

Sociolinguistics Approaches in EFL Teaching Methods for Dominican College Students

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## *Abstract*

This work is concerned with the effects or pedagogical influences of the so-called Sociolinguistics Approaches on Dominican College education, specifically at three groups of advanced EFL Classes at the State College, that is to say the Universidad Autonoma of Santo Domingo-UASD-, during the last virtual and first semester of this year (2021-1), as a part of the Core Curriculum of the said institution.

The emphasis was placed in determining how certain currents of the like had have a considerable influence in both the teacher's population as well as that of the students, resulting with not a new discovery, that Constructivism and Cognitivism were among others, like Vygotsky and Piaget the ones that still enjoy a great prestige in our academic world, not only for the EFL or ESL professors of the school of foreign languages, but also for the rest of the school and faculties such as Spanish letters, Philosophy, and Sociology.

The results of this investigation are concretely offered through the discussion of the Research Questions in the final chapter of this research work, as a manner of conclusion.

Keywords: Sociolinguistics Approaches, Constructivism, Cognitivism EFL College Education.

## *Introduction*

The present research project, constitutes one of the first, if not the very first one, works done in the Dominican Republic regarding the relationship between EFL/ESL/ Teaching and the so-called Sociolinguistics theories, which is of extreme importance for a country where Constructivism has been declared as the official philosophy of their education system.

In Chapter I, a detailed information was offered in order to introduce the reader into the theoretical framework of it, that is to say, introducing the goals, objectives and scope of this work, as well as the geographical and historical backgrounds where the intervention took place.

Chapter II by its part, illuminated us by bringing the most brilliant literature on the topic, as a mode of a real literary review.

Chapter III dealt with the methodology of the work.

And finally, Chapter IV offered us the findings, results and conclusions of this short, but necessary experiment on the relationship of social sciences and Foreign languages teaching.

## Chapter I: Theoretical Framework

### *Overview*

The scope of this study is to explain within the framework of the most cultivated sociolinguistic theories there are, the phenomenon of the so-called Sociolinguistic approaches for the EFL learning and acquisition at Dominican Colleges or Universities, specifically at the State College of the Dominican Republic, that is to say, the Universidad Autonoma the Santo Domingo.

### *Statement of the Problem*

Part of the academic regular offer of the UASD University are the undergraduate (A Bachelor's Degree in English as a Foreign Language), and graduate programs (A Master's Degree in Applied Linguistics for EFL Teaching), for Dominican monolingual students, speakers of Spanish as their native language, and as part of their professionalization careers in the field of Modern or Foreign Languages. Besides, those academic courses offered in English, are also offered in the French version. Another popular programs are, the extracurricular courses of some foreign languages as Russian, Chinese Mandarin, German, Italian and Portuguese, and so on, depending on the demand, for this State College with a population of more than 200,000 students, enrolled, year by year, and with a population of no more than 4,000 Teachers or Professors, depending on their ranks.

The Dominican students who are coursing those careers, are predominantly graduates from hundreds of public high schools, scattered all over the country, and are the expression of the diversity academic backgrounds which forms the official educational system of our country, sponsored by the Ministry of education of the Dominican Republic-MINERD-

Although there are of course, a lot of similitudes and differences in the outcome of this product (the High School Graduate or *Bachiller* as it is called), they are the product of a country which shows a society of great social differences and disparities between the poor and the rich, and with a very stratified middle class, with some almost impossible characteristics to be defined.

That is the social scenario that encompasses and conforms the gross masses of students that normally attend our college classrooms in any of the campuses of this university, be it at the main campus of Santo Domingo, or in any other branches (18 in total) of the inner cities of our country. So, academically speaking, there is a lot of diversities in the population of our students, depending if they graduated in a public or private high school (there are dozens of good-quality bilingual schools located in the capital city or in the other big cities, that can show the atmosphere of any big city of the world, but there are also some inner or border cities of the so-called *Deep South*, that do not distinguishes themselves as to be the nicest or preferable place for anybody to reside in.

The main focus of this work, is therefore, as stated before, to explain the intricacies of the process of learning/acquiring EFL from a socio-cultural approach within a Dominican pedagogical context, and within a Dominican sociological values, as examined in the lights of the most referred theories on the field.

This investigation specifically took place with a population of students of three advanced level groups of EFL, during the, past virtual semester (2021-1) of the School of Foreign Languages of this university, and as consuetudinary part of the core curriculum development.

Howkins (2009) explained like this: *“Just as language use must be seen as a situated phenomenon, so must learning and teaching in classrooms. There are two key aspects to understanding how sociocultural theories might guide us to structure classrooms in ways that adequately support English learner. She proceeded to furtherly defined as follows: A sociocultural approach, as its name implies, situates language use in its social and cultural contexts. Language, as a communicative tool, is always used by and between people for the purpose of making meaning. A language–English for our purposes here– is not one monolithic entity, but a variety of genres, registers, dialects and so forth that are used in specific spaces for specific purposes. While it is clear that different people use different forms of English, say African-American vernacular English(in the case of African Americans),or Singlish(in the case of Singaporeans),eventhatdistinctionistoouniform.Native-likefluencyin a language requires that people have the ability to switch between different forms in different contexts for different purposes, fluently and effortlessly. Here is an example. Imagine that there has recently been a rash of gang-related violence in a neighborhood very close to yours. You have a discussion about this with your best friend. Shortly after-wards, your grandmother phones. She is concerned because she has read about the gang violence, and wants to discuss it with you. If you take a minute to imagine those actual conversations, you will see that, although the general topic is the same, not only might the content of what you say be different, but the actual words and structures you use will, as may intonation ,pitch ,and other aspects of language use. Differences may be attributed to generational differences, formality/informality, and so on , but are rooted in the relationships we have with those we are communicating with, what we are speaking about(imagine if you were instead speaking about the break-u p of your latest relationship, or a professional accomplishment),the context in which the communication takes place, and what it is we wish to accomplish*  
(PDF) Sociocultural approaches to language teaching and learning. Available from: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/298698904 Sociocultural approaches to language teaching and learning](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/298698904_Sociocultural_approaches_to_language_teaching_and_learning) [accessed Jul 11 2021].

*Importance of the Problem*

The relevance of this investigation lies in the fact, that as far as we know it, there haven't been, any research conducted at this college (UASD University) or in this country (The Dominican Republic), in the field of the teaching/learning process of English as Foreign Language (EFL), nor English as a Second Language (ESL), either. Although that does not precisely imply, that certain researchable activities have not been conducted in the area of the Spanish Linguistics in the nation where the figures of Vygotsky and Piaget, just to name a two of them, have been popularized and cherished in the academic community, but not in our field.

### *General Objective*

To conduct a researchable activity on the premise of examining the process of EFL teaching/learning process within a socio-linguistic approach.

### *Specific Objectives*

- 1.-To understand and comprehend within the context of the Dominican pedagogy how those processes affect the teaching/learning process of EFL for College Students.
- 2.-To re-visit Vygotsky, as well as other author's theories in this field for fully understanding how their premises set on the principle for the application of sociolinguistics to our field.
- 3.-To clearly note, observe and verify for our research purposes, how those approaches are interacted in the classrooms.

### *Research Questions*

- 1.-What are Sociolinguistics Approaches for the EFL Language Teaching/ Learning process?
- 2.- Which teaching approaches, methods and strategies were found in the foreign language classrooms?
- 3.-In what way have those approaches impact the Teaching/Learning Process at UASD University?

### *Definition of Terms*

#### 1.-Socio-linguistics Approaches

A sociocultural view of language. A sociocultural approach, as its name implies, situates language use in its social and cultural contexts. Language, as a communicative tool, is always used by and between people for the purpose of making meaning.

#### 2.-EFL Teaching/Learning Process

Teaching a language whether English for Foreign Language (EFL) or English as a Second Language (ESL) always focuses on the four skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing and should have applied into a well-balanced implementation to each.

<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/223142903>

### 3.-EFL Teaching Methodologies

“ESL” is usually used to refer to English language teaching to students in countries where English is the official or national language. ... On the other hand, EFL stands for English as a Foreign Language. “EFL” is generally used in countries that don't use English as their official or national language.9 ago. 2018

<https://www.goabroad.com/articles/teach-abroad>

### 3.-The School of Foreign Languages at the Universidad Autonoma de Santo Domingo

It teaches, studies and investigates on the use and mastery of a particular language (English) in the context of the culture and civilization in which it is used: It carries out linguistic studies, especially comparative ones; teaches the use of the English language as a second language, tries to transmit and make known the culture or civilization of a people or peoples through the use of language; It tries not to produce in the students the destruction of their own language by linguistic acculturation; teaches the English language to male and female students at a university or higher education institution; organizes curricula and extracurricular activities; acts as an advisor in the field of translating texts from one language to another; can act as an interpreter or as a translator; edit and publish translations.

#### *Graduate Profile*

The profile of the graduates of this mention is based on the development of solid oral and written communication skills in English, which implies a broad knowledge of the corresponding culture. Due to the solid training they will receive in the area of Applied Linguistics, as well as the information they will have on the teaching methodology, they will be able to teach at a higher level. They will also perform their functions in those institutions where communication.

[www.uasd.do](http://www.uasd.do) –uasd webpage.

#### *A Brief History of the University*

The University of Santo Domingo was created through the Bull In Apostolatus Culmine, issued on October 28, 1538 by Pope Paul III, which elevated to that category the General Study that the Dominicans ruled since 1518, in Santo Domingo, viceregal headquarters. of colonization and the oldest colonial settlement in the New World.

The University of Alcalá de Henares was its model and as such was the bearer of the Renaissance ideas that emerged from the medieval world, from which Spain emerged from the days of the conquest.

The nascent University began its teachings organized in four Faculties: Medicine, Law, Theology and Arts, in accordance with the norms established at the time for similar institutions in the metropolis. The Arts studies included two modalities, namely: the "trivium" which

included Grammar, Rhetoric and Logic and the "quadrivium" which included Arithmetic, Geometry, Astronomy and Music".

#### Vicissitudes

In 1801, as a result of the Haitian occupation of the country, the University interrupted its operation, because the Dominicans, who ruled it, abandoned the colony. It was reopened in 1815, when the colony returned to Spanish sovereignty, but from then on it adopted a secular character.

Between 1815 and 1821 it functioned under the rector of Dr. José Núñez de Cáceres. The University closed its doors again in 1822 due to the fact that a large number of its students were recruited for military service by order of the Haitian regime that governed the nation. With the consummation of the Independence of the Republic in 1844, the will to reestablish the

University, a symbol of cultural tradition and the character of the newly acquired nationality, was reborn in the Dominicans.

Responding to this claim, on June 16, 1859, President Pedro Santana promulgated a law that restored the old University of Santo Domingo, with an academic composition similar to that of medieval universities (four faculties: Philosophy, Jurisprudence, Medical Sciences and Sagradas Letras) and as a dependency of the central government through the General Directorate of Public Instruction and the corresponding State Secretariat.

But for reasons of political contingencies, the aforementioned provision was not executed and the University was not reopened.

On December 31, 1866, the Professional Institute was created by decree, which functioned in place and in substitution of the old University of Santo Domingo.

On May 10, 1891, the Professional Institute closed its doors, until August 16, 1895, which reappeared under the rector of Archbishop Fernando Arturo de Merino.

On November 16, 1914, the President of the Republic, Dr. Ramón Báez, who was also Rector of the Professional Institute, transformed the Professional Institute into the University of Santo Domingo by decree.

From 1916 to 1924, the University had to interrupt its operation as a result of the North American intervention.

During the 31 years of the tyranny of dictator Rafael Leonidas Trujillo, the University of Santo Domingo, like the other institutions in the country, was deprived of the most elementary freedoms for the fulfillment of its high mission, becoming an instrument of control political and propagation of totalitarian slogans, against whose damages the little material progress achieved by the Institution in those years of despotic government was worth nothing, such as the acquisition of land and the construction of the University City.

#### Autonomy and university jurisdiction

Law No. 5778 of December 31, 1961 endowed the University with autonomy. From that moment he began to debate to achieve institutional balance and a climate of coexistence that would allow him to develop all his creative faculties. But after three decades subjected to the iron will of a regime contrary to all forms of human communication that did not serve its interests, the institution did not find it easy to initially use the newly acquired freedom and self-government to carry out its mission of service and contribute to the cultural and economic improvement of our people.

On February 17, 1962, the first authorities were elected under the autonomy regime. Law 5778 on autonomy also enshrined the jurisdiction for the university campus, but this was suppressed by the de facto government of the Triumvirate, through Law # 292, of June 12, 1964.  
[www.uasd.do](http://www.uasd.do) –uasd webpage.

## Chapter II: Review of Literature

### Overview

The real intention of this chapter is to examine the most relevant theories on sociolinguistics approaches there are all over the world to this date, as a point of departure in which we are constructing the theoretical backgrounds for later analysis of the explored situation in our country scenario. In such a way, we will review and quote all of the literature available on this matter, before getting to our main point of interests, which is, as states before, the concrete situations of the referred approaches in the Dominican Republic.

To that effect, Hall (2007), expressed as follows: *“The Learning Context As learning is an active process, the learning context has an important role in the learning process. The context should be designed to help develop critical thinking skills in the learner by using the types of tasks performed in the professional field of practice. Problem solving activities are felt to meet this requirement, as Jonassen (2000 p 63) commented: “problem solving is generally regarded as the most important cognitive activity in everyday and professional contexts”. The best problems are authentic ones, that is are ill-structured problems, as is found in real life (Jonassen, 1998). Cognitive tools are also provided in this environment to aid the learning for example by helping to decrease the cognitive load or help with visualisation. These tools can include computers, concept maps or calculators, for example.”*

*The context described in the sociocultural approach is a social one. This is because of the type of tools described in this theory and the necessity of mediators. The context needed for learning is that where the learners can interact with each other and use the new tools. This means that the learning environment must be authentic, that is, it must contain the type of people who would use these types of tools such as concepts, language, symbols in a natural way. The activity that is part of this environment would also need to be an authentic one, as the type of language used by the people in the environment would be determined by the type of tasks they would be doing. Here the learners will be able to learn how to use domain knowledge in the same way practitioners would, as they would discuss and interact using the domain knowledge that learners require competence in (Brown, Collins & Duguid, 1989). Therefore the type of situation that is required for this interaction is tasks or problems that would normally be done by those in the field. These tasks may be simple or complex, depending on the learners’ levels, but must be authentic. (Pp.96-97)*

With respect to the so-called Mediator Tools, Hall (2007), stated the following:

*Sociocultural theories place the social environment at the very centre of learning, and without which, the “development of the mind is impossible” (Cole & Wertsch, 2001 p 4). This is because learning is mediated. Vygotsky proposed that in the learning process, experts use tools to mediate learning. Cognitive development is not a direct result of activity, but it is indirect; other people must interact with the learner, use mediatory tools to facilitate the learning process, and*

*then cognitive development may occur. These tools are “psychological” (Vygotsky, 1978 p 53) in nature, in that they are used to express thinking, and include language, signs, symbols, texts and mnemonic techniques. The most significant sociocultural tool is language, as it is used to teach tool use and is vital in the process of developing higher psychological functions (Karpov, 2003; Rogoff, 1990; Sutherland, Armstrong, Barnes, Brawn, Breeze, Gall et al, 2004). Mediator tools are first seen externally as the expert teaches the learner how to use the tool, then internally as the learner begins to use the tool in performing other activities. In the internalisation process, the tools modify and transform the learners’ thought processes as they begin to use these new tools to express their thinking. Thus, the impact of the social environment on learning can be seen in that the experts select and teach tool use and this affects the way that the learners express their thinking (Cole & Wertsch, 2001; John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996). (P. 96)*

*As per a definition of what is called a Zone of Proximal Development, the following definition is offered, again by Hall (2007) as a: Sociocultural theories propose a mediatory function in learning, the role of the teacher can be described in the way they promote learning, and this can be achieved with Vygotsky’s concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). This concept describes the type of environment that enables the learner to develop cognitively. When faced with a new situation, the learner needs new or more mature psychological tools and mental structures for this particular activity (Chaiklin, 2003). If the learning environment has the right amount of support from others, then the learner can gain maturity in their new tools as they learn to use them in this environment, and the learner is said to be “learning in the ZPD”. It is not just the presence of other more mature people that is necessary, but that these people must be able to help the learners develop and enrich the particular psychological tools that are needed, and only when these learners are ready for this next stage of development. If these factors are all present, then the learners’ interaction in the social environment can able to help them achieve success in the learning activity, in a way that they could not have done without the social support (Chaiklin, 2003; Karpov, 2003; Kozulin, 2003)*

#### *Another Relevant Definitions of Sociocultural Approaches*

Behroozizad et al (2014) Offered the following perspective on the matter as follows:

*“Sociocultural theory or ‘cultural-historical psychology is a theory of the development of higher mental practices which regards social interaction as the core of communication and learning process. Its origin is derived from the sociological and economic writings of Marx and Engels in eighteenth-and nineteenth century.*

*The theory emerged from the work of the Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky (1978), Leont’ev (1981), and Wertsch (1985). One of the outstanding features of sociocultural theory is considering learning as social in nature where meaning is derived through language use within the social context.*

*Contrary to the followers of cognitive theories who believed in mediation between stimulus and the response, Vygotsky’s (1978) theory investigates the context of the behavior or the social situation where the action occurs. The basic assumption in Vygotsky’s theory is the idea that*

*psychological structures do not exist in the individual's mind; rather, they are formed as a result of interaction with the social context. In other words, the emergence of mental functions depends on social interaction. According to Mitchell and Myles (2004) sociocultural theory views learners as active constructs of their own learning environment. Confirming Mitchell and Myle's viewpoint, Guoxing (2004) states that learners in this sense are responsible for their own learning environment and the environment can nurture and scaffold them (Aimin, 2013). Accordingly, teachers are seen as active constructors of their own teaching environment.*

*Whatever teachers think of learners' language learning will definitely affect their constructions of their teaching environment, though learners are the main focus of the teaching activities. Teachers will reconstruct their perceptions of L2 through practice and progress in language learning and teaching. It is worth noting here that the main focus of the sociocultural perspective is not on the individual but on the individual's surroundings.*

*Claiming that learning is a social activity, sociocultural experts such as Cole and Engeström (1993), Van Lier (2000), and Lantolf (2000) made a shift in their attention from individual cognition into mental activity of members of the same social community. Wertsch (1991), for example, emphasizes that sociocultural point of view should be distinguished from the other perspectives (e.g., constructivism) based on the context or surrounding of the learners.*

*Learning is considered as the product of shared activity and the traditional teacher-student relationship should be changed to one that leads to collaborative learning (Zhang, Fanyu, & Du 2013). In this sense, solutions to learners' problems are gained through the involved participants' or members' behaviors in a shared context. The 'expert' member or knowledgeable other assists other members who need help in the learning process.*

*This guidance is stopped when the members who need help can act independently. This problem-solving process is accomplished by two learners who possess different levels of knowledge and experiences. In other words, as a result of this guidance, a novice gradually becomes the effective member of that community. As Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005) state, "successful learning involves shifting control within activities from the social to the individual, from the external to within self" (p. 232).*

*This is evident in Vygotsky's (1981) description of cultural development: "Any function in the child's development appears twice or on two planes. First it appears on the social plane, and then on the psychological plane. First it appears between people as an interpsychological category, and then within the child as an intrapsychological category" (p. 163). Expressed differently, the most significant contribution of sociocultural perspective to learning and consequently decreasing learners' problems is providing a supportive environment for cognitive development. Thus, for any learner to be successful in language learning, during social interaction within a classroom, it is necessary to change his learning status from first dependent other-regulation to subsequent independent self-regulation. (Pp.219-220)*

*Mediation*

*“According to Vygotsky, humans do not make their relationship with the outer world only through direct stimulus-response reflexes; rather, they have the ability to use physical tools to make indirect connections and mediate their relationship. In so doing, they can regulate and control their behaviors via psychological and technical tools or artifacts.*

*The physical tools mediating these relationships are generated by human cultures and are gradually transferred to the next generation. From a sociocultural perspective, learning is a mediated process. Mitchell and Myles (2004) believe that “learning is mediated partly through learner’s developing use and control of mental tools” (p. 195). Lantolf (2000) presented three versions of mediation: mediation by others, mediation by self through private speech, and mediation by artifacts (e.g., tasks and technology).*

*Being grounded in Vygotskian perspective and considering Lantolf’s taxonomy of mediation, this paper treats mediation by others as the domain of the teacher of the EFL classroom with the focus on the teacher’s teaching and scaffolding methods. Human development is not just the outcome of one’s personal attempt and individual function but it is a result of a system of social connections and relations.*

*Three conceptual resources are introduced by Gao (2010) which mediate language learners’ language learning: learning discourses, artifacts and material conditions, and social agents (p. 21). By contextual resources, Gao means any learner’s beliefs and values present in the learning context in relation with foreign language learning which may affect learning processes in general and strategy use in particular.*

*He emphasizes that the function of learners’ discourses is different at the micro-level and macro-level, as micro-level discourses reinforce the learners to be responsible for their learning processes. For instance, they can control and identify the steps required for removing a learning problem. However, at the macro-level discourses are indicators of learners’ values in learning a target language along with the goals they intend to obtain through strategy use.” (Pp.221-222)*

### *Sociolinguistics Approaches and Foreign Languages Learning/Acquisition*

Before beginning to explain the relationship between the sociolinguistics approaches and Foreign language learning or acquisition, let us define and specify first, what those so-called Sociolinguistics Approaches are; for such a purpose, let us consider enumerating the following terms: a) Cognitivism, b) Constructivism, and c) Vygotsky’s Sociolinguistics Theory (which has been discussed earlier, in previous chapters of this work).

#### a) Cognitivism

**Cognitivism** is a learning theory according to which mental processes mediate learning and learning entails the construction or reshaping of mental schemata. Cognitivists believe that knowledge resides in complex memory structures in the human mind called schemata, and learning is the process of changing these structures. ID from a cognitivist

perspective focuses on presenting learners with the appropriate information and feedback to shape their mental schemata.

It considers learning as an expression of mind in its processes and psycho-dynamic conditions. Teachers/authors are responsible in assisting learners, organizing information in an optimal way to be easily assimilated. It is concerned with what the learner is thinking in terms of processing information for storage and retrieval. A psychological paradigm that views learning information processing within the mind.

This epistemology treats conceptual understandings as a pattern of connections between similar elements (e.g., concepts) and learning as strengthening or weakening those connections (e.g., conceptual relations). **Cognitivism** gained momentum in the late 1950s as a counter attack towards behaviorism, which relied upon overt or observable behavior as the determinant of human learning. The cognitivists emphasized the role of internal mental processes and how mind works during the process of learning.

Requires that students engage in the process of accessing prior knowledge, making connections between old and new concepts, and using them to construct theory. Dictionary search/IGI GLOBAL (2021).

#### b) Constructivism

According to McLeod (2019) Constructivism is ‘an approach to learning that holds that people actively construct or make their own knowledge and that reality is determined by the experiences of the learner’ (Elliott et al., 2000, p. 256). In elaborating constructivists’ ideas Arends (1998) states that constructivism believes in personal construction of meaning by the learner through experience, and that meaning is influenced by the interaction of prior knowledge and new events.

Constructivism's central idea is that human learning is constructed, that learners build new knowledge upon the foundation of previous learning.

This prior knowledge influences what new or modified knowledge an individual will construct from new learning experiences (Phillips, 1995).

The second notion is that learning is an active rather than a passive process.

The passive view of teaching views the learner as ‘an empty vessel’ to be filled with knowledge, whereas constructivism states that learners construct meaning only through active engagement with the world (such as experiments or real-world problem solving).

Information may be passively received, but understanding cannot be, for it must come from making meaningful connections between prior knowledge, new knowledge, and the processes involved in learning. McLeod (2019).

Learning is a social activity - it is something we do together, in interaction with each other, rather than an abstract concept (Dewey, 1938).

For example, Vygotsky (1978), believed that community plays a central role in the process of "making meaning." For Vygotsky, the environment in which children grow up will influence how they think and what they think about.

Thus, all teaching and learning is a matter of sharing and negotiating socially constituted knowledge.

For example, Vygotsky (1978) states cognitive development stems from social interactions from guided learning within the *zone of proximal development* as children and their partner's co-construct knowledge.

Each individual learner has a distinctive point of view, based on existing knowledge and values.

This means that same lesson, teaching or activity may result in different learning by each pupil, as their subjective interpretations differ.

This principle appears to contradict the view the knowledge is socially constructed.

Fox (2001, p. 30) argues (a) that although individuals have their own personal history of learning, nevertheless they can share in common knowledge, and (b) that although education is a social process, powerfully influenced by cultural factors, nevertheless cultures are made up of sub- cultures, even to the point of being composed of sub-cultures of one. Cultures and their knowledge-base are constantly in a process of change and the knowledge stored by individuals is not a rigid copy of some socially constructed template. In learning a culture, each child changes that culture.

#### *The Three Main Type of Constructivism*

Typically, this continuum is divided into three broad categories: Cognitive constructivism based on the work of Jean Piaget, social constructivism based on the work of Lev Vygotsky, and radical constructivism.

According to the GSI Teaching and Resource Center (2015, p.5): Cognitive constructivism states knowledge is something that is actively constructed by learners based on their existing cognitive structures. Therefore, learning is relative to their stage of cognitive development.

Cognitivist teaching methods aim to assist students in assimilating new information to existing knowledge, and enabling them to make the appropriate modifications to their existing intellectual framework to accommodate that information.

According to social constructivism learning is a collaborative process, and knowledge develops from individuals' interactions with their culture and society. Social constructivism was developed by Lev Vygotsky (1978, p. 57) who suggested that,

Every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level and, later on, on the individual level; first, between people (interpsychological) and then inside the child (intrapsychological).

The notion of radical constructivism was developed by Ernst von Glasersfeld (1974) and states that all knowledge is constructed rather than perceived through senses.

Learners construct new knowledge on the foundations of their existing knowledge. However, radical constructivism states that the knowledge individuals create tells us nothing about reality, and only helps us to function in your environment. Thus, knowledge is invented not discovered.

The humanly constructed reality is all the time being modified and interacting to fit ontological reality, although it can never give a 'true picture' of it. (Ernest, 1994, p. 8)

### *Constructivist Approaches to Teaching*

Constructivist learning theory underpins a variety of student-centered teaching methods and techniques which contrast with traditional education, whereby knowledge is simply passively transmitted by teachers to students.

The primary responsibility of the teacher is to create a collaborative problem-solving environment where students become active participants in their own learning.

From this perspective, a teacher acts as a facilitator of learning rather than an instructor.

The teacher makes sure he/she understands the students' preexisting conceptions, and guides the activity to address them and then build on them (Oliver, 2000).

Scaffolding is a key feature of effective teaching, where the adult continually adjusts the level of his or her help in response to the learner's level of performance.

In the classroom, scaffolding can include modeling a skill, providing hints or cues, and adapting material or activity (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009). Mcleod(2019)

### Chapter III: Methodology Design

To obtain the data, two qualitative research methods; Direct Observation and In-depth Interview, were administered with 3 teachers of Advanced English from three different sections of the UASD University. Data collection took approximately 3 weeks during the last first virtual semester (2021-1) of this academic year. EFL Teachers who participated in the study were observed in their teaching and were asked to answer a list of guided interview questions that allowed them to elaborate on their teaching style and clarify the teaching methods done in the classroom.

To that respect the following definition of qualitative research is exposed by Bhandari (2020), as follows: “Qualitative research involves collecting and analyzing non-numerical data (e.g., text, video, or audio) to understand concepts, opinions, or experiences. It can be used to gather in-depth insights into a problem or generate new ideas for research.

Qualitative research is the opposite of quantitative research, which involves collecting and analyzing numerical data for statistical analysis.

Qualitative research is commonly used in the humanities and social sciences, in subjects such as anthropology, sociology, education, health sciences, history, etc.”

#### *Qualitative Research Methods*

Each of the research approaches involve using one or more data collection methods. These are some of the most common qualitative methods:

- Observations: recording what you have seen, heard, or encountered in detailed field notes.
- Interviews: personally asking people questions in one-on-one conversations.
- Focus groups: asking questions and generating discussion among a group of people.
- Surveys: distributing questionnaires with open-ended questions.
- Secondary research: collecting existing data in the form of texts, images, audio or video recordings, etc. Bhandari (2020).

#### *Population*

The population for this study were three professors of the so-called Advanced English Sections of the UASD Campuses of two inner cities Campuses (Puerto Plata and Bonao), during the past virtual semester (2021-1) that correspond to the regular undergraduate curricular offer of the university.

#### *Procedures*

Of those three sections of Advanced English for the core curriculum of the undergraduate program (A Bachelor’s Degree in EFL), only two of them were asked, beforehand to largely

employ the sociolinguistic approaches, and the third section was not, as a manner of using it as a Control section, in order to compare the effects of the said methodology. And as stated before, they were subjected to be in-depth observed and the teachers interviewed.

## Chapter IV: Findings, Discussions & Conclusions

### *Findings*

Since the intervention was to be placed at three advanced English Sections, it was not surprising that the levels of those observed students were corresponding as expected in this higher level, classroom activities appeared to be longer and more complicated than those found in another beginning levels. Dialogue and role-playing activities are normally used in the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). Participants showed a strong affinity for CLT, through the learning activities they chose, as well as their personal teaching/interaction styles with students. As facilitators in CLT, they walked around the classroom and facilitated students during individual and group works. For example, sometimes the teacher guided students in their assignments: correcting mistakes, motivating, clarifying things students did not understand fully, etc. At this grade level, most students understood the English instructions, questions and explanations in-between the activities.

There were also a lot of interaction through cultural debates, where the Anglo-Saxon and the Dominican culture were compared, up to the point of presenting by part of the students a deep concerning on the phenomenon of *interculturization*, *transculturation* and *language imperialism*; issues that are commonly discussed, both by professors and students in a college like this one, with a long tradition of struggling for the sake of democracy and that of the public liberties in this country, since not in vain is called the People's University.

### *Research Questions Discussions*

Research Question Discussion #1.-What Are Sociolinguistics Approaches for the EFL Language Teaching/ Learning process?

The discussions held in the first chapters of this work led to the following considerations: That they are the theories developed by such social scientist like Vygotsky and Piaget where the main focus of those EFL Teaching Methodology were placed in society as a whole, rather than individual traits, and to sum it up, they [Sociolinguistic approaches], allow us to study the impact of social factors on cognitive processes as these result in the acquisition of a new linguistic system. Sociolinguistics is a well-established branch of linguistics that focuses on the study of the impact.

Research Questions Discussion #2.- Which Teaching Approaches, Methods and Strategies were found in the Foreign Language Classrooms?

The main leading teaching methodology in this university it is the Communicative Approach, and some other Non-traditional methodologies, needless to say that those traditional methods like the Grammar-Translation Method which many scholars considered obsolete and out of fashion, has not place in the new Dominican academy, and are considered a remnant of past years of the history of our education, when that method was largely used in public secondary schools, and they are

even related to as the preferred methodologies of past dictatorship and have been rejected since the democratic opening of the Dominican Republic. And of course, due to the Covid 19 pandemic, our university has opened its doors for those new EFL Teaching Methods associated to the new technologies of the information, such as the so-called Computer Assisted Language Learning-CALL-, or On-line learning, among others, and using a lot of new portals and platforms like Google, Moodle, etc.

But, above all, constructivism, which is by the way, the official Educational Philosophy and Policy of the Dominican Education System, at the pre-college level, lead the way, also in the Higher Education System.

Research Question Discussion #3.-In what way have those approaches impact the Teaching/Learning Process at UASD University?

For the last decades, it is notable the influence of Constructivism in our educational system, at the pre-college level, and of course, since there were the universities which first adopted such Philosophy and Policies, the path was paved for the authorities to follow those trends, but an inevitable questions that always arose among teachers, specifically at the Middle or High School level, was, how to bring real construtivistics practices into the classrooms, besides being philosophically 'converted' to the Constructivism?

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