



6.2 | Understand: Combining Pedagogical Approaches

In Streamlined ID (2027), we argue that any learning theory can support any type of learning outcome, provided the designer identifies principles or assumptions within that theory that align with the intended pedagogical approach. Hannafin and Hill (2002) suggest that designers who “recognize the utility of various approaches and perspectives and understand key foundations and assumptions” (p. 74) are better positioned to create grounded instruction. In such designs, underlying beliefs about learning are evident in how instruction is structured, the teaching and learning strategies employed, and the technologies selected. Decisions about using a single approach or blending multiple approaches should be guided by the instructional problem, the content, and the learning context (Deubel, 2003), as well as by whether different approaches are more appropriate at different stages of learner development. The following example illustrates how approaches can be combined:



EXAMPLE: COMBINING PEDAGOGICAL APPROACHES

You are designing an online program to train learners how to utilize a new software application in a way that is specific to your company’s business. You support your **constructivist approach** with the assumptions that individuals learn best when allowed to determine what and how they will learn, and when they are actively exploring and solving complex problems in authentic contexts. Your approach provides minimal guidance, a task goal, and a help file for the learners to access if needed. This works for the learners who are experienced, confident, and like to jump in and explore a new online environment or solve an ill-structured problem. It also supports learners who have a task to complete and wish to only learn what is necessary to complete that task.

You also agree with the **cognitivist assumption** that learning involves building on prior knowledge, and some of your learners have insufficient prior knowledge or experience. For those learners, you add some **instructivist** elements by providing more structure and optional guidance in the form of detailed directions. In addition, your learners need to keep current on software updates and be aware of new uses for the software developed by users around the globe. In response to this need for currency, you also incorporate a **connectivist approach** through an online community that enables learners to share ideas, and link to the software company’s news feed to access notifications on upgrades, enhancements, and user-submitted contributions.

References:

- Deubel, P. (2003). An investigation of behaviorist and cognitive approaches to instructional multimedia design. *Journal of Educational Multimedia and Hypermedia*, 12 (1), 63–90.
- Hannafin, M. J., & Hill, J. R. (2002). Epistemology and the design of learning environments. In R. A. Reiser, & J. V. Dempsey (Eds.), *Trends and issues in instructional design and technology* (pp. 70–82). Merrill Prentice Hall.