

## **Using Constructivism to Explore Students' Perspectives on Learning Mandarin Lexical**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Teaching lexical items plays an important role in second or foreign language classroom. There has been a dramatic increase in studies done on the importance of adopting the right methods to introduce the students with lexical items considering the central role that lexis plays in any languages. The purpose of this study is to investigate the students' perspective on the Constructivist Learning Theory in learning Mandarin lexical more effectively. Nine types of teaching methods introduced in this study are: (1) compare and contrast, (2) word wall, (3) note taking and summarising, (4) recitation, (5) cues, question and activating prior knowledge, (6) role play, (7) non-linguistic representation, (8) homework and practice, and (9) analysis of students' work and discussion. Descriptive survey method which involves questionnaires was employed and 35 participants were selected for this study. The findings revealed that the students perceived note taking and summarising as well as homework and practice as the most helpful methods for learners to minimize the negative transfer of their mother tongue in Mandarin lexis learning. They also mentioned that note taking and summarising were the most interesting methods as compared to other methods whereas homework and practice was most effective for them. It is recommended that foreign language instructors in Malaysian higher education institution to keep updated on the current approach in introducing lexical items in an effective and interesting manner.

**Keywords:** Constructivist Learning Theory; Lexical; Mandarin; Foreign Language; Teaching Methods

## INTRODUCTION

Teaching lexical items plays an important role in second or foreign language teaching. There has been a dramatic increase in studies done on the importance of adopting the right methods to introduce the students with lexical items considering the central role that lexis plays in any languages. Accordingly, numerous types of methods, strategies, approaches and practice have been proposed into the field of second or foreign language of teaching, especially in the perspective of lexical. Teaching lexical knowledge in second or foreign language acquisition is important as mentioned by Nation (2001) that teaching lexical items should not only consist of teaching specific words, but also aim at equipping students with strategies necessary to expand their lexical knowledge.

In Malaysia, the numbers of non-Chinese students who choose to study Mandarin as a third language in local universities have increased significantly. However, the language differences have caused some difficulties for the non-Chinese students in their Mandarin language learning. This is especially in terms of lack of lexical knowledge which resulted to students' inability to learn Mandarin well. Thus, the purpose of this study is to develop some teaching methods in Mandarin lexical teaching in Universiti Malaysia Kelantan and to explore students' perspective on learning Mandarin lexical through the Constructivist Learning Theory. Therefore, three research questions are proposed in this study:

1. What are the students' perceptions on the helpfulness of the nine teaching methods in minimising the negative transfer?
2. What are the students' perceptions on the most interesting teaching methods?
3. What are the students' perceptions on the most effective teaching methods?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

In the early stage of learning a foreign language, learners will rely on the knowledge and the structure of their first/native language (L1) to assist them in the process of new language acquisition. First language is defined as the language which is learnt during the learners' early childhood before the age of around 3 years old (Sinha et. al., 2009). As stated by Derakhshan and Karimi (2015), first language becomes the medium for the new language acquisition as it helps to solve the learning and communication problem that occur throughout the process.

As further explained by Faerch and Kasper (1987), this process involves mental and communicative procedures where language learners develop their inter language skills by activating and making use of their previous linguistic knowledge into the learning of the new language. This is also supported by Nation (2001) in his study where first language plays the significant role to communicate meaning and content in the second/foreign language development. Besides the more common term of language transfer being utilized in this field of study, other terms such as interference and cross meaning have also been adopted by some researchers in the past (Brogan & Son, 2015).

It is commonly acknowledged that foreign/second language learners have the tendency to transfer the forms, meaning and culture of the native language into the new language that they are learning. This process of language transfer may bring positive or negative effect to the foreign language acquisition. The effect depends mainly on the nature of the first and the new language involved. Based on Lado (1957), the type of transfer depends on the structural similarities or

differences of the first language and the new language. Similar structures between the first and the new language where they are mutually transferable will aid in the acquisition process (Brogan & Son, 2015). On the other hand, a high degree of variation between the first language and the foreign/second language will result in a high frequency of errors as undesirable habits are transferred from L1 to the new language (Ellis, 1994). This is further explained by Hayati (1998) based on the two assumptions of the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis. The first hypothesis states that the degree of difference between the two languages shows the degree of difficulty while the second one states that the degree of similarity shows the degree of simplicity. Hence, for circumstances where L1 has a high variation degree as compared to L2 or foreign language, this will result in many negative transfers which will impede the learning process in foreign language classroom.

Besides the nature of the first and foreign language, the learners' age and level of proficiency also play significant roles in influencing the type and intensity of the language transfer involved. According to Derakhshan and Karimi (2015), children have less tendency of transferring first language habits to the new language acquisition as compared to adults due to the nature of their brain which is described as more flexible in learning a new language. This is further explained by the fact that children have yet to master the first language and have lack of proficiency in the first language as compared to adults. Hence they rely less on the first language to acquire the second/foreign language which in return minimize the negative transfer occurrences in second/foreign language acquisition. This is also supported by Krashen (1981), where he stated that one of the determining factors in the L2 acquisition is the age of the learners.

Furthermore, a study done by Taylor (1975) discovers that when occurrences of errors are compared between students from elementary level and intermediate and advanced level, it is found that students from elementary level experience more errors as compared to intermediate and advanced level students. From the analysis done in the study, the researcher concludes that the errors present among elementary students are associated with negative transfer from their native language while errors among intermediate and advanced students are associated with intralingual errors namely overgeneralization and incorrect application. The study summarizes that the more proficient the learner becomes, the less he/she relies on the native language to construct the new language.

In the case of tertiary level students, negative transfer imposes a significant threat in the acquisition of the foreign language as the students are adults with strong influence of their native language. As in this study, the students are young adults who learn Mandarin as their foreign language. The factors of age and level of proficiency result in negative language transfer becoming a crucial learning issue that needs to be addressed effectively and resourcefully by the language instructors. It is vital that foreign language instructors are aware of the elements of interference from the first language in the development of the learners' foreign language in their classroom and adopt suitable teaching methods that cater to the problem efficiently (Shi, 2015).

### **Definition of Teaching Methods**

Previous studies have defined numerous terms for 'teaching methods' (Ellis, 1995; Obanya et. al., 1996; Tewodros & Admasu, 2000; Biadgelign, 2010). Ellis (1995) defines teaching methods as teaching process that encompasses course design, course management and methods of face-to-face teaching, provision of other learning opportunities, assessment and feedback to students. Obanya et. al., (1996) share a similar understanding as Ellis that teaching methods as inclusive of

procedures, instructional devices, and direction of instructions intentionally selected to help the teaching and learning objectives. Another prominent definition of teaching methods is that it is both traditional and modern depending on the nature of the involvement of the students and the teacher, the consideration of educational teaching objectives, and their modernity or time to use (Tewodros & Admasu, 2000). Biadgelign (2010) is also in agreement with previous scholars that teaching methods are general means, manners, ways, procedures, or steps by which a particular order is imposed upon teaching or presentation of activities. In general, teaching methods are pedagogical organization of activities where upon their implementation the students will experience effective learning and increased performance.

### **Studies of Teaching Methods**

There is a plethora of studies in relation to teaching methods and its implications on students' performance (Petronilla, 2011; Anbessa, 2013; Miressa, 2014). A study by Petronilla (2011) examined the relationship between instructional strategies/teachers methodologies and students' academic achievement in mathematics on fourth grade students by using the Criterion Referenced Competency Test (CRCT). Her findings revealed that the instructional strategies/teaching methodologies had contributed significantly to the students' achievement. The findings of Anbessa (2013) supported Petronilla study when she recommended in her study that various teaching methods should be used to solve the students' learning problem as well as for the betterment of students' learning quality. The findings were further proven by a study done by Miressa (2014) who tried to assess to what extent English language teachers practice vocabulary teaching strategies in EFL classes at Kellem Secondary school. Based on the findings, it was found that the teachers suffer from lack of skills on the implementation of different types of vocabulary teaching strategies in EFL classes in accordance to the students' suitability and therefore resulted in poor quality of student learning. The above studies indicated that effective teaching methods contributed to students' good performance and lack of effective teaching method would result to students' poor performance in language learning.

With this concern, this paper explores the students' perceptions on the implementation of the selected nine teaching methods introduced in Mandarin language classroom. These nine teaching methods are based on the constructivism theory which is explained in detail in the next part of this section. The nine teaching methods consist of compare and contrast, word wall, note taking and summarizing, recitation, cues, question and activating prior knowledge, role play, non-linguistic representation, homework and practice and analysis of students' work and discussion.

### **The Implementation of Nine Teaching Methods**

#### ***Compare and Contrast***

Compare and contrast is used to identify the similarities and differences of two or more items, and requires students to justify their comparisons by using their critical thinking skills. For example, the instructor compares the similarities and differences between the students' native language (Malay) and the target language (Mandarin). For instance, in Malay language, a sentence normally starts with nouns followed by verb or another noun, like *mee goreng* (fried mee). *Mee* is a noun, and *goreng* is a verb which becomes a compound noun with the word *mee*. In contrast, the word

order in Mandarin is the opposite of Malay language, and always starts with verb followed by nouns, like *chaomian*. *Chao* (goreng) is a verb, and *mian* (mi) is noun.

TABLE 1. The differences of Word Order Malay and Mandarin

English	Malay		Mandarin	
Fried Mee	<i>Mee</i> (noun)	<i>Goreng</i> (verb)	<i>Chao</i> (verb)	<i>Mian</i> (noun)

Understanding the sentence structure will help the students to make comparison between their native language and the target language. Hence the understanding of the sentence structure will help minimise students' errors in language usage.

### **Word Wall**

Word wall is used to organize the collection of familiar words and connect them together. For example, when the instructor teaches the word of *wo* (I), the first step is by asking the students to remember the word 'wo' as a basis. Then the teacher will slowly expand the word to 'wo de' (my), 'women' (we) and 'women de' (our).

TABLE 2. The Word Wall Teaching Methods of *Wo* (I)

English	I	my	we	our
Mandarin	<i>wo</i>	<i>wo (de)</i>	<i>wo(men)</i>	<i>women (de)</i>

The connection of the familiar word in this method may help students to recognize the new words easily, obtain new vocabularies, as well as increase their interest in learning a language.

### **Note Taking and Summarizing**

Note taking is an additional method to support students' learning process. The instructor can always ask students to review and refine the important points from their notes, especially when they need to prepare for their examination, or their on-going assessments.

Meanwhile as for summarizing students can learn how to identify key points, define and also analyze information obtained from reading materials also from the instructor. Therefore, the explicit instruction in the note taking and summarizing would help students to enhance their higher-order thinking skill which will help them to become more effective and successful language learners.

### **Recitation**

Recitation is used as a conscious language input activity. Through reciting a large number of Mandarin vocabularies, students are able to engage in the target language environment more efficiently. They are able to acquire common vocabulary, sentence patterns and fixed expressions used in authentic situations.

### ***Cues, Question and Activating Prior Knowledge***

Cues, question and activating prior knowledge are frequently used by the language instructor in classroom in order to recall information from previous lessons. Cues, questions and activating prior knowledge can also strengthen students' memory and understanding of vocabularies learned from previous lessons.

### ***Role Play***

Role play is used to help the students to practice, experience and act out what they have learned from their textbook and also during lesson. When the students know the different ways to apply their knowledge, they would understand the language better. This would result to an increase in their curiosity of the language.

### ***Non-Linguistic Representation***

Non-linguistic representation refers to the stored information in the memory in the forms of images. The instructor helps the students to create or draw images for example, when teaching the word '*jiaren*', the instructor explains the meaning; '*jia*' means house/home whereas '*ren*' means people/person. Then asks the students to draw a picture of 'people in a house', and asks them to guess who the people are. Lastly the instructor explains the meaning of the word '*jiaren*' which means 'family member'. This method will help students to increase their understanding and develop their memory.

### ***Homework and Practice***

Homework and practice provide the extended learning and reinforcement for students to refine their learning skills. Homework and practice are usually assigned after the students finished a module from the textbook. The given homework mostly include the practice of sentence structures, reorganization of words and phrases, translation of sentences, dialogues, writing tasks and other exercises. Through homework and practices, students could strengthen their understanding and enhance the grammatical knowledge that they have learned.

### ***Analysis of Students' Work and Discussion***

Analysis of students' work is used by the instructor once the students have submitted their homework and practice. This method could help the instructor to identify and examine the students' language errors so as to minimise the occurrences of language errors. Moreover, discussion with the students after analysing their work would further help the students to enhance their language acquisition. Thus, the method of analysing students' work and discussion is important in strengthening the students' foundation for language input as well as language output.

In conclusion, these nine teaching methods encourage students' active participation and critical thinking process in learning foreign language. Constructivism theory plays a prominent role in explaining the contributions of these methods in improving the students' foreign language learning experience.

## **Constructivist Learning Theory**

Constructivist Learning Theory (CLT) is based on the foundation of constructivism. According to Royer (2005), constructivism is viewed as “a component of the cognitive revolution in the 1950s” (Royer, 2005:3). Cognitive revolution which was developed by Thomas Kuhn, was utilized as an approach to analyzing the change in psychology that included observed behaviour and the understanding of the internal mechanisms of the mind. The learning theory from constructivism after then occupied with cognitive or social theories (Royer, 2005:4-5).

From the view of CLT, learners can present some information by selecting and adjusting the new information through cognitive structures such as mental and schema models (Bruner, 1973). Thus, CLT indicated that learning is only occurred if some learners actively connect their cognitive structures through the building experiences from mental and schema (Yager & Lutz, 1994; Fosnot, 1996), or through the reflection of personal experiences of new material by connecting it to what was previously known (Brooks & Brooks, 1993). Piaget (1977) also agreed that through the mental maps formed from the previous experiences, it will be easier for the learner to connect and expose it to new experiences or ideas (Piaget, 1977).

Therefore, as proposed by the founding father of cognitive learning theory, Gagné, learning is cumulative (Gagné, 1985:4). That is, new skills will build upon prior skills to achieve higher levels of e-learning, and teachers through planned or directed instruction develop the learning itself intellectually. While from the view of social theory, Dewey (1963) emphasized that CLT was a social process which centred on the relationship between learners’ experiences and the environment. Therefore, Dewey (1963) suggested that teachers or educators have to begin a lesson based on learners’ experiences, so that learners can create the connections (schema) from their experiences to the world (Dewey, 1963:87). To sum up, Constructivist learning theory (CLT) is the base upon the idea that individuals gain knowledge by solving real world problems through collaboration with others (Newby et. al., 2006), and it is rooted in the following beliefs: (1) learning would occur when learners are actively participating in the process; (2) knowledge is created and instinctive; (3) knowledge is gained through formulating, not discovering; (4) learning is made through personal associations; (5) learning occurs through peer interactions; (6) solving problems that are challenging, unrestricted, and significant will result in learning; (7) learning allows learners to find meaning in the world (Von Glaserfeld, 1995; Vgotsky, 1978); (8) learning occurs by development of thinking and understanding for subject structure and active learning (Bruner et. al., 1956); and (9) learning occurs through reflecting on new concepts (Van de Walle, 2004).

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Sample**

The samples of the present study were collected from 35 undergraduates who took Mandarin as a third language at Universiti Malaysia Kelantan. 35 students from two Mandarin classes were chosen from a total of 40 Mandarin students in *Faculty of Creative Technology and Heritage*, in order to expose to the instruction of teaching methods, followed by the administration of the questionnaire. Out of the 35 students, there were 7 males and 28 females with the age ranged from 21 to 23 years old. The students did not have any background knowledge of the target language learning prior attending the lesson.

## Instrument

The items for the questionnaire were adapted from Kothari (2004) and Nora (2013). The questionnaire consisted of two sections. Section one was the demographic background of the students, such as age, gender, ethnic and academic results. Section two required the students to rate their perceptions on the three parts: helpfulness, interest and effectiveness of the intervention introduced to them in class. Nine teaching methods were introduced namely (1) compare and contrast, (2) word wall, (3) note taking and summarizing, (4) recitation, (5) cues, question and activating prior knowledge, (6) role play, (7) non-linguistic representation, (8) homework and practice, and (9) analysis of students' work and discussion. The reliability of the items were tested by using Cronbach's alpha, and the value,  $\alpha$  were 0.829, 0.834 and 0.866 respectively. The results indicate acceptable reliability for the questionnaire.

## Procedure

The study was conducted in one semester (14 weeks). The students were exposed to the nine teaching methods in Mandarin classroom for ten weeks (eight weeks for Mandarin lessons and two weeks for revision), from week four to week eleven (following the academic calendar of semester September, 2017/2018), a total of eight chapters; from chapter three to chapter ten specifically on Mandarin lexicon. Another two weeks which started from week twelve to week thirteen, were the revision weeks for the students. The duration for Mandarin class is three hours per week. As mentioned above, the nine teaching methods were introduced in Mandarin lesson, and the duration for each method was allocated for approximately 10-30 minutes. The details of the teaching methods and the duration for each method are as follow.

Week	Chapter	Teaching methods	Duration (minutes)
Four	Three	compare and contrast	15
		word wall	15
		note taking and summarizing	15
		recitation	30
		cues, question and activating prior knowledge	30
		role play	20
		non-linguistic representation	15
		homework and practice	20
		analysis of students' work and discussion	20
Five	Four	compare and contrast	15
		word wall	15
		note taking and summarizing	15
		recitation	30
		cues, question and activating prior knowledge	20
		role play	30
		non-linguistic representation	15
		homework and practice	20
		analysis of students' work and discussion	20
Six	Five	compare and contrast	20
		word wall	20
		note taking and summarizing	15
		recitation	25

		cues, question and activating prior knowledge	20
		role play	25
		non-linguistic representation	15
		homework and practice	20
		analysis of students' work and discussion	20
Seven	Six	compare and contrast	20
		word wall	20
		note taking and summarizing	15
		recitation	25
		cues, question and activating prior knowledge	20
		role play	30
		non-linguistic representation	10
		homework and practice	20
		analysis of students' work and discussion	20
Eight	Seven	compare and contrast	15
		word wall	15
		note taking and summarizing	15
		recitation	30
		cues, question and activating prior knowledge	20
		role play	30
		non-linguistic representation	15
		homework and practice	20
		analysis of students' work and discussion	20
Nine	Eight	compare and contrast	15
		word wall	15
		note taking and summarizing	15
		recitation	30
		cues, question and activating prior knowledge	20
		role play	30
		non-linguistic representation	15
		homework and practice	20
		analysis of students' work and discussion	20
Ten	Nine	compare and contrast	15
		word wall	15
		note taking and summarizing	15
		recitation	30
		cues, question and activating prior knowledge	20
		role play	30
		non-linguistic representation	15
		homework and practice	20
		analysis of students' work and discussion	20
Eleven	Ten	compare and contrast	15
		word wall	15
		note taking and summarizing	15
		recitation	30
		cues, question and activating prior knowledge	20
		role play	30
		non-linguistic representation	15
		homework and practice	20

		analysis of students' work and discussion	20
Twelve	Revision 1	compare and contrast	20
		word wall	20
		note taking and summarizing	20
		cues, question and activating prior knowledge	20
		homework and practice	60
		analysis of students' work and discussion	40
Thirteen	Revision 2	compare and contrast	20
		word wall	20
		note taking and summarizing	20
		cues, question and activating prior knowledge	15
		homework and practice	60
		analysis of students' work and discussion	45

The questionnaires were administered by the researchers after the second revision class at week thirteen, following the calendar academic, 2017/2018. Approximately 15-20 minutes were given to the participants to complete the questionnaire. The students' responses to the questionnaire were then analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS version 20.0) in terms of mean scores and standard deviations on a five-point Likert scales as follows: 1 = least; 2 = less; 3 = average; 4 = more; and 5 = most. In the following section, results of analyses done to the students' responses are presented and discussed. Descriptive Statistics analysis was used to analyse the students' perceptions on the helpfulness, interest and effectiveness of the nine teaching methods.

## FINDINGS

### The Helpfulness of the Nine Teaching Methods in Improving Negative Transfer from Their L1 To L2 Mandarin Lexical

Table 3 shows the mean value of the students' perceptions on the helpfulness of the nine teaching methods. The results observed that the methods of note taking and summarizing, and homework and practice were scored the highest mean value of 4.43 for both. Followed by cues, question and activating prior knowledge (4.26), word wall (4.17), analysis of students' work and discussion (4.09), recitation and non-linguistic representation (4.05), and role play (4.0). Compare and contrast was found as the least helpful, with the lowest mean value of 3.94.

TABLE 3. The Helpfulness of Teaching Methods in Improving Negative Transfer

Teaching Methods	Mean	SD
Compare and Contrast	3.9429	.80231
Word Wall	4.1714	.74698
Note Taking and Summarizing	4.4286	.65465
Recitation	4.0571	.83817
Cues, Question and Activating Prior Knowledge	4.2571	.74134
Role Play	4.0000	.87447
Non-linguistic Representation	4.0571	.72529
Homework and Practice	4.4286	.60807

Analysis of Students' Work and Discussion (N=35)	4.0857	.78108
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### The Interest of the Nine Teaching Methods in Learning Mandarin Lexical

Table 4 illustrates the mean value of the students' interest of the nine teaching methods. The results revealed that majority of the students were interested with the nine teaching methods ( $M > 4.0$ ). The students perceived that note-taking and summarizing were the most interesting to them due to the higher mean value of 4.28 as compared to other methods. Followed by homework and practice (4.2), analysis of students' work and discussion (4.14), word wall (4.06), role play (4.02), cues, question and activating prior knowledge (4.0), compare and contrast (3.97), and non-linguistic representation (3.94). The method of recitation was found to be the least interesting to students due to the lowest mean value of 3.91.

TABLE 4. The Interest of Teaching Methods in Learning Mandarin Lexical

Teaching Methods	Mean	SD
Compare and Contrast	3.9714	.78537
Word Wall	4.0571	.80231
Note Taking and Summarizing	4.2857	.78857
Recitation	3.9143	.70174
Cues, Questions and Activating Prior Knowledge	4.0000	.76696
Role Play	4.0286	.82197
Non-linguistic Representation	3.9429	.76477
Homework and Practice	4.2000	.83314
Analysis of Students' Work and Discussion (N=35)	4.1429	.77242

### The Effectiveness of the Nine Teaching Methods in Learning Mandarin Lexical

Table 5 shows the mean value based on a survey conducted to measure the students' perceptions on the effectiveness of the nine teaching methods in learning Mandarin. It was evident that majority of the students felt that the nine teaching methods were very effective in helping them to improve their vocabulary and grammatical knowledge ( $M > 4.0$ ). It also highlighted the potential for accelerated development of students' language skills. Moreover, based from the analysis it is also evident that the students perceived that homework and practice have helped them the most due to the higher mean value of 4.31 as compared to other activities. Followed by note-taking and summarizing (4.28), recitation (4.23), cues, question and activating prior knowledge (4.2), word wall (4.14), analysis of students' work and discussion (4.11), role play (4.05) and compare and contrast (4.03). The method of non-linguistic representation was found as the least effective to students due to the lowest mean value of 3.97.

TABLE 5. The Effectiveness of Teaching Methods in Learning Mandarin Lexical

Teaching Methods	Mean	SD
Compare and Contrast	4.0286	.82197
Word Wall	4.1429	.80961
Note-Taking and Summarizing	4.2857	.78857

Recitation	4.2286	.77024
Cues, Question and Activating Prior Knowledge	4.2000	.79705
Role Play	4.0571	.68354
Non-linguistic Representation	3.9714	.85700
Homework and Practice	4.3143	.75815
Analysis of Students' Work and Discussion	4.1143	.79600

(N=35)

## DISCUSSION

Introducing the students with the nine teaching methods through Constructivist Learning Theory (CLT) had encouraged them to be independent learners who actively involved in the learning process. By participating in activities such as role play, compare and contrast, recitation, word wall and others, the students engaged in discussing, reading, listening, and writing in solving problems and completing the tasks. Through these active participations, the students' critical thinking and problem solving skills were enhanced. They were also given the medium to acquire the knowledge by making connection of the available mental model to the new knowledge received. Hence, this will increase their acquisition of new lexical items and grammatical knowledge that can further promote their third language proficiency. Furthermore, working collaboratively with friends will also promote lexical and grammatical acquisition as students create new understanding based on active, mutual interactions with peers. The motivation gained through this active interaction will further encourage the students to explore the language elements.

Among the nine teaching methods applied in this study, homework and practiced as well as note taking and summarising found to be the most preferable and effective teaching methods applied in classroom. The students believed that those methods helped them to understand the grammatical aspects of the target language and helped them to overcome the interference from their mother tongue. The findings reflected the notion of learning as described in Constructivist Learning Theory in which that learning a language happens when learners able to reflect, adjust and make meaning of the new language with their existing schema and mental experiences. The findings also indicated that the instructor's integration of the nine teaching methods in learning mandarin helped the students to learn better and provided the instructor with the best options to teach mandarin to the students. Anbessa (2013) has also suggested that various teaching methods should be adopted to solve the students' learning challenges as well as to ensure the improvement of the learning environment. It can be inferred from the findings also indicate that it is essential for teachers to prepare teaching methods and strategies that could assist and increase the quality the teaching and learning process. This is similar to Miressa (2014) study that the teachers' lack of lexical teaching strategies in EFL classroom has affected the quality of learning among the students.

The findings indicate that the methods with the highest mean score such as homework and practiced as well as note taking and summarising helped the students with their negative language transfer. By practicing the language and taking notes, negative interferences from the students' mother tongue could be minimised. Constant practice and familiarity with the target language, helped the students and this is supported by Shi (2015) that it is essential for language instructors to create a learning environment and learning activities that could address the interference from the students' first language.

Constructivist Learning Theory (CLT) has been widely adopted in higher education language classroom in Malaysia as it offers many advantages in terms of promoting the students' self-directed learning. Students sufficiently acquire the knowledge, skills and attitude needed to improve their academic achievement particularly in the perspective of lexical. In all, by encouraging students to be independent learners who are responsible of their own learning process, the students' mastery of lexical has been effectively promoted. Hence, it is evident in the findings that the combination of the nine teaching methods has significantly improved the students' Mandarin language learning.

### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

The critical needs for sufficient knowledge in lexical among foreign language students in Malaysia has resulted in the introduction of variety learning approaches in classroom. In the context of this study, nine teaching methods were implemented among foreign language students in Universiti Malaysia Kelantan and as a result it was found that the students had improved their language proficiency significantly. Moreover, through a survey conducted it was also found that the students had favourable perception on the usefulness of the nine approaches as most of the students perceived the activities as very helpful, interesting and effective for them to learn lexical efficiently. In all, this study has confirmed the students' positive perceptions regarding the implementation of this approach in their foreign language classroom.

It is recommended that these activities are adopted in foreign language classroom in Malaysian higher education institutions in order to help the students to acquire knowledge on lexical more effectively which will further help to improve their proficiency level in general. Moreover, foreign language instructors or teachers are also suggested for considering the factor before choosing methods of teaching. They may encourage using the aforementioned methods of teaching to address the different needs of their students depending on the availability of teaching materials/resources, the objectives of the lesson, the nature of the course and content/subject matter, the topic to be delivered, and the number of students within a class. There would help them to control the instruction and positively ensures the quality of student learning. In connection, as we know, good methods of teaching have a positive implication for quality of student learning as they were employing different teaching methods in teaching students which enhance the quality of student learning. Therefore, instructors or teachers should be encouraged to use various/different teaching methods in teaching their students. Teachers should also foster a learning environment that would encourage the students to be more independent.

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