
- the teacher's role has changed from one of observation and intervention, constant attention and support, to one of mediator and facilitator

Felix (2002) underlines the theoretical background of constructivist pedagogy: in the 1990s it became a fertile ground for pedagogical models that branched out from it as follows: 1) constructivist pedagogy as an approach 2) problem-solving teaching 3) cooperative learning. Felix points out that these approaches and methods share common characteristics: a move away from traditional, frontal teaching and the classroom environment, and an emphasis on learner autonomy and group work. Other names and terms are also common in methodologies linked to constructivism: content-based learning, context-based learning, problem-based learning



(PBL), content and language integrated learning. A common feature of all these terms is that the word 'teaching' disappears from methodological terminology and is replaced by 'learning' entirely. This not only refers specifically to the methodological aspect, but also reflects the emphasis of constructivist pedagogy: learning takes over the central role from teaching.

## CONSTRUCTIVISM AND DIDACTICS: CHALLENGE FOR TEACHERS

From a didactical point of view, the view that in today's world, an optimal learning-teaching process must be created, which is responsive and appropriate to the needs of today's society, is of paramount importance (Nahalka, 1998). The challenge for education science in the 21st century is to equip educators with paradigms that transcend the classical pedagogy of transmission and demonstration: Nahalka points out that, moving away from but not denying frontal teaching, pedagogy of action and constructivist pedagogy are methodological trends that can promote learner autonomy by introducing novel models of learning organisation. According to Nahalka's theory, the significance of these two paradigms lies in the fact that they are based on a good knowledge of children's personalities, interests, needs and internal images and knowledge structures (Nahalka, 1998). If one accepts the theory that the process of learning is constituted by personal constructs and that achieving autonomy in learning is one of the most important pedagogical goals, the notion of differentiation (see below) comes to the fore, as learners may be at different levels of development, as well as alternative assessment techniques, as the feedback given to learners will have individual meaning and significance.

The constructivist pedagogical approach and the pedagogy of action challenge teachers. However, this professional challenge can also provide answers to a number of problems that arise in classroom settings: students with different learning styles can be supported at the pace that best suits them; these pedagogical approaches can provide answers to the situation of disadvantaged students from different social backgrounds with learning difficulties in inclusive education. They can also support gifted students and the teaching of faster progressing learners if teachers can move away from the frontal traditional teaching model. Nevertheless, Nahalka (1998) emphasises that the constructivist approach also recognises one-way teacher communication, as the "knowledge transfer", frontal method allows children to shift concepts to acquire a higher level of cognitive system. According to Nahalka (2002), the conceptual shift is one of the major changes in learning theory. In this process, new knowledge contradicts existing elements and then, after processing and anchoring, it falls into place and becomes part of knowledge. Nahalka (2002) distinguishes the following types of learning in his learning theory approach:

- problem-free learning: there is no contradiction between new knowledge and the internal interpretative system, so processing and interpretation take place
- processing: there is a contradiction between the new knowledge item and the internal interpretative system, so only processing takes place but no anchoring
- falsification: there is a discrepancy between the new knowledge item and the internal interpretative system, but both processing and anchoring take place which the learner falsifies. This can occur if the learner expects something different and adapts (falsifies) the new knowledge item



- creative rescue: there is a discrepancy between the new knowledge item and the internal interpretive system, but processing and anchoring take place and the information remains unchanged. The learner keeps the new and old knowledge elements in two ways, side by side, creatively maintaining this system
- conceptual (conceptual) shift: (see above) processing and anchoring take place, new knowledge falls into place.

The most important elements of the constructivist approach are shared by Nahalka (1998) and Johnson and Johnson (1999): the focus shifts from the concept of teaching to learning, the organisation of learning, the various processing processes and learner autonomy through group dynamics and project work.

## FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING: CONSTRUCTIVISM IN METHODOLOGY

What is the relevance of a constructivist pedagogical approach to foreign language teaching? Abdallah (2015) observes that in the language learning process, acquisition has become a less prominent concept as opposed to participation. This shift in emphasis points to the ongoing paradigm shift and intense academic debate, whereby a constructivist pedagogical approach and a pedagogy of action not only reveal the conservative state of contemporary learning processes but surpass it in trying to outline what is the most effective form of learning, and within that, foreign language learning.

One of the key theoretical contentions of the 2000s was that theorists increasingly saw genuine and effective learning as taking place within a conceptual network of learner engagement, activity, and contextualised learning environments (Csizér & Kormos, 2012; Kumar-avidelu, 2003; Shih & Yang, 2008; Yang, 2011). According to their theory, it is in natural and meaningful learning environments exposed to real-life situations that foreign language can be acquired spontaneously. From a constructivist approach, this is also important because learners do not receive language as a finished product, but construct meaning from the information flowing around them, from real life, according to their cognitive level (Aljohani, 2017). Related to this is Lave and Wenger's (1991) explanation that the learning process should not merely convey information and knowledge that is abstract and decontextualised, but should create a socio-social process where knowledge organisation is achieved in a cooperative way.

Among researchers working on content-based language teaching, Felix (2002), and Bax (2003) stand out. Bax takes a critical approach to one of the successful models of foreign language teaching, the communicative language teaching method. In his view, the most important reason for this paradigm shift is the need for a context-based approach to language teaching that goes beyond the communicative method. Bax also points out that the communicative method is English, its original name being about teaching: *Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)*. This approach is fully in line with the constructivist approach to language pedagogy: from Nahalka to Johnson and Johnson, many theorists emphasise that learning through engagement and cooperation is the basis of a successful and effective teaching model. Bax's discussion of context-based foreign language teaching is particularly important because his study highlights the aspect of communicative language teaching that focuses on teachers and explicitly suggests to language teachers that the sole purpose of the communicative method is to facilitate communication (Bax, 2003). It does not, however, answer the relevant professional questions of what



communication is to be established, between whom, in what community, in what culture, in what country, for what purpose, for what age group, and on what topic. In critically distancing oneself from the communicative language teaching method, it is worth noting that Bax's approach is entirely constructivist, since he too sees the root of the unsolved problems of the classroom environment in the existence of a method, communicative language teaching, under which all other functions and circumstances are subordinated (Bax, 2003). Meanwhile, content and context are forgotten by teachers. Bax introduces the notion of context-based language teaching, in which the most important feature is the recognition of the equal validity of methods and the unavoidable role of context, the classroom environment. Arnold (1999) also stresses the role of contextual factors: he approaches the paradigm shift from the perspective of *Humanistic Language Teaching* and highlights the concepts of emotion and affect, listing the main features of constructivism. Arnold formulates that the most important aspect of the learning process is what takes place *inside* the learner and *between* the learners (Arnold, 1999). If we look back at the most prominent constructivist pedagogical theorists, they too emphasize precisely that teaching is cooperative, and that education must take place between student and student.

Nahalka points out that differentiation is supported by a constructivist approach and a pedagogy of action (Nahalka, 1998). If one accepts the view of cognitive theory (Piaget, 1954) that the child, the learner, constructs meaning personally and autonomously, which is also a fundamental feature of learner autonomy theory, then it follows directly that differentiation has full justification in a healthy and effective classroom environment (Nahalka, 1998). After all, individual learners may be at different levels, have different learning styles and need different lengths of time for study. Related to this is Arnold's (1999) description of classroom diversity, in which he emphasises that if the teacher is aware of the learner's difficulties, individuality and individual learning problems and can accept these, a positive classroom environment can be created in which learning can take place along emotionally safe and balanced lines. Arnold sees cooperative classroom tasks to be the best way to achieve diversity and learner autonomy such as project work, where students with different learning styles work together to complement each other. This also supports social responsibility and social competence as described in the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR 5.1.3).

Nahalka (1998) and Arnold (1999) interpret and position their pedagogical approach from the perspective of humanistic teaching. Bax, who comes specifically from the field of ELT (*English Language Teaching*), approaches the characteristics of the constructivist classroom environment from a methodological perspective. Like Bax, Widdowson (1990) as well as Savignon (2006) point to the methodological shift in approach to subordinate teaching method to content and context. In their interpretation, the method is a tool which the teacher must fill with appropriate and relevant content.

## THE IMPLICATIONS IN DIGITAL PEDAGOGY

In the classroom, the theoretical background of constructivist pedagogy is less likely to be central, but its implications for teaching and learning are well known and recognised. Constructivist pedagogy is strongly manifested in *blended learning*, also known as 'blended teaching', which is one of the pioneers of Information Communications Technology (ICT)-enhanced teaching methods. According to some theories and trends in the literature, there are





strong parallels between ICT-enhanced models and constructivist pedagogical theory (Al-Huneidi & Schreurs, 2013). The developmental trajectory of foreign language teaching, based on the concept of blended learning (BL), is currently moving along and beyond tablet-based mobile applications for smartphones and is able to support productive learning management models based on students' active participation. The practical implementations are underpinned by an approach that supports constructivism, individual learning styles and the goal of achieving 21st century skills (collaboration, problem solving, creativity, self-regulation, knowledge building). The following overview, while not exhaustive, outlines the main methodological implementations in language pedagogy.

### Blended learning (BL) - combined learning

The *blended learning* (BL) approach was the first to move the traditional classroom toolbox towards ICT-enhanced methodologies. The concept still has many variations and interpretations. Neumeier (2005) defines *blended learning* as all forms of learning that are ICT-based, as well as learning that blends digital approaches and tools with traditional classroom methodologies. The definition of the term is broad, but its most important feature is a recurring element: the collaboration between digital media and the classroom, which implies the presence of both teacher and student. Neumeier's article was written in 2005, at a time when this type of learning management was significant in language pedagogy. Today, however, the concept of *blended learning* seems almost obsolete and has been replaced in the most recent literature by ICCT (*Information, Collaboration and Communication Technologies*), the Hungarian equivalent of which is the currently widespread and popular ICT (Information and Communication Technology). However, to understand the direction in which the process of foreign language learning is changing, let us first look at the first main concept, *blended learning*. In Neumeier's reading, it is the combination of face-to-face and ICT-supported learning. The main aim is to achieve an ideal and personalised combination of these two learning organisation methods (Neumaier, 2005). Kerres (2001) stresses that the process of *blended learning* should not be about which learning method is better or more innovative than the other, but rather about the unity of this combined learning, where the individual characteristics of the learners and the learning environment are brought together. When examining the conceptual background of *blended learning*, the constructivist buzzwords of individual knowledge construction, personal learning style, self-regulation keep recurring. Neumeier (2005) stresses that one of the bases of e-learning is higher education institutions, and that this is where the phenomenon of *blended learning* with distance learning objectives may have originated. This is a distinctly learning organisation method. Its significance does not necessarily lie in the renewal of content, but in the technological advances and structural concepts that require Information Technology (IT) support and involvement. In the original form of *blended learning*, IT complemented the learning process. In the literature, several types of blended learning are distinguished, although these terms have not been retained in the terminology of the 2010s, but have evolved conceptually into other definitions (*Connections Learning*):

- a) Face-to-face driver: the teacher provides the instruction and ICT is used as an additional teaching tool
- b) Rotation: learners move between two alternating learning modes: online learning and face-to-face learning





- c) Flex: This is the first type of facilitation. The course content remains the same, but the format is largely electronic.
- d) Labs: students receive the full course content online, but only for school/institutional use. The teaching is traditionally done in the classroom.
- e) Online driver: this is a complete shift towards e-learning. Online learning material is combined with online assignments. Face-to-face consultations become an additional form of learning.

Neumeier (2005) points out a specific feature of *blended learning* and at the same time of ICT-supported learning: these learning environments are very specific in terms of learner autonomy and self-regulation. Neumeier argues that learners need to know exactly when to take a role, when to take responsibility for their own learning processes and when to delegate this responsibility (Neumeier, 2005). On this basis, ICT-enhanced forms of learning reinterpret and represent the notion of learner autonomy and self-regulation in a particular way: the student moves between real and virtual/online spaces; elements of gamification (see “The phenomenon of gamification” below) sometimes guide learning processes in a rewardingly way, i.e. there is a strong intervention in learning processes. At the same time, the student enjoys considerable freedom to decide how and at what pace to follow the curriculum and complete the tasks. The latter allows for an online form of differentiation, as well as its implementation in the classroom using ICT tools.

### Task-based learning (TBL), problem-based learning (PBL)

*Blended learning* has opened doors to new types of learning organisation. Electronic, online spaces and ICT-enhanced opportunities have expanded. The importance and direction of knowledge transfer is changing, as in constructivist pedagogy the learner builds knowledge, and the pedagogical characteristics of constructivism are increasingly coming to the fore. Emphasis is placed on learner ownership and involvement, typically associated with 21st century learning skills. Several educational terms have been introduced to the literature: collaboration, group work, project work. In the field of foreign language teaching, two concepts in particular have become well known: task-based learning (TBL) and problem-based learning (PBL).

According to Shehadeh (2003), TBL is not a new approach. It has been present as a pedagogical method since the 1980s, especially in foreign language teaching. It refers to tasks carried out in the classroom and is described as: a) goal-oriented, b) content-centred, c) real-world outcomes, d) approaching a real-life problem with real-life language use (Prahbu, 1990; Shehadeh, 2003). Research confirms that TBL supports the most important aspects of foreign language learning: fluency, accuracy, and complexity (Ellis, 2003). In practice, researchers often illustrate this by guiding language learners through meaning-based tasks to achieve fluency and through form-based tasks to develop accuracy (Ellis, 2000; Shehadeh, 2003). One feature of TBL is that it is closely aligned with constructivist theories. Research emphasises the role of interaction between learners, while pointing out that TBL and PBL are rooted in socio-cultural theory (Ellis, 2000). However, one of the most important contributions of TBL is that it has brought research and practice closer together (Samuda & Bygate, 2008) and that it has created an interaction-based, collaborative knowledge sharing and knowledge construction among learners through intensive peer interaction.

PBL or problem-based learning shares many similarities with the TBL phenomenon, but focuses explicitly on presenting and solving real-life problems. Problem-based learning (PBL)



was originally developed for medical students to diagnose new diseases more accurately (Barrows & Tamblyn, 1980). However, the method can also be applied in foreign language teaching (Czékman, Szabó, Somfalvi, & Maior, 2017). It supports the development of a wide range of skills and contributes to the development of different learning strategies. Teachers can help students to become creative and, at the same time, more self-regulated learners. Information and communication technologies (ICT) can push the boundaries of problem-based learning, but PBL can also provide useful learning approaches for new technologies. PBL is criticised by Kirschner, Sweller, and Clark (2006), when they claim that research shows that there is no difference in problem-solving ability between groups of learners taught in this way and a control group. The authors agree that the key difference lies in the nature of the instructions: their research focuses on different levels of the task delivery process. However, Kirschner et al. consistently analyse the PBL phenomenon, while questioning the innovation of the method in their critique.

## CALL, TELL, MALL

Thanks to the theoretical background of constructivism and the rise of online learning, abbreviations such as CALL, TELL and MALL have become established in both international and Hungarian literature. To understand the theory and practice of constructivist pedagogy, it is worth examining the following phenomena. The acronym CALL stands for Computer Assisted Language Learning. MALL is an acronym for Mobile Assisted Language Learning, while TELL was a comprehensive and summarising initial term: Technology Enhanced Language Learning. In Kétyi's (2016) reading, the terminology is inextricably linked to the evolution of technology, therefore the literature distinguishes between 3 types of CALL: restricted CALL, open CALL, integrative CALL, depending on their focus. During the era of restricted CALL, the focus was explicitly on drill learning, while in the case of open CALL, communication, and the integration of ICT tools in education can be dated to the era of integrative CALL (Kétyi, 2016). However, the full diffusion of ICT tools has not yet occurred. This is due not only to the lack of information and experience among educators, but also to ideological debates and possibly an aversion to technology (Bax, 2003). Kétyi points out that it is almost impossible to keep up with technological developments from a research perspective. The first name, CALL, clearly stems from the phenomenon of Computer Assisted Language Learning. Today, tablets and smartphones are prominent among the primary learning tools for foreign language teaching. Thus, the term computer-mediated language learning alone has become obsolete, with ICT, Information and Communication Technology, being the most commonly used term today (Kétyi, 2016). Another general research characteristic of the use of ICT tools in foreign language teaching is that empirical research is scarce and that both the literature and empiricism are relatively limited. However, as technological advances make towards research, it is expected that the number of studies will increase.

## CONCLUSION

The theory of constructivism is an underlying phenomenon in many aspects of foreign language teaching. We have seen how important it is to understand its dynamics as it impacts the development of autonomous learnership, the process of differentiation or even the assessment of



the students. It affects classroom work and thus influences directly the teacher's job too. The paradigm-shift in teaching foreign languages in Hungary can be well supported by understanding the tenets of constructivism and by moving the focus from the teacher's omnipotent role to that of the student, while deconstructing frontal teaching, traditional classroom environment and promoting the awareness and independence of the students.

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