

## **Exploring the Impact of Sociocultural Background on Learners of English as a Second Language: A Case Study of Malaysian Secondary School Students**

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### **Abstract**

The accomplishment of learning a language is mostly related to sociocultural backgrounds of a learner. These two aspects significantly contribute to the access of resources, having certain attitudes, achieving language proficiency and self-development. In Malaysia, different learners achieve different results in learning English as a second language. It shows there are different views of the learning which are likely caused by learners' sociocultural background. The background is related to belief, culture, tradition and other people play who a role in individual learners. Thus, to what extent the aspects of views and sociocultural background are connected should be discovered. This study explored the English learning experience of form four students who are either sixteen- or seventeen-years old studying at a secondary school in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. By exploring the students' experience, the study aimed to discover the views of English learning through semi-structured interviews. The study also aimed to explore how the views could be connected with their sociocultural background. The data from the interviews were thematically analysed. There were two themes discussed which are related to (1) learners' views of English and (2) role of family, friends and teachers. The findings show how significant learners' views of English learning and how relevant Vygotsky's sociocultural theory to the role of other people related to the learning. The connection of these two aspects should add a new dimension to the existing findings. Nevertheless, more studies are needed to compare the findings from other learners of other schools to lead to a more comprehensive conclusion.

**Keywords:** Sociocultural background, Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and second language acquisition (SLA)..

## INTRODUCTION

English is widely used in the world nowadays where some countries such as England, United States of America and Australia use it as their official language. Elsewhere, countries such as Malaysia, Argentina and the Netherlands can be considered as countries that use English as their second language.

In multi-racial Malaysia, English is learnt at both primary and secondary school as a compulsory subject after the approval of Malaysian education proposal called Razak Report in 1956. It is a subject to take starting from the primary level when the students are at the age of seven. The overall duration of learning this language is about eleven years which students are tested formally through on-going assessments and examinations which cover the aspects of listening, reading, speaking, writing and literature.

As a former British colony historically and a developing multi-racial country that is competing with others globally especially in terms of economy, mastering English is a necessity for Malaysians. Failing to do so can slow down the process of leading the nation in this competitive world. As English has been a compulsory subject to learn formally at school for students within a time period, it is significant to study the effort of Malaysian school students in learning English; in order to discover the students' view of language as a second language and its learning process either formally at school or informally outside the school as their views can be related to their sociocultural background covering their belief, culture, tradition and the role other people play in the society.

Despite the teaching of English is done extensively at school with the full support of the Ministry of Education, the performances of students all around Malaysia measured by standardized English examination are not at the same level. Different students have different levels of achievements of this language. On one hand, concerning those who are unable to perform, this outcome could be due to some problems such as the lack of exposure to the language, the lack of practice of it and the lack of opportunity to use it. Even though the factors mentioned seem to have their relevance to hinder some students' progress towards the mastery of the language, the aspect concerning students' views on learning the language either positively or negatively can still be one of the primary factors; since amazingly there are students who seem to not have many problems learning it and as a result be able to develop their English at school level based on their examination results and other assessments. It demonstrates that different students would get different results despite any limitations they may experience while learning; indicating that there are other relevant factors affecting learning achievement which are not much emphasised.

One of the factors is learners' views. The views can play a major role in having some expectations of learning as in this context, what the learners think of English learning can lead to what they hope from it. The views can either contribute to the success or problems in the learning process. There can be numerous kinds of views, however all their views may centre around or associated with one quite significant and dominant factor which is students' sociocultural background. It is a factor related to previous conditions or experiences that creates the present view and the present reality that affect language learning progress. Brown (1998) pointed

out that “language is a key factor of cultural and social identification, and second language learning usually involves the acquisition of a second identity” (p.3). According to Brown, second language learning is a process of getting a new identity. As second language is something new that is likely leading to adding a new feature to one individuality; this new additional identity can either contradict, compromise or complement the old one. After all, it boils down to certain views of the learners.

Another factor can be related to other people a learner lives or mixes with. The people are those who consciously or unconsciously influence the development of a learner since he or she is still a child. Second language learning (SLA) is a wider spectrum of gaining knowledge which requires learners to widen what they know. This scenario of widening knowledge needs to involve other people and it depends as well on social activity; which are crucial to influence the acceptance of and the interest in SLA. This is in line with the view of psychologist, Lev Vygotsky regarding sociocultural theory as Rentauli Mariah Silalahi (2019) pointed out that “Vygotsky considered that people around children’s lives are very influential in shaping the development of the children as those people will most probably be the persons that assist the children to learn” (p.173).

Thus, it is quite important to relate the matter of sociocultural background in understanding the process of learning a second language and how it makes an impact on it. This factor is associated with any students and it can be a determinant one in shaping students’ thinking of the language and its learning which the more diverse and complex the factor becomes; it is likely that there will be more differences in students’ views of learning English. Therefore, it seems that how students view the language and its

learning process based on their sociocultural background is vital in identifying the outcome of the learning. These views would be the foundation and contributing factor that lead to the results of learning a second language.

### **Statement of Problem**

Previous studies found that attitude and anxiety are two common causes of learners having problems in learning English. However, these two factors can be stemmed from sociocultural background. The factor of others being around a learner of English can either provide the right support or not which later can have a certain impact of the development of the learning. Zone of Proximal Development is an idea by Vygotsky which shows a connection of between what a child can do himself and herself and what the child can do if he or she is assisted by others; that in the end it leads to the child's actual ability. This was supported by Verenikina (2010) who pointed out "learning in the ZPD refers to performing a range of tasks that the person cannot yet handle alone but can accomplish with the help of instructors or more capable peers" (p.4). This demonstrates how relevant Vygotsky's ZPD is in a learning support system. In addition, to relate it to learning English as a second language, Lee (2015) said "administrators and educators have found consistent evidence validating the importance of applying Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory to teaching ESL students" (p.4).

As ZPD relates the development of someone's learning to others and this can be relevant to English learning as well, it establishes that a learner's social activity because of his or her beliefs, habits and traditions makes the learner generally different from one another. Therefore, this situation

explains that different sociocultural background leads to different views and results of learning. Norrizan Razali (1992) argued that “Heath's and Philips' studies show how different home or community culture and language habits can pose problems for pupils' learning or schooling. Taking this finding into the perspective of ESL teaching in the Malaysian context, it is of utmost importance that any recommendations for ESL teaching consider the possibility that pupils in schools may come from communities or homes that practice an entirely different pattern of language habits, language, and culture” (p.2). This shows how sociocultural background plays a role in learning English as a second language in Malaysia. In relation to the development of learning a second language and the application of sociocultural theory (SCT), Rahmatirad (2020) said “we must be well aware that the knowledge of SCT can also be useful for teachers to discover and create ways to set up tasks and activities which can allow for the facilitation of language learning. However, SCT presented another ideology of learning, which appeared in the field of learning with two perspectives: cognitive and social” (p.30); which emphasised the significance of cognitive and social aspects.

Thus, the factor of sociocultural background concerning learners' beliefs, tradition and habits which is related to their social activity in learning English as a second language should be emphasized more. It is significant to discover the spiritual factor that might be unseen physically or related to previous life conditions and experience; however, can be the primary one and the most probable cause of the two factors mentioned earlier. This sociocultural factor can be a strong force that either enhances or diminishes the learning. It is a deep belief-or-feeling factor which to a large

extent can create specific kinds of views. As Brown pointed out that “second language learning usually involves the acquisition of a second identity”, it is quite important to relate the matter of sociocultural background in understanding the process of learning a second language in terms of how the background makes an impact on it; in the creation of a new identity with a different language which in the end produces certain results.

The background is also likely a significant foundation that leads to having views about the worth of studying English; which in the end would determine how much or to what extent effort will be made by learners in the learning process. The views can be varied in Malaysia as a country with diverse ethnic groups such as Malay, Chinese, Indian, Iban and Kadazan. The diversity that is connected with their sociocultural background dealing with beliefs, traditions and habits surely influence their views about many aspects. The fact that each ethnic group is different from one another generally can lead to different views about English learning as well. Thus, this study of learners’ views of English and its learning either formally or informally will be significant to obtain fresh answers justified by the learners themselves to discover their views of English learning and how other people play a role in the learning process.

Therefore, although there are common factors that can hinder learners’ progress in learning English as a second language in Malaysia such as their attitude and anxiety, the unseen factor about their sociocultural background needs to be studied comprehensively to understand what views learners have about the learning. Identifying and justifying the sociocultural background of the learners can provide a different way of looking at the problems in learning English as a second language in Malaysian secondary



school. The findings will be more comprehensive as the primary and secondary factors will be studied from the perspective of the learners' learning experience and be backed up by a sociocultural theory.

### **Research Objectives**

This study focused on two questions: (1) What are learners' views and attitudes of learning English as a second language? (2) How do learners' interpersonal views contribute to the learning of English?

### **Literature Review**

#### **Vygotsky Sociocultural Theory and Zone of Proximal Development**

##### **(ZPD)**

Previous studies have discussed the impact of sociocultural background on learning in general. It is common for researchers to relate Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory and Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) to it. Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory discusses how someone's cognitive development is caused by social activity or social interaction. In relation to it, the social activity or social interaction involving other people in the society will lead someone to be in the ZPD. This means that a child can be independent and this is associated with a real and clear development by himself or herself; nonetheless a child also needs the assistance of others in doing something which shows the relevance of other people in the child's life. This concept of the zone of proximal development emphasizes that a kind of change in a child to be more advanced is shaped by both his actual ability and the ability of others in a particular influential relationship (Moll: 2014).

In addition, Verenikina, (2010) said that “learning in the ZPD refers to performing a range of tasks that the person cannot yet handle alone but can accomplish with the help of instructors or more capable peers” (p.4). This means that the ZPD will be like stages of development about what someone can do himself or herself will be developed to a more advanced level with the help of more knowledgeable others which later results in the person reaching his or her maximum capacity by himself or herself.

Daneshfar & Moharami (2018) also pointed out in relation to ZPD that “the nature of human underlies interactions with the surrounding in cultural social contexts toward the process of socialization. These interactions require the person engaging in close relation with others and objects to build the theoretical understanding of every communicative process. No doubt the significant means of endowing communication in the society is through language. The mere importance of conceptualizing the language requires the child or the learner to attend in close interaction with the environment and the people” (p.602). This makes it clearer that socialization through interaction using a particular language is significant in Vygotsky’s ZPD.

### **Impact of Vygotsky’s Sociocultural Theory on Language Learning and SLA**

Vygotsky’s Sociocultural Theory has been relevant to language learning and SLA. The argument on the importance of other people or more knowledgeable others in influencing a learner carries a weight in formal education in general. In relation to ESL, Lee, (2015) pointed out that “administrators and educators have found consistent evidence validating the

importance of applying Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory to teaching ESL students” which shows the relevance of Vygotsky’s theory (p.4).

Basically, Vygotsky’s theory of cognitive development is related strongly to the connection of the elementary mental function with the social interaction with especially older people. It is about a child’s collaboration with adults (Tudge & Winterhoff, 1993). Even though what was said by Tudge was a general statement connected with learning, it tried to prove the effectiveness of Vygotsky’s theory by emphasising the role of other people or more knowledgeable others in developing learners which can be applied to language learning and SLA as well.

Ameri (2020) supported this matter by arguing that “sociocultural theory provides a window into language acquisition that is useful in considering the relationship between social interaction and language development”. The author also added “for SLA researchers working within a sociocultural theoretical framework second language acquisition research methodology is based upon the understanding that socialization and language acquisition cannot be separated from the interactive linguistic contexts in which they occur” which shows how Vygotsky’s Sociocultural Theory can be related to language learning and SLA (p.1531).

In addition, Hughes (2021) argued:

*Second language acquisition (SLA) is a complex, interdisciplinary field of study which has its roots in subjects as varied as cognition and psychology to social applications and actions in anthropology and sociology (cited in Han & Nassaji, 2019). One of the oldest and most influential ideas in SLA comes from the sociocultural perspective and, in particular, the work of*

*Soviet psychologist Lev Vygotsky. Nearly a century ago, Vygotsky attempted to connect the seemingly disparate areas of society, culture, and cognition in his unifying, wide-angle theory called Sociocultural Theory (SCT). (p.41).*

This shows how relevant sociocultural background is to SLA. Despite being a complex field of study, SLA is interdisciplinary which has more than one factor in determining the success of it.

### **Issues in SLA as Part of Applied Linguistics**

SLA is under the category of applied linguistics. Applied linguistics which is connected with the practical applications of a language emphasises the methods to use a language for learners. In relation to SLA, despite having particular methods to assist the acquisition, it is still not a process without difficulties or challenges. It is never a smooth process of acquiring a particular language from the linguistics point of view. This means that different learners will learn a second language differently (Ellis. 1995). The cause of this can be related to a specific situation a learner is in where there might be less exposure to the language and less opportunity for him or her to use the language learnt. As a result, due to different methods applied in learning due to such situation, different learners get different results.

Another difficulty or challenge experienced by certain second language learners is how the first and second language can be unintentionally mixed with one another in an improper way. This situation takes place when a learner is still in the process of learning his or her first language; however, has to also learn a second language. This can lead to being unclear about the distinction of both languages (Klien : 1986). Due to this which the acquisition of two languages takes place almost at the same

time, SLA may not be a success due to two different processes of learning that take place simultaneously.

Even though primarily under the field or category of applied linguistics, the difficulties or challenges mentioned above should be addressed in the way which other aspects related to sociocultural background are emphasised.

### **The Relevance of Identity and Culture to SLA**

As sociocultural theory is relevant to SLA, it has to be used to show the link between the two matters. Once SLA takes place, learners' sociocultural background which some part of the learners' identity and culture will be compromised. It is in a way a process of either consciously or unconsciously adapting to a new identity with new cultural elements. As language is part of a culture, SLA is rather inevitably a cultural process. Brown (1998) said that "language is a key factor of cultural and social identification, and second language learning usually involves the acquisition of a second identity" (p.3). This means being involved in SLA requires the knowledge of some cultural aspects of the second language to ensure a successful acquisition.

Furthermore, Chandrasegaran (1981) pointed out that "it would probably be more effective to encourage and sustain an interest in the utilitarian and/or socio-cultural aspect of English" which the knowledge of sociocultural aspects of a second language learnt would motivate learners to explore the elements of the language more (p.55).

### **The Development of English as a Second Language in Malaysia**

There are stages of the development of English language as a second language in Malaysia. According to Zaidan (1993) “historically speaking, we can discern three stages for English in Malaysia: the colonial period, the post-independence period, and the period of opening up, growth and development of the ‘80s” (p.8). This means English in Malaysia has changed from an exclusive language used mostly by professionals and upper classes as a result of colonisation to a language needed by many Malaysians to get involved in the country’s economy and compete with other nations.

Currently, English is widely used in Malaysia. One of the reasons is due to formal schooling. English has been emphasized in the education system and placed its significance which students have been exposed to this language even at the stage of kindergarten, their primary and secondary schools as well as for amazingly a few semesters at higher level education. (Ahmad, Kamisah & Maziana : 2006). This can explain how significant English is and the cause of its wide use in general.

The development of English reached at another phase in Malaysia in 2007 which a language new policy implemented. It is called *Pengajaran dan Pembelajaran Sains dan Matematik Dalam Bahasa Inggeris* (the teaching and learning of Science and Mathematics in English) The short form for it is PPSMI. Its aim is to improve the standard of English. Even though the aim is good, not all Malaysians agreed to it. There were those who oppose it argued about it based on the point that it can undermine the role of Malay as the national language and it can cause difficulties for rural students who do not have enough exposure to the language. (Melor & Saiful : 2017).

Based on political parties representing an ethnic-group in Malaysia, Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) believes that the policy should not be implemented, contrary to United Malay National Organisation (UMNO) and Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC) that believe otherwise.

### ***Issues of SLA in Malaysia in Relation to Sociocultural Factors***

In the context of Malaysia, SLA has its own issues related to sociocultural factors. Naginder, (2006) said “classroom behavior is tied to a complex interaction of broad social and cultural factors (Sullivan 1996)” (p.27). She then added by referring to the issue of low-English proficiency among Malaysian students “if the teacher is of different ethnic origin with different cultural practices and one who does not acknowledge students’ culture, students may pose resistance and indifference”. She argued that Indian, Chinese and Malay students learned English differently. The Indians were vocal, risk-taking and expressive while the Chinese in general were analytical and spoke when others spoke to them. For the Malays, they had a tendency to work in groups, thus being comfortable to form views when they were in a group situation. This statement emphasizes that SLA is influenced by sociocultural factors which if the factors are not considered by the teacher, the learning outcome can be different for students of a different ethnic-group.

Moreover, Normazidah, Koo & Hazita (2012) in a journal article entitled *Exploring English Language Learning And Teaching In Malaysia* argued about one study conducted by Lee that “Lee’s study reveals that learning and using English has some impacts on the learners’ identity. It is important therefore for teachers and curriculum designers to understand how

English language plays a part in the learners' repertoire and their identities" (p.9). This shows that SLA that is not linked with the students' identity; originated from their sociocultural background cannot encourage a serious response to the language learnt.

Previous studies have demonstrated how Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory and ZPD are relevant to SLA. They have also demonstrated the issues in SLA including that of Malaysia in relation to sociocultural factors. Nonetheless, the findings of the previous studies still lack the information about learners' views of learning English as a second language and how their sociocultural background influences the views.



## METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

This study was a qualitative one under the category of explanatory case study. It was a descriptive type of study that tried to discover the related problem in depth. It suited the study which aimed to answer two questions which are about how students' views of English learning affect the learning process and how other people play a role in the learning. By obtaining the answers of these two questions, the impact of sociocultural background on the learning of English would be discovered.

### Study Site and Sampling

A secondary school had been selected as the site of the study There were about 2000 students who learned English as a compulsory subject at the school. The number of students was consisted of five levels which were form one, two, three, four and five. For this study, nine students had been selected to participate in the study by interviewing them. Three of the students were advanced learners, three others were intermediate while the other three students were beginners. The selection of the students was based on their English examination result and their teachers of English recommendation.

### Instrument

The study applied the method of interview. All the students who were the participants had been involved in a semi-structured interview based on the two questions mentioned earlier which are (1) the students' views of English

learning affect the learning process and (2) the role other people play in the learning.

### **Data Collection**

There were nine students had been chosen as the participants. All of them were form four or 10<sup>th</sup> grade students whose age was either sixteen or seventeen years old. As they had experienced learning English for about eight years including the period of learning at primary school, they were expected to have a wide view about the problems in English language learning in relation to sociocultural background. Three of the participants were students who were at advanced level based on their English examinations. Three other participants chosen were the intermediate students and there were three beginners. All of the students chosen were those recommended by their teachers of English who believed that the students were able to contribute their views to the study.

To obtain the data for the study, interview method had been used. It was an individual interview which was conducted face-to-face. The researcher set a suitable time which was convenient for each participant for the interview to take place. Furthermore, the researcher played a role of someone who explained the nature of this study to the students before the interview; and was the one who guided the students on what role to play to maximize their contribution to the study. The researcher made sure that the students feel comfortable and ready to share their views. If there was any difficulty faced by the students in answering the questions posed, the questions was rephrased to make them easier-to-understand ones. The

researcher conducted the interview as comprehensive as he could to gain a deeper understanding on the students' views of the topic.

The interviews conducted were always be based on the themes of SLA in relation to sociocultural background. The interview started with the researcher asking the participants' background as mentioned earlier. It followed by questioning their views of the learning of English as a second language. Then, the researcher asked questions related to their experience in learning English to discover the impact of other people in the learning process.

The description of the participants is based on the table below:

Participants' Code	Level of English	Age	Gender	Race/ethnicity	SES	DU
S1	Advanced	16	Male	Chinese	High	DU1 -DU62
S2	Advanced	16	Male	Chinese	Middle	DU1– DU 99
S3	Advanced	16	Female	Chinese	High	DU1 – DU111
S4	Intermediate	16	Male	Indian	Low	DU1 – DU127
S5	Intermediate	16	Female	Chinese	Middle	DU1 – DU136
S6	Intermediate	16	Male	Chinese	Middle	DU1 – DU66
S7	Beginner	17	Male	Chinese	High	DU1 – DU127
S8	Beginner	16	Male	Chinese	High	DU1 – DU280
S9	Beginner	16	Male	Chinese	High	DU1 – DU 157

### **Data Analysis**

The method of analysis of the interviews was thematic analysis. The process involved identifying the codes, developing coding categories and identifying connections and patterns among categories. These were expected to decode all significance and recognize similarities and differences in the interviews. Mohammed Ibrahim (2012) said that “by using, thematic analysis there is the possibility to link the various concepts and opinions of the learners and compare these with the data that has been gathered in different situation at different times during the project” (p.40). It means that this process of decoding aimed to interpret the intended messages in a comprehensible form for further analysis.

## RESULTS FROM THE INTERVIEWS

### Learners' Views of English

The first question based on the research objective had resulted in obtaining a theme connected with learner's views of English which is mainly on how English as a communication tool and as a job prospect. S1 said:

*English language to me it's like the language I use to communicate most among my friends and sometimes family members [DU 2].*

This participant also said:

*English I think is a very important language to me, that is personally because in, in international state, like in America or Britain we use English most and it's set as an international language [DU 2].*

S1 emphasised the importance of communication in relation to the realisation of how important English was.

Another participant, S4 mentioned that:

*I use to English like to communicate to others. It helps me to communicate better with friends [DU 2].*

This participant then continued to say:

*A.. I think English is a, one of the important language for us to communicate and I think it's more convenient to our future, our job or what.. [DU 2].*

To S4, it was also about the importance of communication and added that this language was connected with the future and the job prospect. The

matter of the future and the job prospect was also mentioned by S8 in relation to the operation of company. The participants said:

*Because in many company they use English to talk, to write the invoice or every things. [DU18]*

Based on the overall findings, the theme obtained from the first research question concerning learners' view that English is important confirms that other people; such as the participants' family members and friends had either shaped or develop their view of the importance of English through communicating among them. Another reason that caused learners to have this view was the factor of job prospect which was related to being a good user of English.

This can validate Vygotsky's idea of a child's social activity that can influence his or her cognitive development which in the context of the study, his or her view of English learning. Even though the participants are already adolescents, their present thinking is highly likely from their childhood's experience being with other people as there must be a connection between childhood and adolescence. This is in line with Smith, Dockrell & Tomlinson (2020) who said: "Vygotsky (1978, p.88) proposed the development of human mental functioning 'presupposes a specific social nature and a process by which children grow into the intellectual life of those around them'" (p.148).

### **Role of Family, Friends and Teachers**

The second question is still in the domain of experience with other people in learning English. The findings from the interview show that family, friends

and teachers played an important role. S2 pointed out in the interview on the influence of other people:

*It's like, it's more of, it's again more of a culture basis so with around people, some influence like, some influence in manners of what you choose to speak to them or how you speak with that [DU 4].*

To S2, it was other people who influenced what language to be used either English or other language. It shows the effect of being with other people in relation to language choice; which demonstrates a learner's cognition can react to social activity as discussed in Vygotsky's sociocultural theory.

S5, on the matter of other people mentioned:

*My English vocabulary, a.. not that pro la, so that I, I need the help from others.*

[DU 54].

To this participant, other people were influential in developing English vocabulary or English learning in general; and this development could be achieved through social activity.

For S7, other people also played a role in learning or developing English. The participant mentioned in the interview:

*Like my, like my mother, friends. My mother, friend like the like speak, speaking, they also teaching sometimes. [DU 34]*

*They make me more improve my English because my next future.*

[DU 42]

*They will buy me some books.* [DU 44]

All the statements above show how other people, referring to the mother and friends had influenced the participant to learn or develop English.

Overall, the data collected during the interviews show that the involvement of other people like family members, teachers and friends was important for the participants to cognitively develop themselves in English learning. This supports the idea of Vygotsky's ZPD which a child can develop himself or herself with the help of the more knowledgeable others. This can be supported by Verenikina, (2010) who argued that "learning in the ZPD refers to performing a range of tasks that the person cannot yet handle alone but can accomplish with the help of instructors or more capable peers" (p.4). In addition, Rentauli Mariah Silalahi (2019) pointed out "in the end, any learning process will contribute to developing someone's ZPD with the presence of assistance, mediation, cooperation, imitation, target and crises" (p.183) which all involve other people which contribute to cognitive development as a result of social activity. Furthermore, the findings show that what the participants had experienced in their social activity throughout their life since childhood having some effect in their adolescence.



## DISCUSSION

The results obtained from the interviews demonstrate that all questions based on the research objective were answered by relating to the experience of being with other people. The themes which are connected with learners' views and role of family, friends and teachers all centre around learners' sociocultural background. The participants agreed that their experience connected with social interaction or social activity led to feeling the social influence; later shaping the view about how important English could be.

It was other people who were in the surrounding of the learners played their role to influence the English learning. Based on the results, the influence was from the effect of communication and support in their social activity; and the degree of the influence could lead to a different result for a different individual learner of English.

## CONCLUSION

The study has explained how other people are mainly related to English learning. This demonstrates how relevant Vygotsky's sociocultural theory in the learning development generally and English learning specifically.

However, the study has its limitation which there were only nine participants who were students of one school interviewed. The findings would be broader if the number of students to participate is more and involving more than one school.

Therefore, it would be better if a similar study is conducted by interviewing more students in order to obtain a more comprehensive findings from different students. It would also be better if the number of schools is at least three as the more the schools to be the sites of the study, the better the findings to be compared. In the end, the analysis of the findings is more reliable. As a result, the conclusion of the findings would be stronger.

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