

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Research

English as a core subject taught as a foreign language in schools seems to mean that English as an additional language for all the learners regardless of their cultural and ethnic origin (Masunungure & Maguvhe, 2024). In Indonesia, the overall goal of the ELT is predominantly to cultivate discourse competence (students' speaking, listening, writing as well as reading skills for any communicative events). With a view to realising the objective of attaining discourse competence in English language education, the learners also must develop other competences, including communicative competence, linguistic competence, socio-linguistic competence and strategy competence (Ali et al., 2023). Hence, discourse competence is the last component of competence and the other competences as supportive competences, but must initially be obtained.

English as a foreign language provides the learners with sufficient communicative plus literacy skills to enable them undertake further education in a foreign country (Starovoyt et al., 2020). However, to gain proficient level in English is practically challenging because English is not used as an official language in the Indonesia. The respondents are exposed to it only in school instruction as a part of the subject and it is comparatively rare to find the target language in use outside classrooms (Ramanayaka, 2023). This condition has led to inadequacy of enough practice needed for the language proficiency among EFL learners in Indonesia.

International or global language is used and spoken by many people worldwide today because it is the acknowledged lingua franca of many wide range areas such as politics, diplomacy, science, technology, business, international trade and industry, commerce, education, media, information technology and popular culture (Kawakibi & Indrawan, 2024). It is therefore the learning of English becomes the primarily skill that need to be developed to complete the competence improvement process. Communicative competence refers to mastering English language skills essential for driving transformative development within governmental and academic spheres, where proficiency in communicative English

is a fundamental requirement (Shaik, 2024).

It appears that in any language as a means of communication, the speaker's good knowledge of linguistic, sociolinguistic and sociocultural conditions are significantly essential. They all cause the speaker use the right language, the right context and right purpose, if all those are provided, he/she can be deemed to be as communicative as needed. However, this communicative competence has become a problem for foreign language learners. They usually incorporate the challenges, with reference to their process of attaining this goal. Speaking is an essential aspect of the language since it indicates how well people understand each other (Pickering & Garrod, 2021). To consider the importance of having proficiency in English speaking, everyone must be able to master English fluently to be able to compete globally and see the outside world so that English is seen as a unifying tool nation and has an important role in life, especially in education (Haryadi & Aminuddin, 2023).

According to Indonesia's long-term educational objectives, acquiring a foreign language provides people access to a wealth of knowledge that will help them shape their academic futures. Proficiency in English provides students with the tools needed to enhance their communication skills (Nesaratnam et al., 2020). This is especially vital given that a significant portion of scientific publications, academic presentations, and instructional content are in English. Additionally, English proficiency opens doors to studying in English-speaking countries and meeting employment criteria, further emphasizing its importance (D. T. B. Vy, 2024).

To achieve English speaking proficiency in which English is not the students' first language is surely not an easy thing. In Indonesia, for example, English is positioned as a foreign language that is taught in schools and is not used in society. It neither functions as a tool of communication in the law court and the education system, nor does it have any special status in the language legislation. Zein et al. (2020) states that making easy generalizations about the social functions of English are not easy in a country like Indonesia where English is not the first language. In inner circle countries (USA, UK, Canada, Australia, New Zealand), English is used for all communicative purposes, but in Indonesia, its role is defined

primarily by means of a conscious process of language planning, rather than by linguistic evolution (Zentz, 2020).

According to Government Regulation, Number 28, 1990, English is to be taught from the first year of Junior High School but may be taught as early as Primary Four at the school's discretion (Faridatuunnisa, 2020). This regulation is in line with the 1989 national rules of law that gives English a place as the *first foreign language* to be taught as one of the compulsory subjects at the secondary level, but allows it to be taught from Primary Four. English has been taught at their secondary level of education which is three years in junior high school and three years in senior high school, learning English is only limited to students understanding "reading, listening, and writing, and speaking". Students still face difficulty in speaking English (Jaelani & Zabidi, 2020).

In case of English Department of Mulawarman University where the study was conducted, Speaking is a mandatory subject given in the first, second, third, and fourth semester. As long as the researcher's observation and experience as a lecturer who teaches the speaking subject, from Speaking 1 up to Speaking 4, some students perform high proficiency in Speaking subject and some others perform low proficiency in Speaking subject. This is an interesting and challenging phenomenon since students have been given the same course materials, instructions, treatments, teaching strategy and taught based on lesson plan which was carefully compiled following the standard competence in speaking course syllabus in tertiary level in Indonesia Education system. It is a big question why there is a different result in students' speaking proficiency while everything given to them in the speaking class such as course materials, instruction, treatment, teaching strategy was not different at all. What factors influence such conditions have been put to my concern as one of the lecturers teaching speaking courses.

Studies related to factors that influence the EFL learners' speaking skill proficiency have been conducted by many researchers. The factors such as pedagogical factors (strategies, resources and evaluation used by teachers in English classes), cognitive factors (conceptualization, formulation, and articulation), affective factors (emotions, self-esteem, self-confidence, empathy, anxiety, shyness, fear of failure, attitude, and motivation), linguistic factors

(grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation) proved to play important roles on EFL students' speaking proficiency (Elsayed, 2022). Among the four factors mentioned above, sociocultural factors affecting the EFL learners' speaking proficiency are urgently considered to investigate in this study. Investigating the social and cultural factors can lead me to gain deep and detailed information about students' speaking experiences through the benefits as well as the constraints social and cultural factors have and how these factors affect their speaking proficiency both positively and negatively (Kakita & Palukuri, 2021).

The importance of investigating the sociocultural factors encompass how aspects of the speaking skill are interfered by the studied sociocultural factors such as social distance, cultural confrontation, sociolinguistic background, and socio-economical background of EFL students (Kakita & Palukuri, 2021). Concerning the act of learning, sociocultural theory has a universal view. In the field of second language learning (SLL) research, sociocultural theorist Vygotsky (1962) stated that sociocultural theories have been extensively referred to language which comes out from cultural and social activity and only later becomes reconstructed as an individual, psychological phenomenon (Tzuriel, 2021).

In addition, sociocultural theory developed by Vygotsky (1962) is a valuable framework that emphasizes the importance of social interaction, cultural context, and language in cognitive development. At its core, the sociocultural theory suggest that learning takes place through social interactions within a specific cultural and linguistic environment. Further, the theory emphasized that language is not simply a means of communication, but a tool that shapes our thinking and understanding of the world (Lantolf & Thorne, 2007).

Investigations on other sociocultural factors such as gender, age, personality (extroversion and introversion), home environment (family support, relationship with parents and siblings), multicultural environment, multilingual environment, ethnicity, religion, belief, linguistic background (the use of learner's native language L1 that interfere the L2 acquisition), socio-economic background (level of education, occupation, income of students' parents), interaction with peers, interaction with teachers, interaction with native speakers, internet influence (social media activity), extra inputs or exposure of English outside classroom environment

(joining English conversation club and English camp, listening to English songs, watching movies with or without subtitles both in English and student's L1), and stereotyping labeled to EFL learners by society that influence EFL learners' speaking proficiency are few and not studied well. This becomes my reason to bring this topic as the research problem to investigate in case of the EFL learners of English Department, Mulawarman University Samarinda.

As there is a wide range of sociocultural factors involved in this present study, it is essential to set up the coverage of sociocultural factors such as gender, family background, socio-economic background, exposure of English outside classroom, social media interaction, social interaction with peers, native speakers of English, and language instructors, as well as personality traits (extroversion and introversion). It is assumed that the selected factors above will best fit in revealing the answers of the problem as well as filling the gap of previous related studies which have not covered the above selected sociocultural factors affecting the tertiary EFL learners' speaking proficiency.

The novelty of this research lies in its comprehensive examination of a wide range of sociocultural factors that are often underexplored in existing studies. While prior research has focused on isolated aspects such as gender or socio-economic status, this study uniquely integrates multiple dimensions, including personality traits (extroversion and introversion), multicultural and multilingual environments, social media interaction, and exposure to English outside the classroom, alongside traditional factors like family and socio-economic background. Furthermore, the localized focus on EFL students at Mulawarman University adds another layer of uniqueness, as it investigates these sociocultural dynamics within a specific institutional and cultural setting, potentially offering insights that are both contextually relevant and applicable to broader educational frameworks.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Having studied in the English department and completed three semesters of Speaking courses (Speaking 1, Speaking 2, and Speaking 3), not all students achieved the same level of speaking proficiency, despite receiving identical course materials, instruction, treatment, and teaching strategies in the same classroom setting. This intriguing phenomenon raises a significant question: why do some

students demonstrate high proficiency in speaking English, while others exhibit low proficiency? Considering this issue, it is essential to investigate the sociocultural factors that influence students' speaking proficiency.

1.3 Research Questions

The main concern of this research is to answer and solve the problems which are formulated in the form of questions as follows:

1. What are the main sociocultural factors that affect the third semester students' speaking proficiency?
2. How do these sociocultural factors affect the third semester students' speaking proficiency?

1.4 Objectives of the Research

Relating to the research questions mentioned previously, the objectives of this research have directions:

1. To determine the main sociocultural factors that affect the third semester students' speaking proficiency.
2. To validate the extent to which sociocultural factor affects the third semester students' speaking proficiency both positively and negatively.

1.5 Scope and Limitation of the Research

This study was conducted at English Education Department of Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Mulawarman University Samarinda and took the third semester students as the participants who had taken Speaking courses (Speaking 1 up to Speaking 3).

The investigation was focused on and limited to the socio-cultural factors that affect tertiary EFL students' speaking proficiency which consist of gender, family background, socio-economic background, extra inputs or exposure of English outside classroom environment, social media interaction, social interaction with peers, native speakers of English, and language instructors, and personality (extroversion and introversion).

1.6 Significance of the Research

Theoretically, this study aims to contribute by providing empirical data along with a deeper and more comprehensive analysis of sociocultural factors that influence EFL students' speaking proficiency. It explores how these factors exert both positive and negative impacts and examines how they are perceived by students with high and low speaking proficiency. Additionally, the study offers valuable insights for lecturers teaching speaking courses, enabling them to understand the factors that affect the process of teaching speaking skills. Ultimately, this research may inspire other researchers to conduct further studies on similar or related topics.

Practically, the findings of this study can serve as a reference for lecturers of Speaking courses to develop and implement teaching strategies that integrate sociocultural factors with other essential elements, such as pedagogical, affective, cognitive, and linguistic aspects. These strategies can better support and motivate students to enhance their English-speaking proficiency beyond the formal classroom setting. For students, the findings will raise awareness about the influence of sociocultural factors on their English-speaking proficiency, encouraging them to take proactive steps to improve their skills.

1.7 Operational Definitions

In this study, there are some terms that are needed to be clarified in order to avoid misunderstanding. The terms are described as follows:

1. Speaking is the delivery of language through mouth or the productive skill in the oral mode. To speak, we create sounds using many parts of our body, including the lungs, vocal tract, vocal cords, tongue, teeth and lips.
2. Speaking proficiency functionally means the ability that one has as a highly articulate well-educated native speaker of a language that reflects the cultural standard of the country where the language is natively spoken.
3. English speaking proficiency is the ability of students to use the English language to communicate in spoken contexts while completing their program of study.

4. EFL (English as a foreign language) refers to English which is used by, learned by or taught to people whose native language or first language is not English.
5. EFL students are individuals learning English in a non-English-speaking country, where they typically have limited exposure to English outside the classroom. Their primary goal is to communicate effectively with people from different cultural backgrounds.
6. Tertiary level refers to post-secondary education obtained at institutions such as universities (government or privately funded), colleges, technical training institutes, and vocational schools.
7. Tertiary level students are individuals pursuing post-secondary or higher education at public and private universities, colleges, technical training institutes, or vocational schools.
8. Investigation refers to the process of examination, inquiry, or an active effort to gather information or insights about a phenomenon or specific subject that may not be immediately apparent.
9. Affect is the verb which means “to act on; produce a change in”. This term refers essentially to the area of emotions, feelings, beliefs, moods and attitudes, which greatly influences our behavior.
10. Sociocultural factors refer to things that influence people's feelings, values, beliefs, behaviors, attitudes, and interactions. Examples include Family background, socio-economic background, social interaction (with peers, teachers, social media), personality, stereotyping, social classes, religious beliefs, wealth distribution, language, business practices, social values, customer preferences, social organization, and attitude towards work, etc.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, the relevant theories and research underpinning this study are presented. The first section provides a literature review, encompassing findings from previous related studies. This section introduces both current and past research in the field, highlighting the gaps that this study aims to address. The second section outlines the theoretical framework, which serves as the foundation for this research. It includes concepts, definitions, and discussions of sociocultural theory, the sociocultural factors influencing EFL students' speaking proficiency, and key constructs such as speaking, speaking proficiency, and English-speaking proficiency.

2.1 Previous Studies

Several researchers have explored the factors influencing students' speaking proficiency, particularly among EFL learners. This section reviews both earlier and recent studies to provide a comprehensive foundation for the present research. The reviews are divided into two main parts: factors affecting EFL students' speaking proficiency and sociocultural factors specifically influencing their speaking proficiency. By examining these studies, this section highlights key findings and insights that support the rationale and contextual relevance of the current study.

2.1.1 Studies on Factors Affecting EFL Students' Speaking Proficiency

Exposure to the Target Language (TL) is a critical factor in achieving proficiency in a second language (L2). Among the numerous factors influencing L2 learning, language exposure—both formal and informal—plays a pivotal role (Al-Zoubi, 2018). The study by Vy et al. (2024) employs content analysis as a central method for analysing qualitative data obtained from semi-structured interviews. This approach was systematically used to transcribe and categorize the responses of six students and four instructors, focusing on their perceptions of English-speaking fluency and strategies for its improvement. The research identified task repetition as the most effective strategy for enhancing fluency. Notably, it revealed

a discrepancy between teachers' and students' perceptions of speaking fluency, which may impede the achievement of fluent speech. These findings provide a foundation for discussing pedagogical strategies to support both teachers and students in developing fluency. Additionally, the analysis uncovered nuanced factors influencing fluency, such as the interaction of linguistic, affective, and performance-related elements. For instance, while students prioritized affective factors like motivation and confidence, instructors emphasized linguistic aspects such as vocabulary and pronunciation, highlighting differing perspectives.

Fan & Yan (2020) provides a comprehensive narrative review of empirical studies on speaking assessment, using the argument-based validation framework proposed by Chapelle et al. (2008). Employing systematic content analysis, the authors categorized 104 studies published in two high-impact journals based on how they addressed six inferences: domain description, evaluation, generalization, explanation, extrapolation, and utilization. Through the content analysis approach, specific patterns and themes within the data were identified and coded, allowing a detailed understanding of the focus areas within the literature. The findings revealed a disproportionate emphasis on evaluation, generalization, and explanation, while studies on domain description, extrapolation, and utilization were underrepresented. Topics like speaking constructs, rater effects, and factors influencing test performance dominated the discourse, highlighting recurring concerns over linguistic and psychometric validity.

O'Dowd (2021) examines the learning outcomes of virtual exchange (VE) initiatives among Spanish university students studying English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Using a qualitative content analysis methodology, the research analysed 345 student portfolios from 13 VEs conducted over four years. The findings reveal that VEs significantly contributed to developing students' global citizenship, intercultural awareness, and confidence in using English as a communication tool. Students reported that the personalized and collaborative nature of VEs helped overcome stereotypes and encouraged critical reflections on cultural norms. However, some students demonstrated a superficial understanding of cultural differences, emphasizing the need for guided pedagogical mentoring during VEs. A comparison of telecollaborative (bicultural) and transnational

(lingua franca) VE models showed distinct learning outcomes. While telecollaborative exchanges focused on cultural knowledge and language confidence, transnational exchanges emphasized collaboration skills, digital literacy, and intercultural communication styles. The study highlights the importance of task design and mentorship in maximizing the pedagogical potential of Ves.

Prawiyata & Barus (2021) evaluates the speaking abilities of English Education Study Program students at UMN Al Washliyah through the use of vlogs in an Instructional Planning and Media course. Employing a qualitative descriptive research design, the study integrates content analysis to systematically examine vlogs created by 10 students in the 2020/2021 academic year. Speaking abilities were assessed using a rubric-based evaluation method that considered originality, structure, language use, vocabulary, pronunciation, and delivery. Through content analysis, the study identified patterns and themes in student performance, highlighting specific strengths in vocabulary and originality while noting moderate challenges in pronunciation and delivery. The findings underscore the effectiveness of vlogs as an engaging alternative medium for improving speaking skills, fostering creativity, confidence, and active participation. By utilizing content analysis, the research provides nuanced insights into how digital media can support language development.

Grieve et al. (2021) explores the fears and challenges faced by university students during oral presentations and public speaking, as well as the strategies they use to overcome these fears. Using a qualitative survey design, data were collected from 46 undergraduate and postgraduate students attending public speaking workshops at the University of the West of England. Responses to open-ended questions were analyzed using a combination of content analysis and Braun and Clarke's six-phase thematic analysis framework. Content analysis was employed to systematically categorize responses into key themes, ensuring an objective and structured approach to identifying patterns in the data. The thematic analysis further refined these categories into six main themes: fear of being judged, physical symptoms of anxiety, uncertainty about the topic, negative effects on the university experience, the importance of practice and preparation, and the need for more

practical support. The findings reveal that public speaking fears are pervasive and can significantly impact students' academic experiences, contributing to reduced participation and increased anxiety.

Tran & Nguyen (2024) explores the effectiveness of TED Talks in enhancing English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students' public speaking skills through a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative analyses. Quantitative data were analyzed with SPSS 20, providing insights into students' perceptions and practices concerning TED Talks. Qualitative thematic analysis was applied to the interview data, systematically identifying recurring patterns and themes related to students' experiences. The results demonstrate that TED Talks significantly enhance public speaking skills by offering authentic examples of effective communication, increasing confidence, and fostering critical thinking. Students also reported greater motivation and engagement due to the diverse topics and speakers featured in TED Talks. Using content analysis, the study employed open and axial coding to extract and categorize meaningful data, resulting in key themes like improved communication skills, increased motivation, and difficulties with language comprehension. These findings suggest that TED Talks, when integrated into EFL curricula with adequate support and scaffolding, can serve as an innovative and impactful tool for developing public speaking skills.

Huang (2021) investigates the impact of smartphone-based collaborative vlog projects on English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners' speaking performance and engagement. Using a mixed-methods approach, the research combines quantitative and qualitative analyses to assess measurable outcomes and subjective experiences. Quantitative data were collected through pretest and post-test speaking assessments, with paired-sample t-tests indicating significant improvements in speaking proficiency. Descriptive statistics and reliability analysis using Cronbach's alpha evaluated students' perceptions of group collaboration. Qualitative data from reflection papers and focus group interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis, identifying key themes such as teamwork, digital media production skills, and the development of speaking proficiency. Additionally, Word Cloud analysis was employed to visualize recurring terms in focus group discussions. The findings demonstrate that vlog projects enhance speaking abilities,

foster collaboration and creativity, and increase student engagement. Challenges such as time management and technological barriers were also noted.

Jasso et al. (2024) explores the perceived role of external factors within family, school, and community contexts on the Spanish and English proficiency of Latine Spanish–English bilingual university students. Using qualitative content analysis, the research identifies commonalities in participants’ experiences and perspectives. Twenty-three bilingual students in Houston, United States, rated their language proficiency using the Language Experience and Proficiency Questionnaire (LEAP-Q) and participated in structured in-person interviews. Key findings indicate that home interactions with parents, family language policies, and the need to communicate with grandparents were the most significant contributors to Spanish proficiency. Conversely, English proficiency was most influenced by interactions with friends and siblings and the school environment. Researcher triangulation was employed to ensure rigor, and the consolidated criteria for reporting qualitative research (COREQ) guided the study design and analysis to align with established qualitative research standards. The findings highlight the critical impact of external factors on bilingual language development from childhood to adulthood, offering valuable insights for bilingual acquisition research and practical implications for supporting bilingual communities.

Ngoc & Dung (2020) investigates key factors influencing the oral fluency of second-year non-English major students at a public university in Vietnam. Using a mixed-methods approach, the research combines quantitative and qualitative analyses to uncover challenges and contributors to students' speaking performance. Quantitative data were gathered through a survey questionnaire completed by 98 students, while qualitative insights were obtained from semi-structured interviews with 15 teachers and 15 students. The quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to identify prominent issues, while qualitative content analysis was employed to systematically code and interpret interview responses, revealing in-depth themes. The findings indicate that affective factors, including fear of making mistakes and lack of confidence, significantly hinder oral fluency. Automation, error correction, and performance factors also emerged as influential contributors. Recommendations include implementing strategies to address

emotional barriers, promoting regular speaking practice, and creating supportive environments for fluency development. This study contributes valuable insights for educators seeking to enhance speaking skills in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context.

Khasawneh & Ahmad (2023) conducted a study to examine factors influencing the development of speaking skills among Jordanian EFL learners, focusing on educational tools, instructional strategies, and common student mistakes. Using a quantitative research approach, data were collected through a survey of 316 students from Irbid National University and Jadara University in Jordan. The study, grounded in second-language acquisition theory, highlighted the role of instructional materials, strategies, and error correction in improving speaking skills. Findings revealed that educational tools were widely utilized and significantly contributed to enhancing speaking proficiency, while instructional strategies had a moderate impact, with limited emphasis on interactive activities like discussions and role-playing.

Ghafar et al. (2023) conducted a study exploring factors influencing English-speaking proficiency among EFL learners, focusing on psychological, linguistic, and instructional challenges. Using a qualitative approach, the research analyzed existing studies on speaking challenges and strategies to synthesize data. Grounded in communicative and task-based language teaching methodologies, the study emphasized interaction, practice, and error correction as key components of effective learning. The findings identified several challenges, including inhibition, limited vocabulary, and overreliance on native language during English-speaking tasks. Factors such as performance conditions (time pressure, planning), affective aspects (anxiety, motivation, confidence), listening competence, and topical knowledge were highlighted as significant influences on speaking proficiency.

Nhan (2024) conducted a study to examine the factors influencing English-speaking proficiency among English-majored students at a Vietnamese university. The research utilized a mixed-methods approach, collecting data through a questionnaire distributed to 62 students from diverse backgrounds, and analyzing linguistic, psychological, knowledge-based, and environmental challenges. Grounded in theories of language acquisition and communicative competence, such

as Swain's Output Hypothesis and Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, the study highlighted several key findings. Linguistic factors, particularly vocabulary size, grammar complexity, collocations, and word stress patterns, were identified as significant influences on speaking proficiency. Psychological barriers, including anxiety, embarrassment about errors, nervousness during evaluations, and lack of confidence, were major obstacles. Additionally, limited background knowledge and unfamiliarity with specific topics posed challenges for discussions, especially on academic and cultural subjects. Environmental factors such as insufficient opportunities for speaking practice, inadequate resources, ineffective teaching methods, and non-conducive classroom atmospheres further hindered students' progress.

Fathi et al. (2024) investigated the impact of AI-mediated activities on EFL learners' speaking skills and willingness to communicate (WTC). Sixty-five EFL learners were divided into an AI group, using the Andy English Chatbot, and a control group, engaging in face-to-face peer-interaction activities. Data were collected through IELTS speaking tests, a WTC scale, and semi-structured interviews. Results revealed that AI-mediated speaking activities significantly improved learners' fluency, coherence, lexicon, grammatical accuracy, pronunciation, and WTC compared to traditional methods. Learners also expressed positive attitudes toward AI-mediated instruction. The study highlights the potential of AI tools in enhancing speaking skills and communication confidence in language learning contexts.

Fındıklı (2023) investigates factors influencing foreign language speaking anxiety (FLSA) among high school students in Turkey. It uses a quantitative cross-sectional survey design and includes a sample of 250 students from grades 9 to 12. Data was collected using the "English Speaking Anxiety Scale," supplemented with demographic and academic variables. Findings reveal that female students exhibit higher FLSA levels than males, and anxiety increases with grade level progression. Students with lower self-perceived English proficiency and lower English exam scores tend to experience higher FLSA, while previous speaking support showed no significant impact. This study highlights the complex interplay of gender, grade levels, self-perception, and academic performance in shaping speaking anxiety,

offering valuable insights for educators and policymakers.

Jiang et al., (2024) investigates the factors influencing deep learning among EFL students in Small Private Online Courses (SPOCs) at Higher Vocational Colleges (HVCs). Using grounded theory, the research aims to identify key factors shaping deep learning experiences and their interrelationships. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with 18 EFL students and 4 teachers, and NVivo 11 software was employed for qualitative analysis. A three-tier coding process led to the development of the "environment-person-mediation-behaviour" (EPMB) model, which outlines the mechanisms influencing deep learning. The findings highlight that intrinsic motivation and cognitive abilities are essential for deep learning in SPOC settings. Situational factors, including blended learning environments, curriculum satisfaction, and teaching methods, significantly impact learning experiences. These factors interact through mediators such as continuity, attraction, guidance, motivation, and regulation, exerting either positive or negative effects on deep learning.

Bakhshayesh et al. (2023) explored the relationship between multiple intelligence (MI), critical thinking (CT), and the speaking skills of Iranian EFL learners. Seventy intermediate participants from Shahrekord University and a language institute in Yazd were selected. To assess the participants' MI profiles, McKenzie's MI Inventory Questionnaire (Persian translation) was administered, while the Persian translation of the California CT Skill Test was used to evaluate their CT. The participants' speaking skills were measured using the IELTS speaking test. The results indicated no significant correlation between MI and speaking skills. However, a significant relationship was found between CT and speaking skills, showing that learners with higher critical thinking abilities performed better and more fluently in their L2 speaking.

Wang (2023) investigated the psychological factors influencing Chinese undergraduate EFL learners' production behaviors, focusing on Foreign Language Enjoyment (FLE) and Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA) within the framework of the Production-Oriented Approach (POA). Using a mixed-methods approach, data were collected through surveys and analyzed quantitatively with SPSS and qualitatively with NVivo. The study revealed that learners preferred

written tasks over oral production due to higher anxiety associated with speaking activities like public presentations. FLE positively influenced production behaviors, while FLCA had a negative impact, with classroom atmosphere and team cooperation emerging as key predictors of positive attitudes towards production tasks. No significant differences were found in FLE, FLCA, or production behaviors based on gender or test scores. The findings underscore the importance of creating supportive and engaging classroom environments to reduce anxiety and enhance learners' willingness to participate in productive tasks, providing valuable insights for emotionally intelligent EFL pedagogy.

Pan et al., (2024) investigates the factors influencing Thai EFL learners' behavioural intention to adopt Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL). The researchers combined the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and Expectation Confirmation Theory (ECT) to develop a comprehensive model incorporating external variables such as perceived enjoyment, habits, and social influence. Using a quantitative methodology, they collected 507 valid responses through a structured questionnaire, employing structural equation modelling (SEM) for data analysis. The results confirmed that most hypotheses were supported, revealing that perceived enjoyment, perceived usefulness, habits, and satisfaction significantly influenced behavioural intention. Notably, perceived enjoyment emerged as the strongest predictor of behavioural intention. In contrast, social influence did not significantly impact satisfaction. The findings underscore the importance of designing engaging and efficient MALL applications and highlight how learners' enjoyment, perceived usefulness, and established habits drive MALL adoption.

Tran et al. (2024) investigates the impact of an innovative online conversation project, Viet-Skype, on enhancing the speaking and listening skills of EFL learners in Vietnam. The researchers aimed to explore how authentic conversational interactions via video conferencing tools could improve learners' communicative confidence and language proficiency. The study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining pre-tests and post-tests for quantitative analysis, alongside surveys, testimonials, and observations for qualitative insights. Grounded in interactionist theories of second language acquisition, the study highlights the significance of meaningful communication, corrective feedback, and authentic

contexts in language learning. Results revealed substantial improvements in learners' speaking fluency, pronunciation, grammatical accuracy, and listening comprehension. Additionally, the program boosted learners' motivation and confidence while bridging sociocultural gaps. The findings underscore the potential of technology-mediated interaction for addressing resource constraints and promoting effective language learning in EFL contexts.

Jin (2023) explores the use of vlogging as an innovative method to enhance speaking proficiency among Korean EFL learners, focusing on its effects on Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety (FLSA) and Willingness to Communicate (WTC). Conducted over a semester, 49 university students were divided into an experimental group (n=25) that participated in vlogging activities and a control group (n=24) that received traditional instruction without social networking components. Data were gathered through pre- and post-questionnaires on FLSA and WTC, as well as speaking skill assessments. The results showed that vlogging significantly reduced FLSA and increased WTC, with the experimental group exhibiting greater improvements in vocabulary, comprehension, fluency, and task proficiency compared to the control group. However, no significant improvement in speaking accuracy was observed. These findings highlight the potential of vlogging to reduce anxiety, boost communication willingness, and enhance speaking proficiency, offering valuable insights for EFL teachers aiming to create engaging and supportive learning environments.

Al-khresheh (2024) explores the impact of presentation-based tasks on the speaking skills of Saudi learners of English as a foreign language (EFL). Using a quasi-experimental design, the research involved 16 male university students divided into experimental and control groups. The study employed pre- and post-intervention assessments using a speaking proficiency evaluation rubric to measure participants' performance in fluency, coherence, vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and engagement. The results demonstrated that students in the experimental group, who participated in structured presentation activities, showed significant improvements in all assessed linguistic domains compared to the control group. Enhanced self-efficacy was identified as a crucial factor contributing to these improvements, aligning with Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory. The findings

underscore the importance of interactive and practical tasks in developing speaking confidence and proficiency among EFL learners.

Kafipour & Khoshnood (2023) examines the influence of dynamic assessment on Iranian EFL learners' speaking skills, particularly considering their cognitive styles (field dependence and field independence). The research employed a quasi-experimental design, involving 60 Iranian females intermediate EFL learners, who were divided into two experimental and two control groups. Participants were identified as field-dependent (FD) or field-independent (FI) using the Group Embedded Figures Test (GEFT). The experimental groups received dynamic assessment with flexible mediation and interaction, while the control groups received traditional communicative language teaching (CLT). Pre- and post-tests based on the IELTS speaking test were administered to evaluate speaking proficiency. The findings reveal that dynamic assessment positively impacts the speaking skills of both FD and FI learners. However, FD learners demonstrated significantly greater improvement compared to their FI counterparts. This suggests that dynamic assessment is particularly effective for learners who benefit from interactive and guided learning environments.

Li & Pei (2024) explores the challenges faced by Chinese English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners in English Medium Instruction (EMI) settings at Chinese universities. The primary objective is to investigate the language-related academic challenges and their impact on learners' perceived success in EMI courses. Utilizing a sample of 361 EFL learners from multiple Chinese universities, the study employed a 45-item questionnaire adapted to assess difficulties across four key language skills: writing, reading, speaking, and listening. The researchers also examined self-reported success in EMI courses as a measure of academic performance. Results revealed that writing skills were the strongest predictor of perceived success in EMI, explaining 28.19% of the variance, followed by reading skills (19.54%) and listening skills (2.82%). Speaking skills did not significantly predict success. Learners reported particular difficulties with proofreading, speaking fluently, and understanding complex academic vocabulary.

The reviewed studies highlight several key factors affecting EFL students' speaking proficiency, emphasizing the multifaceted nature of language learning. Language exposure, both formal and informal, plays a critical role in enhancing vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension, as greater exposure to the target language leads to improved proficiency (Candilas, 2016; Al-Zoubi, 2018). Affective factors, such as anxiety, motivation, and confidence, are pivotal in shaping learners' willingness to communicate and performance, with studies showing that reduced anxiety and increased motivation lead to better speaking outcomes (Leong & Ahmadi, 2017; Ngoc & Dung, 2020; Jin, 2023). Cognitive factors, including vocabulary knowledge, grammar, and critical thinking abilities, significantly impact fluency and accuracy, while cognitive styles also influence learners' language development (Nhan, 2024; Bakhshayesh et al., 2023; Kafipour & Khoshnood, 2023).

Instructional and pedagogical strategies, such as dynamic assessments, presentation-based tasks, and communicative teaching methods, have been identified as effective approaches for improving speaking proficiency, particularly when they are interactive and engaging (Khasawneh & Ahmad, 2023; Al-khresheh, 2024). Technological integration, including AI-mediated activities and vlogging, has also been shown to enhance speaking skills by reducing affective barriers and increasing learner engagement (Fathi et al., 2024; Jin, 2023). Additionally, environmental and contextual factors, such as classroom atmosphere, teacher-student interaction, and access to resources, are crucial in creating supportive and structured environments that foster learning (Wang, 2023; Li & Pei, 2024). These findings underscore the importance of addressing linguistic, psychological, instructional, and environmental dimensions comprehensively to improve EFL learners' speaking proficiency effectively.

2.1.2 Studies on Sociocultural Factors Affecting EFL Students' Speaking Proficiency

Several studies on sociocultural factors influencing EFL learners' speaking proficiency are presented to provide a foundation for the current research. Since

this study specifically focuses on investigating the sociocultural factors that affect EFL tertiary learners' speaking proficiency, the researcher carefully selects and reviews relevant research articles, journals, theses, and dissertations. This rigorous review process aims to support and strengthen the study by identifying gaps in existing research, thereby highlighting areas that warrant further investigation.

Hamdi (2023) examines the integration of Critical Language Awareness (CLA) in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction. This research aims to understand how EFL educators incorporate CLA to develop critical perspectives among learners. It identifies themes such as aligning EFL teaching with social contexts, applying Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), and providing professional training for educators. Using qualitative methods, interviews were conducted with six experienced EFL educators at a Saudi Arabian university. The participants emphasized that current EFL curricula often lack critical language teaching due to insufficient materials, limited classroom time, and inadequate training. However, they highlighted the importance of CLA in fostering learners' ability to analyse and respond to social issues critically. The study revealed that EFL educators support using CLA to empower learners, advocating for tasks inspired by learners' social realities.

Kafipour & Khoshnood (2023) investigates the impact of dynamic assessment (DA) on the speaking skills of Iranian EFL learners, considering their cognitive styles—field-dependent (FD) and field-independent (FI). Using a quasi-experimental design, 60 intermediate-level EFL learners were divided into experimental and control groups. The experimental groups underwent DA with flexible mediation, while control groups followed traditional teaching methods. Results revealed that DA significantly improved speaking skills for both FD and FI learners, with FD learners showing greater progress due to their preference for guidance and interaction. This study emphasizes the importance of cognitive styles in DA, suggesting its potential for enhancing language learning outcomes through tailored teaching strategies. The findings highlight DA's utility in integrating assessment with instruction and its capacity to foster learner improvement by addressing individual cognitive differences.

Sabbah (2023) investigates the pedagogical strategies implemented by the English Department of a private Lebanese university to address the decline in students' speaking skills during the early months of the COVID-19 lockdown (March–June 2020). Using a mixed-methods approach, data were collected through semi-structured interviews with English instructors, speaking assessment scores, and enrollment records from the English Peer Support Program (PSP). Qualitative analysis identified key challenges faced during the shift from face-to-face to online learning, along with intervention strategies such as leveraging computer-mediated communication (CMC) tools to enhance students' oral proficiency. Quantitative analysis revealed improvements in speaking assessment scores following the interventions, with pre-test and post-test results showing progress across four semesters. A one-way ANOVA test further confirmed the PSP's effectiveness in preventing further decline in speaking abilities among struggling students. The findings underscore the importance of addressing psychological and technological barriers in online learning environments to support the development of speaking skills, particularly during emergency situations.

Susanti et al. (2023) explores the promotion of learner autonomy in online education among EFL student-teachers in Indonesia during the COVID-19 pandemic. It emphasizes that learner autonomy, defined as the ability to manage and take responsibility for one's own learning, was moderately developed among participants. Key factors influencing autonomy include self-direction, motivation, and collaboration. Challenges such as Indonesia's teacher-centered educational culture, limited access to technology, and poor internet connectivity hindered the development of autonomy. However, online learning provided opportunities for collaboration and access to digital resources. Effective strategies, including scaffolding by teachers, peer collaboration, and fostering motivation, were highlighted as crucial for enhancing autonomy. The findings underline the need for educators to adapt their methods to empower students and for systemic improvements in technological access to support online education.

Sun (2023) examines a project-based inquiry aimed at fostering critical global thinking among 25 EFL university learners in mainland China. Grounded in pedagogies of discomfort and empathy, the project sought to raise awareness of

global human rights violations while nurturing intercultural empathy, empowerment, and a sense of hospitality beyond national borders. By leveraging literature and arts under explicit teacher guidance, students engaged with challenging socio-political issues, developing their political and ethical responsibilities. The findings highlight the potential of foreign language education to serve as a transformative space for social justice and global awareness, offering a framework for integrating critical thinking and ethical reflection in EFL higher education.

Quoc & Van (2023) investigates the impact of a constructivist approach on EFL learners' lexical retention, focusing on meaning recall and learners' attitudes. Using a quasi-experimental design, it involves 75 Vietnamese undergraduates divided into a control group taught traditionally and an experimental group employing the constructivist method. Over eight weeks, the constructivist group demonstrated significantly better vocabulary retention compared to the traditional group, with the posttest scores showing remarkable improvement. Participants in the experimental group also expressed favorable views on the approach, citing enhanced engagement, comprehension, and collaboration. These findings underscore the efficacy of constructivism in fostering active and meaningful learning experiences, with recommendations for integrating its principles into vocabulary teaching. The study contributes to theoretical and pedagogical discourse, advocating for a shift from teacher-centered to learner-centered methodologies for improved lexical retention.

García (2023) explores the use of contemporary country music as a pedagogical tool to foster EFL learners' narrative skills. It demonstrates that authentic materials, such as music, significantly influence learners' emotional and cultural understanding, creating an engaging classroom environment. The research establishes a positive connection between the linguistic and narrative elements of song lyrics, making contemporary country music a suitable medium for developing narrative skills. By analyzing the themes and structures of 216 country songs, the study highlights their potential to discuss social issues and enhance cultural competence. It concludes that the narrative and emotional depth of these songs, paired with their linguistic appropriateness, make them effective for teaching

narrative skills in EFL classrooms. Limitations include a small sample size and the need for more comprehensive validation of the materials.

Hu & Luo (2024) investigates the effectiveness of neurocognitive, metacognitive, and sociocultural strategies in enhancing vocabulary retention among Chinese EFL learners. Employing a quasi-experimental design, 90 participants were divided into experimental and control groups, with the former receiving innovative instructional techniques such as visual-auditory methods, storytelling, and drawing with closed eyes. Data analysis, including pre- and post-tests and MANCOVA, demonstrated significant improvements in vocabulary recall and recognition in the experimental group compared to the control group. The findings underscore the importance of integrating these strategies to foster a multidimensional and engaging learning environment, emphasizing vocabulary acquisition as a crucial component of second language proficiency.

Tian et al. (2023) examines the classroom assessment practices of Vietnamese university EFL teachers from a sociocultural perspective, focusing on how their language assessment literacy (LAL) influences these practices. Using a mixed-methods explanatory sequential research design, data were collected via self-reported questionnaires and follow-up interviews. Quantitative analysis with SPSS and thematic qualitative analysis revealed a preference for traditional assessment tasks over alternative methods, with no correlation between teaching experience and the types of assessment used. Alternative assessments were found to be challenging due to material, institutional, and Confucian ideological constraints, and teachers differed in their perceptions of effective alternative assessment types. The findings highlight the complex interplay of sociocultural factors in shaping teachers' assessment practices and LAL. The study suggests the need for targeted professional development programs to support teachers in implementing diverse and effective assessment practices within specific sociocultural contexts.

This ethnographic study delves into the sociocultural factors contributing to the demotivation of junior secondary school students in a rural village in Buton, Indonesia, toward learning English. Data was collected from 32 participants, including students, parents, an English teacher, and a school principal, through in-

depth interviews and observations. The analysis revealed three key themes: ethnocentric stereotypes, skeptical views about the utility of English, and a slow-living lifestyle. Ethnocentrism led students to prioritize their local language and perceive English as unnecessary or harmful. Skeptical views stemmed from beliefs that English had no relevance to their lives due to the village's isolation and lack of technological infrastructure. The slow-living lifestyle further hindered motivation, as students exhibited a preference for relaxed activities over challenging academic pursuits. These findings suggest a need for strategies to shift perceptions, highlighting English's role in global communication and employability while maintaining cultural preservation (Dunifa, 2024).

C. Li (2023) explores the changes in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) motivation among Chinese tertiary students transitioning from traditional Chinese-medium education to an English-Medium Instruction (EMI) university. Using a longitudinal mixed-methods approach, it examines motivational shifts over an academic year through surveys and interviews. The results indicate a significant increase in motivation, driven by factors such as aspirations to study abroad, the instrumental use of English as an information medium, the influence of teachers and peers, and engaging learning environments. Socio-cultural factors, including learning discourse, cultural artifacts, and socialization through content subject learning in English, were identified as critical mediators. The study underscores L2 motivation as a dynamic and contextually responsive construct, emphasizing the importance of EMI environments in enhancing learner motivation and offering pedagogical insights for fostering EAP learning.

Sociocultural factors significantly influence EFL learners' speaking proficiency, as highlighted by various studies. Critical Language Awareness (CLA) fosters critical thinking by aligning instruction with social realities (Hamdi, 2023). Dynamic Assessment (DA) enhances speaking skills, especially for learners needing guided interaction (Kafipour & Khoshnood, 2023). Online learning strategies, including scaffolding and collaboration, helped overcome barriers during the COVID-19 pandemic, improving autonomy and speaking proficiency (Susanti et al., 2023; Sabbah, 2023). Project-based learning promoted empathy and global awareness through engaging socio-political topics (Sun, 2023). Authentic materials

and constructivist methods, such as storytelling and music, enriched cultural understanding and language skills (Quoc & Van, 2023; García, 2023). Challenges like reliance on traditional assessments, ethnocentric views, and skepticism about English's relevance in rural areas highlight the need for targeted interventions and professional development (Tian et al., 2023; Dunifa, 2024). These studies emphasize the importance of integrating sociocultural, psychological, and pedagogical approaches to enhance EFL learners' speaking proficiency effectively.

2.2 Sociocultural Theory

2.2.1 Neo-Vygotskian Theory

Sociocultural theory, also referred to as neo-Vygotskian theory, is rooted in Russian cultural psychology and has become a foundational framework in understanding second language development. It emphasizes that human cognition and learning are deeply influenced by social and cultural contexts (Leon, 2023). The Neo-Vygotskian theory is an extension of Vygotsky's original learning theory, emphasizing the importance of social interaction in an individual's cognitive development. According to Vygotsky (1978) and Crain (2011) cognitive processes such as thinking and understanding develop through social interaction structured within a cultural and linguistic context. In this theory, cognitive tools and language play a critical role as mediators that enhance learning and development (Williams, 2016). One of the central concepts in this theory is the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which refers to the gap between what an individual can achieve independently and what they can achieve with the assistance of others, such as a teacher or peer (Vygotsky, 1978) (Leon, 2023).

The Neo-Vygotskian approach, as an extension of Vygotsky's original theory, places more emphasis on the contextual and social aspects of learning. Neo-Vygotskians argue that learning is not just the result of interaction between individuals and others, but also relates to the use of technology and media in the learning process. For example, digital technology today can serve as a cognitive tool, expanding individual cognitive abilities and enhancing the learning experience (Miller, 2010). Technology provides new ways for students to interact with learning materials and with peers, facilitating more collaborative and personalized learning

experiences. For instance, research by (Veraksa et al., 2022) illustrates how technology can function as a mediator in cognitive development, extending an individual's ZPD through applications and digital devices. This Neo-Vygotskian theory also acknowledges the importance of cultural influence in learning, emphasizing that every social interaction occurring within a particular cultural context can influence the way an individual thinks and learns. The emphasis on collaboration within this theory is further supported by the presence of learning communities in digital spaces, where knowledge is constructed through communication and collaboration among learners.

Central to this theory is the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), a concept introduced by Vygotsky (1978), which describes the difference between what an individual can accomplish independently and what they can achieve with the assistance of a more knowledgeable individual or supportive tools. In the context of second language acquisition, the ZPD underscores the importance of interaction and guidance in learning (Leon, 2024). For example, when learners are exposed to a language task that they cannot fully complete alone, the presence of a teacher, peer, or structured resource can help bridge the gap between their current abilities and their potential capabilities (Miedema, 2023).

This scaffolding process enables learners to perform beyond their independent level, facilitating growth and skill development. The ZPD thus highlights the dynamic and collaborative nature of learning, where external support plays a critical role in advancing cognitive and linguistic proficiency (Ohta, 2024). This theory has profoundly shaped modern approaches to language teaching, encouraging practices that integrate social interaction and cultural context into the learning process. Lai (2023) describe ZPD as the gap between what an individual can accomplish independently and what can be achieved with assistance from their environment. Zumbach et al. (2023) further elaborate that sociocultural theory emphasizes how human cognition is shaped by the use and creation of mediating tools.

2.2.2 Zone of Proximal Development in Neo-Vygotskian Theory

As the zone of proximal domain is the most applied pattern of the neo-Vygotskian theory in second language acquisition, it is important for the researcher to put more explanation on what ZPD is. The zone of proximal development (ZPD) together with mediation have important implications in the language learning process. ZPD is defined as the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers (Vygotsky, 1978) (Lambright, 2024).

The Neo-Vygotskian theory builds upon the foundational concepts of Vygotsky's work, with a focus on the crucial role of social interaction in cognitive development. According to Vygotsky (1987), learning and development are deeply intertwined, where learning through interactions with others triggers the development of voluntary behaviours in children. However, he emphasized that learning and development do not occur simultaneously, with learning preceding development. Learning, through participation and internalization, leads to cognitive development. Vygotsky (1987) highlighted those social interactions, both with adults and peers, are essential for triggering the learner's progress within the ZPD (Cooper & Lavie, 2021).

The ZPD, as defined by Vygotsky (1978), is the distance between a learner's current independent capacity and potential capacity with appropriate assistance. Harvard (1997) suggests that the ZPD encompasses the gap between the child's independent abilities and their abilities when provided with external help. This is echoed by Mitchell and Myles (2004), who describe the ZPD as the domain of knowledge or skills where learners are not yet capable of functioning independently but can achieve the desired outcome with scaffolded assistance. These interpretations indicate that the ZPD involves external factors, such as guidance, support, and feedback from others, which learners may not have until they are capable of self-directed learning (Breive, 2020).

The role of social interaction in activating the learning process is central to Neo-Vygotskian theory. Interaction with peers and more knowledgeable individuals provides scaffolding that aids learners in navigating their ZPD. Social

factors, such as collaboration and communication, stimulate learning by providing the necessary support to help learners progress beyond their independent capabilities. This social dimension of learning is integral in both Vygotskian and Neo-Vygotskian theory, emphasizing that cognitive growth is not an isolated process but one that thrives through social engagement and external assistance (Herheim et al., 2021).

The Neo-Vygotskian theory, an extension of Vygotsky's ideas, places a significant emphasis on the role of social interaction in cognitive and language learning. Vygotsky (1987) argued that cognitive development is catalysed through social interactions, particularly with more knowledgeable others, within the ZPD. Learning begins as a social activity, moving from external, collaborative interactions to internalized, independent cognitive processes. The ZPD, therefore, represents the gap between what a learner can do independently and what they can achieve with assistance (Vygotsky, 1987) (Ivanov et al., 2020).

Several scholars have highlighted the pivotal role of social interaction in language learning. Van Lier (1996) suggested that interactions with peers who are at similar or even lower levels of proficiency might be more beneficial than interacting with more advanced speakers. This is because such interactions foster the development of alternative strategies and contingencies in discourse management. When learners engage with peers at their own level, the discourse is more likely to involve mutual problem-solving and collaborative learning, which encourages the creation of new learning strategies. In contrast, interactions with more advanced speakers might result in a more passive learning experience for the less proficient learner (Tilak & Glassman, 2022).

Moreover, Mitchell and Myles (2004) emphasized the dynamic sequence between social and individual processes in learning, suggesting that all learning is first social and then individual, first inter-mental and then intra-mental. This perspective underscores the idea that learning is a social endeavour before it becomes internalized. Learners actively shape their learning environments by selecting goals and strategies, thus constructing their own cognitive development through their interactions. This sequence highlights the importance of social interaction in the initial stages of learning, particularly in language acquisition,

where peer interactions play a critical role in providing scaffolding for individual cognitive growth (Y.-C. Huang, 2021). Thus, the Neo-Vygotskian perspective emphasizes that learning, particularly language learning, is inherently social, with learners shaping their learning environments and cognitive processes through their interactions with others. Social engagement provides the scaffolding necessary for learners to progress through their ZPD, which ultimately leads to more independent and individualized learning (Evans & Saracho, 2022).

2.2.3 Social Constructivism Theory

Social constructivism theory, influenced primarily by the works of Vygotsky (1978) and further developed by scholars like Bruner (1996) and Rogoff (1998), posits that knowledge is actively constructed through social interaction and cultural experiences. This theory emphasizes that learning is not a passive process but rather an active one, where individuals build their understanding of the world through engagement with others, particularly in social contexts. Vygotsky's (1978) concept of the ZPD is central to social constructivism (Zajda, 2023). According to Vygotsky, learners are capable of performing tasks with the help of more knowledgeable others, such as teachers or peers. The learning process occurs first at a social level (inter-mental) before being internalized (intra-mental). Vygotsky's theory stresses the importance of language and culture in shaping cognitive development, where language serves as the primary tool for transmitting knowledge and mediating cognitive processes (Belolutsкая et al., 2022).

One key tenet of social constructivism is the idea that learning is a socially situated activity. According to Bruner (1996), learning occurs through participation in cultural practices, with individuals taking part in activities and dialogues within their community. These social interactions are crucial for the construction of knowledge, as learners build on prior knowledge and collaborate with others. Bruner's concept of "scaffolding" emphasizes that learners can achieve higher levels of understanding when provided with appropriate support. As learners engage in tasks beyond their current capabilities with the help of others, they are gradually able to perform these tasks independently (Ohreen et al., 2022).

Rogoff (1998) further developed this idea by emphasizing the role of community and collaboration in learning. She argued that learning is a shared activity, with both adults and peers contributing to the construction of knowledge. In this view, the process of learning is not just an individual endeavour but one that is deeply embedded within social contexts (Nurhasnah et al., 2024). Through participation in guided interactions, learners develop the skills and strategies necessary for independent thinking (Matee et al., 2023). Social constructivism also highlights the importance of a learner's active role in the learning process. It posits that learners are not passive recipients of information but are active constructors of knowledge, making meaning from their own experiences and social interactions. This constructivist view suggests that the social and cultural environment plays a vital role in shaping an individual's cognitive development, with social interaction and collaboration being key components of effective learning (Murphy, 2022).

2.3 Definition of Sociocultural Factors

Sociocultural factors refer to the social and cultural elements that shape the behaviours, beliefs, values, and practices of individuals and communities. These factors are influenced by the interaction between society, culture, and individual experiences, affecting how people think, act, and interpret the world. Sociocultural factors include various variables such as language, traditions, norms, values, religion, social class, gender roles, education, and ethnicity, which collectively contribute to the formation of a person's identity and influence their social interactions and decision-making processes (Hofstede, 2001; Giddens, Duneier, Appelbaum, & Carr, 2017).

Social influences play a significant role in sociocultural factors, as they involve the relationships and interactions that individuals have within their social environment. These influences include family dynamics, peer groups, societal expectations, and social networks, which help shape the behaviours and choices individuals make. Social norms, or the accepted behaviours and practices within a community, dictate how people conform or deviate from what is expected. For example, family and peer support or pressure can impact decisions regarding education, career, and lifestyle choices (Hofstede, 2001).

Cultural influences are also a critical part of sociocultural factors, as culture encompasses the shared beliefs, values, customs, and behaviours that define a group or society. Culture provides the framework through which individuals interpret their world, influencing how emotions are expressed, how people communicate, and what is considered acceptable behaviours. For example, in collectivist cultures, group harmony and family relationships may take precedence over individual success, while in individualistic cultures, personal achievement is often emphasized (Triandis, 1995). Economic status and social class are important sociocultural factors, as they determine access to resources, opportunities, and social mobility. People from different social classes may have differing access to education, healthcare, and networks, which can influence their choices and experiences. For example, higher social classes may have greater access to opportunities and resources, while individuals from lower social classes may face challenges in achieving upward mobility (Giddens et al., 2017).

Education is another key sociocultural factor, as it shapes individuals' understanding of the world and their opportunities in life. The cultural importance placed on education and the availability of resources can greatly impact how individuals value learning and academic achievement. In some societies, education is seen as the key to personal and professional success, while in others, informal learning through community traditions may be more emphasized (Bruner, 1996). Religion and belief systems also play a significant role in sociocultural factors. Religious beliefs provide moral guidelines, rituals, and social expectations that influence how individuals relate to one another and make decisions. Religion can shape ethical considerations, family structures, and attitudes toward social issues, such as gender roles, marriage, and justice (Triandis, 1995). Additionally, gender roles within a society influence what is considered acceptable behaviour for men and women, dictating career choices, family responsibilities, and personal expression. While some societies have rigid gender roles, others may allow more flexibility in how gender identity is expressed (Giddens et al., 2017).

In conclusion, sociocultural factors are crucial to understanding human behaviour and societal dynamics, providing context for individuals' development, identity, and interactions. These factors influence how people perceive the world,

engage with others, and make life choices. Recognizing the importance of sociocultural factors is essential for understanding cross-cultural differences, promoting social cohesion, and addressing the complexities of societal challenges (Hofstede, 2001).

Understanding the broader scope of sociocultural influences is critical for identifying how specific elements, such as cultural norms, distance, language identity, and motivation, directly impact the process of language learning and fluency development. These factors shape not only the learner's approach to acquiring a second language but also their ability to effectively navigate and adapt to the communicative demands of the target culture. The following is an explanation of several sociocultural aspects according to Alptekin (1981) :

a. Cultural Norms

Cultural norms establish the behavioral and communicative expectations within a society. For language learners, understanding these norms is essential for achieving fluency. For instance, in English-speaking cultures, direct communication is often valued, requiring clarity and brevity in speech. However, learners from cultures that favor indirect communication might struggle to adjust to this style, leading to hesitation or miscommunication. Similarly, the use of verbal and non-verbal cues varies widely across cultures. English speakers often rely heavily on verbal communication, while others may integrate gestures or facial expressions more prominently. Adapting to these norms is crucial for learners to interact fluently and confidently in the target language.

b. Distance

The concept of cultural distance explains the challenges faced by language learners when the cultural gap between their native and target languages is significant. This distance encompasses linguistic structures, societal norms, and values. The greater the distance, the harder it becomes to adapt to the target language's fluency and usage. For example, an individual transitioning from a collectivist to an individualist culture might find it challenging to internalize communicative norms that require assertiveness and self-expression.

c. Language Identity

Language is a core component of an individual's identity and reflects their cultural heritage and personal values. For language learners, the relationship between their native and target language identities greatly impacts fluency. If learners perceive the target language as a threat to their native identity, they may resist engaging deeply, hindering their progress. On the other hand, learners who view the target language as a means of personal growth or a gateway to new opportunities are likely to embrace it with enthusiasm, which facilitates better fluency. Balancing one's native and target language identities is crucial for achieving confidence in communication.

d. Motivation

Motivation plays a pivotal role in language learning, directly influencing a learner's effort and engagement. Integrative motivation stems from a desire to connect with the target language community, such as forming relationships or participating in cultural activities. This type of motivation often leads to higher proficiency as learners immerse themselves in authentic language experiences. Instrumental motivation, on the other hand, is goal-oriented, driven by practical needs like securing a job or achieving academic success.

Sociocultural factors are essential in shaping human behavior and societal dynamics, playing a crucial role in individual development, identity formation, and interactions. These factors, including language, social norms, cultural practices, education, and social class, influence how individuals perceive the world, communicate, and make decisions. Social influences, such as family and peer relationships, guide personal choices, while cultural norms dictate acceptable behaviors and communication styles. The role of education and economic status further impacts an individual's opportunities, as well as their access to resources. Religion, gender roles, and belief systems deeply affect social structures and moral guidelines, influencing decisions across various life domains. Understanding these sociocultural factors is vital for comprehending cross-cultural differences, fostering social cohesion, and addressing complex societal challenges. Sociocultural elements such as cultural norms, distance, language identity, and motivation are particularly important in the context of language learning. These factors shape not

only the learners' approach to acquiring a second language but also their ability to adapt and engage in the communicative demands of a new culture. Cultural norms, such as direct versus indirect communication, cultural distance, and the balance between native and target language identities, all play significant roles in determining a learner's fluency and success in navigating a new language and culture (Hofstede, 2001; Giddens et al., 2017; Triandis, 1995; Alptekin, 1981).

2.4 Definition of Sociocultural Context

In the context of second language acquisition (SLA), sociocultural factors refer to the social and cultural influences that impact the process of acquiring a second language. These factors play a crucial role in shaping language learning experiences and outcomes. Some key aspects include:

1. **Social Context:** The environment in which language learning takes place, such as the presence of native speakers, language exposure in daily interactions, and opportunities for authentic communication, can significantly influence second language acquisition.
2. **Cultural Background:** Learners' cultural backgrounds and their familiarity with the cultural aspects of the target language can affect their motivation, engagement, and ability to comprehend and use the language effectively.
3. **Social Interaction:** Language is often learned through social interactions. The quality and quantity of interactions with native speakers, peers, and language instructors can impact language development. Sociocultural theories, such as Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development, highlight the role of social interactions in language learning.
4. **Identity and Belonging:** Learners' sense of identity and belonging within the target language community can influence their motivation and persistence in language learning. Feeling connected to the culture associated with the language can enhance the learning experience.
5. **Cultural Sensitivity:** Awareness and sensitivity to cultural nuances, customs, and social norms are important in language acquisition. Understanding the sociocultural context of the language helps learners navigate communication effectively and appropriately.

In conclusion, the sociocultural context plays a vital role in second language acquisition, as it encompasses the social and cultural factors that influence learners' language learning experiences and outcomes. Key elements such as the social context, cultural background, social interactions, and a sense of identity and belonging significantly impact how individuals acquire and use a second language. Interaction with native speakers and the opportunity for authentic communication are essential for language development, while understanding cultural nuances and customs enhances effective communication. Moreover, learners' engagement with the language community and their sensitivity to cultural differences shape their motivation and persistence. Overall, a holistic approach that incorporates sociocultural factors is essential for fostering meaningful and successful language learning.

2.5 Sociocultural Factors Affecting Students' Speaking Proficiency

2.5.1 Gender

In general, language studies suggest that gender often leads to significant differences in outcomes. According to Dörnyei (2008) as cited in Sundqvist (2009), girls typically perform better in language subjects than boys in school (Björnsson, 2005; Carr & Pauwels, 2006; Klapp Lekholm, 2008). Gorski (2000) attributes this disparity to neurological differences between the sexes, while Dahlström and Sax (2007) explain that inherent gender differences contribute to boys falling behind girls in academic performance. For instance, it is observed that women's brains generally develop faster than men's, leading to earlier maturation in girls. These biological differences have led Dahlström (2007) to suggest the possibility of separate classes for boys and girls in foreign language education.

Sax (2007) further argues that a mix of social and biological factors creates a discouraging environment for boys both at home and in school. Together, these perspectives emphasize the significance of biological differences as a key factor in explaining gender disparities in academic achievement. However, alternative explanations have been proposed, with Klapp Lekholm (2008) suggesting other factors at play, and Oscarson (1998) noting that no gender-related differences were found in learners' ability to assess their own language learning.

A further and relevant discussion about gender and language learning in general and the more specific discussion about innate gender-related differences are featured on an empirical study based on data from adolescent learners in Australia, England, Wales, New Zealand, and Scotland (Carr & Pauwels, 2006). The study showed an example of societal perceptions of what is considered appropriate male behavior had an effect on boys' motivation for and participation in second language courses. Those perceptions entail fear of being different and not like "real boys" which discouraged boys from studying languages. In addition, Carr & Pauwels (2006) found that the teaching methodology used in the language classrooms often the one that appealed more to girls than to boy and suited girls better. As the conclusion have drawn from this study, boys are not as motivated for language learning as girls.

Gender significantly influences speaking competence, particularly in the context of second language acquisition. Social and cultural expectations often shape the opportunities and motivations for language practice among different genders. For instance, societal norms may pressure boys to conform to traditional masculine roles that discourage engagement in activities perceived as less aligned with those roles, such as language learning. This can lead to reduced participation and limited opportunities to develop speaking competence. Additionally, teaching methodologies and classroom dynamics that favor collaborative or communicative tasks may align more with learning styles often attributed to girls, providing them with more effective environments for developing fluency. Consequently, these gendered dynamics can create disparities in speaking competence, with girls often exhibiting greater proficiency and confidence in second language speaking skills than boys.

In conclusion, gender and sociocultural factors play a significant role in shaping language learning outcomes, particularly in the context of second language acquisition. Studies consistently show that girls tend to outperform boys in language subjects, with biological differences, such as the faster brain development in girls, being a contributing factor to this disparity. However, societal perceptions of gender roles and the teaching methodologies used in language classrooms also influence motivation and participation. Boys are often discouraged from engaging

in language learning due to fear of deviating from traditional masculine behaviors, and they may find teaching approaches more suited to girls' learning styles.

2.5.2 Family Background

Family background typically refers to the political, economic, cultural aspects of the family, and other influencing factors. The family serves as a core environment for youth growth and development, exerting a profound influence on them (Guohua et al., 2024).

Family background functions as an important predictor of academic achievement, which in turn plays a crucial role in determining one's occupational status and income (Tsou, 2024). Understanding to what extent similar or different family characteristics shape economic achievements over a lifetime is critical for scholars studying social mobility. If consistent family characteristics influence achievements throughout career stages, then family background can be conceptualized as a single unobserved factor or dimension that impacts achievements across the life course. Conversely, if different family characteristics exert varying effects at different career stages, theories must address why this occurs and identify the most significant aspects at each stage (Karlson, 2024).

Most effects of family background on labor market outcomes are transmitted through educational achievements, often realized as academic credentials (Jelonek, 2022). The classic status attainment model by Blau and Duncan also highlights the relationship between family background and educational attainment, which then contributes to variations in occupational status (Zhou, 2023). Moreover, empirical evidence suggests that schools can amplify or diminish the effects of family background on academic achievement (Ersan & Rodriguez, 2020; Giancola & Salmieri, 2020)

The family is the basic social unit where individual values and attitudes are established and nurtured. It is the primary and most significant environment individuals are exposed to (Z. Li & Qiu, 2018). The family environment, as the most critical component in translating talent and ability into achievement, comprises four dimensions: structural family characteristics (also referred to as family demographic information), family climate, parental values, and imposed

values (L. Xu et al., 2024).

SES (Socioeconomic Status) is a commonly used indicator of family background and generally represents an individual or family's position in a hierarchy based on their ability to access or control valuable resources such as wealth, power, and social status (Tsou, 2024).

Family background encompasses the social, economic, educational, cultural, and environmental conditions of a family that shape an individual's upbringing. According to Musa, the family environment plays a significant role in shaping a child's abilities, including speaking skills. Factors such as parents' education level, socioeconomic status, and communication culture within the family greatly influence an individual's linguistic development (Musa et al., 2024).

In the context of education, Szabo emphasizes that social interactions within the family provide a foundation for language development. For example, families that actively communicate tend to produce individuals with better speaking abilities. Additionally, parental literacy levels contribute to the verbal stimulation children receive during their formative years (Szabó et al., 2024).

Research shows that family background significantly impacts students' speaking abilities. Parental education levels are often associated with children's speaking skills. According to (Pei & Pamintuan, 2024), highly educated parents tend to provide more complex and varied verbal stimulation to their children, enabling them to develop better speaking skills. Moreover, the family's socioeconomic status plays a major role. Families with higher socioeconomic status often have access to better educational resources, such as books, language programs, and private lessons.

Wahyuni (2022) asserts that environment and family background plays a vital role in the EFL learning process and specifically on how the EFL learners perform their oral speaking. In most cases, learners who are raised within labor family background tend to show passive speaking performance, not to say lower willingness to communicate in English. Same case happens from those who come from less advantaged economic background. On the contrary, the EFL learners who coincidentally grow up in more educated and well-established economic background tend to be more assertive in their speaking.

Latha (2012) discusses that rural background of learners where English is generally not used is another cause affecting the learning process. Most of the learners coming from rural background are first generation learners of English language. Their parents being farmers and uneducated often results in the lack of guidance the EFL learners receive from their elderly. When learners of such background are asked to do a speaking activity, they end up in saying nothing. Even if they try to speak, they often tend to use their mother tongue, resulting in the failure of the learning speaking process.

Next, studies by (Awopetu, 2024) reveal that children from high-income families hear more words per day compared to children from low-income families, which affects their vocabulary and speaking skills. The communication culture within the family is also an important factor. Families that frequently engage in discussions, storytelling, and reading together help their children develop better speaking skills (Szabó et al., 2024). Furthermore, a bilingual or multilingual home environment can enhance children's speaking abilities, particularly in cognitive flexibility and language comprehension.

To sum up, family background plays a pivotal role in shaping students' speaking abilities. Factors such as parental education levels, socioeconomic status, family communication culture, and language use at home directly impact speaking development (Tsou, 2024). By understanding these influences, educators and policymakers can design more effective strategies to support students in developing their speaking skills. In addition, family background and socio-economic status significantly impact learners' language performance, with those from more educated and economically stable backgrounds showing higher levels of confidence and assertiveness in language use.

2.5.3 Socio-economic Background of English Learners

Avendaño, Calderón, and Meléndez (2019) state that learning a foreign language or a second language involves the social background of the learners while learning a foreign language because learning occurs in a variety of contexts. The impact of context on learning a language is considerable because the learning environments will enable individuals to learn how to learn and to develop as fully

integrated learners. Learner's access to different cultural goods or cultural capital such as internet, computers, pictures, paintings, books and dictionaries and social capital such as learners' relationships with teachers, parents, siblings, and peers may have a profound influence upon whether, what and how any individual learns a language (Williams and Burden, 1997 as quoted by Pishghadam 2011).

Pishghadam (2011) emphasized that the connection between social class, success, and the various types of capital that learners possess has become a significant topic of study in language learning research. It has been suggested that ESL students may exhibit varying levels of enthusiasm for learning English based on the cultural and social environments they have been exposed to, with the social context directly influencing the conditions that either facilitate or hinder second language acquisition (Pavlenko, 2002 as cited by Pishghadam, 2011). In the second language learning process, it is crucial to acknowledge the role of society, particularly within the educational context.

Pishghadam (2011) points out that researchers agree on the importance of understanding the relationships between social and educational institutions, as examining how individuals' diverse social and cultural backgrounds affect their educational outcomes is essential. Furthermore, Pishghadam (2011) argues that English language teachers must remain vigilant and proactive in supporting learners, as the educational system often perpetuates social inequalities by overlooking the varying levels of cultural and linguistic competence among students from different social backgrounds. In light of this, teachers must understand that language instruction is inseparable from considerations of social class.

In learning a second or foreign language, learners are inevitably influenced by various social contexts, including factors such as their home environment, the number of siblings, extracurricular activities, religious participation, parental knowledge of their children's friends, parental employment, and the degree of parental involvement and monitoring in education (Pishghadam, 2011). These factors relate to the concept of social capital, which includes aspects like the number of close friends and the presence of two parents. These forms of capital provide essential support and input that can contribute to academic success. As Pishghadam

(2011) suggests, learners who have access to greater cultural resources and a broader social network are more likely to benefit from these social capitals, ultimately leading to greater educational success.

Learners from families with more social and cultural capital are generally more successful in education. This view is reinforced by Arikan (2011), who demonstrates that students from higher socio-economic backgrounds tend to achieve higher academic success and are more likely to attend prestigious universities compared to their lower-income peers. Those with higher salaries can afford educational expenses for themselves and their children, highlighting that social class, housing, and access to resources significantly affect the acquisition of value systems as well as academic achievement (Arikan, 2011).

2.5.4 Extracurricular Exposure to English: Activities Beyond the Classroom (English Clubs, Movies, Music, and Reading)

Extracurricular exposure to English plays a significant role in second language acquisition (SLA), as it provides learners with opportunities to engage with the language in diverse contexts outside the formal classroom setting. Research has shown that informal language learning activities such as participation in English clubs, watching English-language movies, listening to English songs, and reading English books or novels can enhance learners' language skills, particularly in the areas of listening, speaking, vocabulary acquisition, and cultural understanding. English clubs and camps offer learners a chance to practice English in a social and supportive environment. These extracurricular activities allow for authentic language use through discussions, games, and group activities that motivate students to use English in informal settings. According to Chen et al. (2022), joining English clubs facilitates peer interactions and provides a platform for language learners to engage with the language outside the constraints of formal classroom teaching. This peer-driven learning environment can help reduce the affective filter, boosting students' confidence and willingness to communicate in English (Chen et al., 2022).

Exposure to English through movies and music has been found to significantly improve learners' listening comprehension and pronunciation. Movies,

with their use of real-life language, idiomatic expressions, and various accents, offer learners a chance to experience English in its natural, conversational form. In a study by Zhang and Li (2021), it was found that learners who regularly watched English movies showed improvement in their listening skills, particularly in understanding colloquial language and slang. Similarly, listening to English songs can contribute to vocabulary expansion and pronunciation practice (Yin, 2020). Music, with its rhythm and rhyme, aids learners in becoming familiar with the intonation and stress patterns of English, which is crucial for fluency development.

Reading books or novels in English is another highly effective form of extracurricular exposure. This activity helps learners to expand their vocabulary, improve reading comprehension, and understand different writing styles. According to Zhao and Sun (2023), extensive reading outside the classroom not only enhances language proficiency but also encourages cultural awareness. Learners are exposed to different contexts, dialects, and cultural nuances that deepen their understanding of how English is used across various contexts. Furthermore, reading has a long-lasting impact on language acquisition, as it allows for repeated exposure to new vocabulary and structures in a contextual setting.

Engaging in these extracurricular activities can complement formal language education by providing learners with additional input in the target language. According to Lee and Lee (2020), such informal learning experiences support the development of language skills that are often overlooked in the classroom, such as speaking fluency, cultural understanding, and informal language use. These activities also encourage learners to take responsibility for their own learning, fostering greater autonomy and motivation in language acquisition (Lee & Lee, 2020). language development and greater success in second language acquisition.

2.5.5 Social Media Interaction

Social media platforms have increasingly become important tools for language learners, offering a unique space for interaction and engagement with native speakers and other learners around the world. These platforms provide a vast array of opportunities to practice language skills outside traditional classroom

settings, fostering authentic communication and exposure to real-life language use. Social media interaction enhances second language acquisition by facilitating language exposure, interaction with diverse linguistic communities, and cultural exchange.

One of the main benefits of social media interaction is the increased exposure to the target language. Learners can follow accounts, join groups, or participate in forums dedicated to the language they are learning, which allows them to encounter new vocabulary, idiomatic expressions, and cultural references in real-time contexts. According to a study by Li and Ni (2021), social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram provide learners with exposure to language used in authentic, informal settings, which helps to enhance their understanding of colloquial speech, slang, and cultural nuances. This exposure allows learners to internalize language patterns more effectively than through textbook-based learning alone.

Social media platforms also offer learners the chance to interact directly with native speakers, which is a key component of effective language learning. Through commenting, messaging, or participating in group chats, learners can practice writing and reading in real-world contexts while receiving immediate feedback. As highlighted by Chik (2020), social media interaction enables synchronous and asynchronous communication, allowing learners to engage in real conversations at their own pace. This interaction helps improve fluency, as learners are often encouraged to produce language spontaneously, leading to more natural language use. Furthermore, this direct communication with native speakers exposes learners to various accents and dialects, broadening their understanding of the language beyond the standardized form taught in the classroom.

Engaging with social media content in the target language also offers cultural insights, which are crucial for developing a deeper understanding of the language. Learners not only gain knowledge about the language itself but also about the culture, values, and social norms of the communities that speak it. According to Xie (2020), this exposure to cultural aspects through social media, such as participating in cultural events online, watching videos, and following influencers, motivates learners by making the language learning process more immersive and

relevant. The cultural dimension of language learning helps increase motivation and can make the learning process more enjoyable and engaging.

Another key advantage of social media interaction is the opportunity for peer learning. Platforms like YouTube, TikTok, and various language learning apps allow learners to collaborate and share resources, study tips, and personal experiences with others. This social learning aspect fosters a sense of community and support, which is essential for maintaining motivation and consistency in language learning. As noted by Thorne (2021), social media platforms create a collaborative environment where learners can share learning strategies, practice together, and support one another, enhancing the overall learning experience.

While social media offers numerous advantages, it is important to recognize some challenges in its use for language learning. One concern is the quality of language input, as social media content is often informal and may include slang or incorrect grammar. Learners need to be able to discern between formal language and casual expressions to avoid adopting incorrect language forms. Furthermore, excessive use of social media can lead to distractions, limiting the time spent on structured language learning activities. Teachers and learners must find a balance between using social media for exposure and interaction while ensuring that formal learning objectives are met.

Social media interaction plays a significant role in language learning by providing learners with authentic language exposure, opportunities for interaction with native speakers, and a platform for cultural exchange. By integrating social media into language learning practices, learners can develop their language skills in a dynamic and interactive environment, promoting fluency, cultural understanding, and peer support. However, it is important to be mindful of the potential challenges and to use social media effectively as part of a broader language learning strategy.

2.5.6 Social Interaction in Language Learning: Peer, Native Speaker, and Instructor Engagement

a. Peer Interaction

Social interaction plays a fundamental role in language learning, particularly in second language acquisition (SLA). According to Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory, language development is deeply embedded in social interactions, where learners build meaning and develop cognitive skills through communication with others (Vygotsky, 1978). He argues that learners' interactions with more knowledgeable peers and teachers lead to cognitive development, which is essential for mastering a second language. This is especially true in peer interactions, where learners can engage in collaborative learning, share knowledge, and provide mutual support in the language learning process.

Vygotsky's concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is central to understanding peer interactions in language learning. The ZPD refers to the range of tasks that a learner can perform with guidance from a more knowledgeable individual, such as a peer or instructor. Peer interactions are critical because they allow learners to collaborate within their ZPD, helping them bridge the gap between what they can do independently and what they can do with assistance. These interactions can involve negotiation of meaning, clarification of language forms, and collaborative problem-solving, all of which enhance the learner's ability to use the language more effectively.

In the context of language learning, peer interaction encourages learners to use the target language in authentic, low-stakes settings, which can build their confidence and promote language acquisition. According to the Interaction Hypothesis, proposed by Long (1983), meaningful communication, which often occurs through peer interactions, enhances language learning by providing opportunities for learners to produce and receive feedback on the target language. This hypothesis suggests that peer interactions, where learners are more likely to engage in authentic, real-time communication, are crucial for improving fluency and developing communicative competence.

Peer interaction in language learning has been widely studied in the literature, highlighting its importance for various aspects of language acquisition, such as speaking fluency, vocabulary acquisition, and overall language proficiency. Studies have shown that peer interactions can offer learners a rich source of input and provide opportunities for output, both of which are essential for language

development (Swain, 2000). Moreover, peer interaction has been found to be particularly beneficial in developing oral skills and fostering a sense of community among learners (Storch, 2002).

One of the primary benefits of peer interaction in language learning is the improvement of speaking skills. In a study by Derakhshan and Karimian (2020), peer interaction was found to significantly enhance learners' speaking fluency. The researchers emphasized that peers often provide a comfortable and supportive environment for language learners to practice speaking without the pressure of judgment from a teacher. This environment encourages learners to use the language more spontaneously and practice more freely. Furthermore, peer interactions often involve the negotiation of meaning, where learners work together to clarify vocabulary or sentence structure, which aids in language processing and retention. In addition to speaking skills, peer interactions also contribute to vocabulary acquisition. Research by Kim and McDonough (2015) showed that peer discussions and collaborative tasks led to better retention of new vocabulary. Peer interaction allows learners to negotiate word meanings, use context clues, and practice using new words in context, which enhances their ability to internalize new vocabulary. The active use of vocabulary during peer interactions also reinforces its meaning, helping learners to acquire words more effectively.

Peer interactions also provide social support, which plays a crucial role in language learning motivation. According to MacIntyre and Gardner (1991), a supportive peer environment helps reduce language anxiety and builds learners' self-confidence. This is particularly important in language learning, where learners often feel apprehensive about making mistakes. Peer interactions help to create a low-pressure environment where learners feel more comfortable taking risks and using the target language. This social support enhances learners' motivation to continue their language studies and can lead to greater success in language acquisition.

Collaborative learning, which often occurs through peer interaction, has been shown to be highly effective for language learning. Storch (2002) found that collaboration among peers in task-based language learning activities resulted in significant improvements in language proficiency. Collaborative tasks, such as pair

work or group projects, allow learners to pool their knowledge and solve problems together, enhancing their cognitive and linguistic development. This collaborative process fosters both language skills and social interaction, creating a more dynamic and engaging learning experience.

Regular interactions with peers who speak the target language or are also learning it can influence language use and learning strategies. Peer support and collaboration contribute to a positive sociocultural context for SLA. Furthermore, interaction with peers can also greatly improve students' English-speaking proficiency for several reasons as follows:

1. **Practice in Authentic Conversations:** Interacting with peers allows students to practice speaking in real-life situations and engage them in authentic conversation in English by which improve their fluency and confidence.
2. **Immediate Feedback:** Peers immediate feedback on each other's language usage, pronunciation, and grammar can foster a collaborative learning environment where students can learn from their mistakes and improve more rapidly.
3. **Shared Learning Experience:** collaboration with peers in language learning can create a sense of friendship and shared experience. Students can support and motivate each other, making the language learning journey more enjoyable and rewarding.
4. **Diverse Perspectives:** The perks of having peers from various linguistic and cultural background provide students with exposure to different accents, vocabulary, and communication styles. This exposure helps students adapt to diverse English-speaking environments and enhances their overall language proficiency.
5. **Cultural Exchange:** Interacting with peers from different cultural backgrounds is beneficial for students as they get insights into cultural norms, customs, and traditions associated with the English language. This cultural exchange enriches their language learning experience and fosters intercultural competence.
6. **Increased Confidence:** Having conversation and practicing with peers in English helps students overcome shyness and fear of making mistakes. As they become more comfortable speaking with their peers, their confidence in their

language abilities grows, leading to improved speaking proficiency.

7. **Opportunities for Collaboration:** To be actively participated in collaborative activities such as group discussions, debates, role-plays, and presentations can encourage students to do meaningful language practice. These collaborative tasks promote not only speaking proficiency but also critical thinking and teamwork skills.

In conclusion, students can get numerous benefits from interaction with peers because it gives broader opportunities for them to improve their English-speaking proficiency, including increased practice opportunities, diverse perspectives, immediate feedback, shared learning experiences, enhanced confidence, cultural exchange, and collaborative learning opportunities.

b. Engaging with Native Speakers of English

Engaging with native speakers of English plays a crucial role in the process of second language acquisition (SLA), as it offers learners authentic and real-time exposure to the language used in everyday contexts. This type of interaction aligns with the Interaction Hypothesis, proposed by Long (1983), which posits that language acquisition is significantly enhanced through interactive communication. The hypothesis suggests that interactions with native speakers, who can provide immediate feedback, clarification, and correction, help learners acquire language more effectively. Engaging with native speakers offers learners the opportunity to negotiate meaning, which is a fundamental aspect of language learning (Long, 1983).

Another relevant theoretical perspective is Vygotsky's Socio-Cultural Theory, which emphasizes the role of social interactions in cognitive development. Vygotsky (1978) argued that language is primarily a social tool, and learners acquire language through collaborative communication with more knowledgeable others. In this context, native speakers serve as key figures who assist learners by offering cultural and linguistic input, scaffolding learning, and facilitating progress within the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Engaging with native speakers allows learners to push the boundaries of their existing language knowledge and internalize more complex language structures.

Community of Practice (CoP), a concept introduced by Lave and Wenger (1991), is another framework that can be applied to understanding the importance of interacting with native speakers. CoP theory emphasizes the role of participation in a community of shared practice, where learners engage in meaningful activities that allow them to co-construct knowledge. Native speakers often provide the necessary context for learners to be immersed in the social practices and communicative norms of English-speaking communities, which enhances language acquisition in real-world settings.

Research consistently highlights the importance of engaging with native speakers for language learners, especially in terms of fluency, pronunciation, and comprehension. According to Liu and Xu (2022), interacting with native speakers helps learners to develop better communicative competence, as they are exposed to authentic language use, slang, colloquialisms, and cultural references that are not typically taught in the classroom. Native speakers offer a dynamic source of linguistic input, which aids learners in acquiring natural language flow and understanding nuances in meaning that formal education may overlook.

Native speaker interactions are particularly beneficial for developing speaking skills. By engaging with native speakers, learners can practice spontaneous, real-time conversation, which fosters fluency and confidence in speaking. In a study by Zhang and Li (2021), it was found that learners who regularly engaged with native speakers in conversational settings showed significant improvements in their speaking abilities, particularly in terms of fluency and pronunciation. Native speakers provide immediate, real-world feedback, which allows learners to refine their speaking skills in ways that are directly applicable to authentic communication.

Engaging with native speakers also facilitates the development of cultural awareness, which is integral to mastering a language. According to Smith and Brown (2020), language learning is not only about acquiring linguistic structures but also about understanding the social and cultural contexts in which the language is used. Interaction with native speakers exposes learners to cultural practices, norms, and values that shape language use. This cultural exchange enhances learners' ability to navigate social interactions and participate meaningfully in

English-speaking environments. Moreover, the connection with native speakers provides a sense of social integration, as it immerses learners in the cultural practices and identity of the target language community.

Despite the many benefits, engaging with native speakers presents challenges, particularly for learners who are less confident or have limited opportunities for interaction. Studies by Lee and Choi (2023) suggest that learners may experience anxiety or fear of making mistakes when interacting with native speakers, which can hinder their willingness to engage. To address this, creating supportive environments, such as language exchange programs or online conversation platforms, can encourage more interaction and reduce learners' apprehensions. Lee and Choi (2023) also highlight the importance of learners setting realistic goals and expectations, understanding that language learning is a gradual process that requires sustained interaction with native speakers over time.

With the advancement of technology, learners now have access to a variety of platforms that facilitate interaction with native speakers. Online platforms such as language exchange websites, video calls, and social media groups provide learners with opportunities to engage in real-time conversations with native speakers, regardless of geographic location. According to a study by Wang and Liu (2021), these online interactions can be just as effective, if not more so, than face-to-face communication, especially for learners in remote areas. These tools bridge the gap between learners and native speakers, allowing for continuous language practice and exposure.

Engaging with native speakers is an essential component of second language acquisition, offering numerous benefits such as improved speaking skills, enhanced fluency, increased cultural awareness, and better social integration. Theoretical frameworks like the Interaction Hypothesis, Vygotsky's Socio-Cultural Theory, and Community of Practice underscore the importance of social interaction in language learning. Research highlights the positive impact of native speaker engagement on language proficiency, particularly in informal communication settings. While challenges such as learner anxiety may arise, technology provides an effective solution by offering learners new avenues to interact with native speakers in a supportive environment. Overall, incorporating native speaker

interaction into language learning practices significantly enhances the overall language acquisition process.

c. Teachers and Lecturers in Language Learning

In language learning, teachers and lecturers play a pivotal role as facilitators of knowledge, guiding learners through the complexities of acquiring a second or foreign language. The role of teachers extends beyond mere content delivery to encompass social and cognitive scaffolding, where learners are supported in their journey through various stages of language acquisition. This role is grounded in several key theories of language learning, including Behaviorism, Cognitivism, and Sociocultural Theory.

Behaviorism (Skinner, 1957) highlights the importance of reinforcement and feedback in language learning. Teachers provide corrective feedback, reinforcement, and repetition of language structures, helping learners internalize language forms. Cognitivism (Piaget, 1970) emphasizes the role of the teacher in creating a learning environment where students can process and organize information effectively. According to this theory, teachers act as cognitive guides who help students construct knowledge through interaction with linguistic input and opportunities for problem-solving.

The Sociocultural Theory (Vygotsky, 1978) is particularly significant in understanding the role of teachers and lecturers. Vygotsky's concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) suggests that learners can achieve higher levels of language proficiency with the guidance of more knowledgeable individuals, such as teachers or lecturers. The teacher's role is not just to deliver knowledge but to scaffold the learner's progress, providing support that is gradually removed as the learner becomes more proficient. The teacher's guidance and feedback are critical in fostering language acquisition in both formal and informal settings.

Teachers are not just passive transmitters of knowledge; they actively influence the success of language acquisition. Research shows that the teaching strategies employed by instructors have a significant impact on students' language learning outcomes. A study by Zhu and Ma (2021) found that when language instructors adopt communicative and interactive teaching methods, students exhibit

higher motivation and better language proficiency. Teachers who foster a supportive and engaging learning environment help students build confidence and improve their communicative competence.

One of the primary functions of teachers in language learning is to create an environment that encourages active language use. According to Kim and McDonough (2022), task-based language teaching (TBLT) is an effective strategy for language instructors to promote interaction and problem-solving in real-world contexts. In this approach, teachers design tasks that mimic real-life situations, allowing learners to use the target language authentically. The teachers' role in facilitating these tasks involves guiding students through the process, offering corrective feedback when necessary, and encouraging reflection on language use. In addition to task-based strategies, differentiated instruction has been shown to improve language learning outcomes. Teachers who adjust their teaching styles based on the varying needs and learning preferences of their students can help ensure that all learners progress at an optimal pace. According to Jackson (2020), personalized instruction enables students to work within their ZPD, fostering language acquisition by providing appropriate challenges and support.

In addition to their linguistic role, teachers and lecturers also act as cultural mediators. Language learning is not only about acquiring vocabulary and grammar; it also involves understanding the cultural contexts in which the language is used. Research by Sadeghi and Motallebzadeh (2022) highlights the importance of teachers incorporating cultural elements into language lessons. Language instructors who expose students to the cultural nuances and social practices of the target language can enhance students' understanding and use of language in authentic contexts. This cultural competence is vital in helping learners navigate social interactions in the target language and gain a deeper appreciation of its cultural significance.

In the context of higher education, language lecturers play an even more specialized role. A study by Lee and Lee (2023) showed that university lecturers who engage in task-based and project-based learning strategies create more dynamic and interactive language learning environments, which lead to better student outcomes. Lecturers often provide a deeper, more analytical approach to

language learning, encouraging students to critically engage with texts and produce more sophisticated language output. They also focus on advanced skills such as academic writing, critical thinking, and research, which are essential for students in academic settings.

Despite their central role, language teachers and lecturers face various challenges in fostering effective language learning. One significant challenge is student motivation. According to Zhang (2021), many language learners experience anxiety, lack of confidence, and disengagement, which can hinder their progress. Teachers need to employ strategies that reduce anxiety and motivate learners, such as creating a positive and inclusive classroom environment, providing frequent feedback, and setting achievable goals. Additionally, teachers often face constraints such as large class sizes, limited resources, and insufficient professional development opportunities, which can impact their effectiveness (O'Connor, 2020).

Teachers and lecturers are crucial in guiding language learners through the complexities of acquiring a second or foreign language. Their role extends beyond simply providing language input; they actively shape the learning environment, engage students in meaningful tasks, and act as scaffolding figures in the learners' Zone of Proximal Development. By employing effective teaching strategies, offering personalized support, and integrating cultural elements into their lessons, teachers can significantly enhance language acquisition outcomes. However, language instructors also face challenges, including student motivation and external constraints, which require ongoing adaptation and support.

2.5.7 Personality and Language Learning: The Impact of Extroversion and Introversion

Personality traits, particularly extroversion and introversion, have long been discussed as individual differences in second language acquisition (SLA). However, within the framework of sociocultural theory, personality can also be understood as a sociocultural factor that influences, and is influenced by, the learner's social environment (S. W. Kim & Lee, 2024). According to Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, individual development, including cognitive and affective

aspects, is mediated by social interaction and cultural context (Vygotsky, 1978). In this light, personality traits are not static, isolated characteristics but are shaped and expressed through ongoing engagement with one's social surroundings (Johnson et al., 2024). For example, an introverted learner in a highly interactive classroom culture may experience challenges not due to lack of competence, but due to sociocultural expectations regarding classroom participation (L. Huang, 2025).

Vygotsky emphasized that cognitive development is deeply influenced by cultural context. This perspective diverges significantly from Piaget's theory, which suggests that children progress through universal stages of development irrespective of cultural background (Piaget, 1972). In contrast, Vygotsky argued that the trajectory of cognitive growth is shaped by the specific cultural tools, practices, and meanings available within a child's sociocultural environment (Vygotsky, 1978). As such, cognitive development is not a universally fixed process but a culturally mediated one, with different societies fostering different ways of thinking and learning (Tchombe, 2022).

Another major distinction between Vygotsky and Piaget lies in their views on the role of language in development. Piaget posited that language emerges from the progression of thought, that is, cognitive development precedes linguistic ability (Piaget, 1923/1959). Vygotsky, proposed that language and thought initially develop as separate systems in early childhood and begin to converge around the age of three, ultimately forming verbal thought or inner speech (Vygotsky, 1986). He believed that language is not simply a product of cognitive development, but a central mechanism through which higher mental functions are formed. Through language-mediated interaction with others, children internalize social meanings and transform them into personal cognitive tools (Ferreira et al., 2023). In Vygotsky's view, learning is not merely the acquisition of knowledge but the process of integrating culturally shaped language into thinking. This perspective underscores the essential role of communication and social interaction in the formation of consciousness and supports the idea that learning and development are inseparable processes, mediated by language within specific cultural settings (Tzuriel, 2021).

According to Vygotsky, humans are born with innate cognitive capacities that serve as the foundation for more complex intellectual development. He referred

to these initial abilities as elementary mental functions, which include basic attention, perception, sensation, and memory (Vygotsky, 1978). These functions are biologically determined and shared among all humans, forming the groundwork upon which higher mental functions are socially constructed through interaction and cultural mediation (Pedapati, 2022). Vygotsky emphasized that these elementary functions are not sufficient on their own; rather, they must be shaped through social experiences, particularly through the use of language, to develop into more sophisticated cognitive abilities (Daramola et al., 2024).

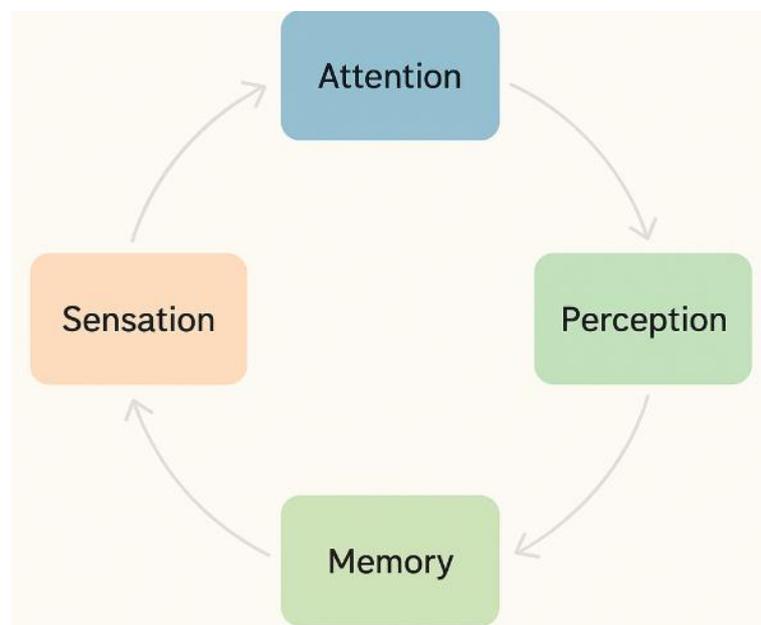


Figure 2.1 Vygotsky Intellectual Adaptation Theory
Source: (Yusof, 2021)

Cognitive skills initially emerge through social interactions within the surrounding environment and gradually evolve into more sophisticated and efficient processes, which Vygotsky refers to as higher mental functions. These developments are not solely biologically driven but are shaped by the cultural context in which a child is raised. Each culture provides children with specific tools and strategies, such as language, symbols, and methods of reasoning, that facilitate the enhancement of basic mental functions like attention, perception, memory, and sensation (Yusof, 2021). This process, termed intellectual adaptation by Vygotsky, involves acquiring culturally specific ways of thinking and solving problems

through guided interactions with more knowledgeable members of society (Yusof, 2021).

For example, while memory capacity in early childhood is biologically constrained, the strategies used to manage memory are largely culturally determined. In literate societies, children are commonly taught to take notes to support memory retention, whereas in pre-literate cultures, alternative methods such as repetitive verbal cues or the use of tangible items like pebbles are employed to aid recall (Colelli et al., 2025). These variations demonstrate that cognitive functions, even those executed independently, fundamentally shaped by the cultural tools, values, and beliefs within a given society. Thus, Vygotsky contends that cognitive development is inherently sociocultural, with thought processes and problem-solving skills reflecting the norms and practices embedded in one's cultural environment (Rigopouli et al., 2025).

Social learning theory has its foundations in the work of Vygotsky, who asserted that cognitive development is shaped through interactions with parents, caregivers, peers, and the broader cultural environment. According to Vygotsky, children are born with basic biological constraints, but their higher mental functions evolve through social interaction and cultural mediation (Shabani, 2016). He emphasized that learning is fundamentally a social process, occurring as individuals engage with others in meaningful activities. In educational contexts, the application of sociocultural theory encourages collaborative learning, dialogue, and shared problem-solving, where students acquire knowledge by observing, listening, and interacting with more knowledgeable peers or adults (Chen, 2025).

Vygotsky's theory posits that consciousness and thought are the outcomes of socialization processes. He highlighted the pivotal role of social experiences in enhancing children's cognitive development, introducing key concepts such as the *Zone of Proximal Development* (ZPD), the gap between what a learner can do independently and what they can achieve with guidance (Vygotsky, 1978). This co-construction of knowledge reflects the dynamic interplay between individual learners and their sociocultural context (Chen, 2025). Although Vygotsky developed his theories around the same period as Jean Piaget during the 1920s and 1930s, his early death at the age of 38 limited the further elaboration of his work.

Nonetheless, his writings continue to be influential and are still being translated from Russian (Daniels, 2001).

Darvin & Norton (2023) extends this view through the concept of language learner identity, emphasizing that learner investment and willingness to communicate are deeply tied to how learners are positioned socially and how they perceive themselves within the learning environment (Y. Wang, 2021). Personality traits like introversion or extroversion influence learners' access to language practice opportunities, and these opportunities are, in turn, mediated by power relations, classroom norms, and peer dynamics (W. Xu, 2025). Similarly, Thao et al. (2024) argues that SLA must consider the social turn, acknowledging the complex interaction between personal dispositions and social identity in language development. Thus, personality becomes relevant not merely as a psychological construct but as a socioculturally embedded factor (Sellars et al., 2018).

Empirical studies also support this perspective. Thach (2025) found that extroverted learners tend to perform better in oral production tasks due to their greater sociability and willingness to take communicative risks. However, they emphasize that this advantage is context-dependent, as cultural norms and classroom expectations can either support or inhibit extroverted or introverted tendencies (Mirnawati et al., 2024). Khodabandeh (2022) and Hayati (2021) similarly observed that introverted learners may excel in reading and writing, while extroverts show stronger performance in speaking and listening, differences that reflect both personal inclination and the sociocultural affordances of the learning setting. These findings underscore that personality traits do not operate in isolation but are dynamically linked to the learner's social environment (Akifah & Hayati, 2025).

2.6 Speaking

2.6.1 Definition of Speaking

Speaking is a vital language skill that involves the production and expression of ideas, thoughts, and emotions through spoken words. In the context of second language acquisition (SLA), speaking is viewed as the ability to produce fluent, comprehensible, and socially appropriate utterances in real-time

conversations. According to the Interaction Hypothesis (Long, 1983), speaking is considered essential for language learning as it promotes communication and the negotiation of meaning between speakers. The hypothesis highlights the importance of interactive communication, where learners actively engage with others, facilitating language acquisition. Speaking, therefore, is not only about producing grammatically correct sentences but also about interacting effectively in various social contexts.

In Sociocultural Theory (Vygotsky, 1978), speaking is also regarded as a social process where learners develop linguistic skills through collaborative dialogues with others. Vygotsky emphasized that learners' cognitive development and language skills are enhanced through social interaction, as they can receive support, scaffolding, and feedback from more knowledgeable individuals. From this perspective, speaking is integral to building knowledge and making sense of the world through language. Moreover, the Cognitive Theory of Second Language Acquisition (Ellis, 2020) views speaking as a complex cognitive process that involves not only the production of speech but also mental processes such as planning, problem-solving, and self-monitoring. According to Ellis, effective speaking requires the coordination of several cognitive mechanisms, including retrieving vocabulary, constructing grammatical structures, and producing speech sounds efficiently and fluently. The theory suggests that the development of speaking skills in a second language involves both implicit and explicit learning, where practice, interaction, and feedback contribute to language improvement.

Speaking has long been recognized as one of the most critical skills for effective communication in a second language. Research from recent years highlights several key components that contribute to successful speaking performance: fluency, accuracy, pronunciation, and social appropriateness. Each of these components plays a distinct role in language production, and collectively, they contribute to a speaker's ability to convey meaning effectively. Fluency refers to the ability to speak smoothly and naturally without unnecessary hesitation, while accuracy involves the correct use of grammar and vocabulary. According to Tavakol (2020), fluency and accuracy are interdependent; however, learners often prioritize fluency in communication, especially in informal settings. A study by

Zarei and Ghafournia (2021) found that learners who focus on fluency tend to produce more spontaneous speech, while those who prioritize accuracy may focus more on constructing grammatically correct sentences, sometimes at the expense of fluid conversation. However, both fluency and accuracy are essential for effective communication, as speakers must be able to produce speech quickly while ensuring it is grammatically correct and comprehensible to others.

Pronunciation, which includes the articulation of sounds and words, is crucial in speaking. Proper pronunciation allows speakers to be understood clearly by native and non-native speakers alike. Intonation, which refers to the rise and fall of pitch during speech, also plays a vital role in expressing meaning and emotion. Research by Azabdaftari and Rafieyan (2022) emphasized that accurate pronunciation and appropriate use of intonation contribute to learners' comprehensibility and their ability to convey intended meaning effectively. Effective speaking involves both producing clear sounds and using pitch and rhythm to emphasize key parts of speech.

Social appropriateness in speaking refers to the ability to adapt one's language according to the context, including understanding and using formal and informal registers, politeness strategies, and conversational norms. According to Liu and Zhang (2021), social appropriateness in speech is particularly important for learners in real-world communication settings, where speaking involves not just linguistic knowledge but also cultural understanding. Learners must recognize social cues, such as politeness, to engage effectively in different contexts, ranging from casual conversations to more formal, academic, or professional environments.

The role of speaking in the classroom is critical for language development. Communicative language teaching (CLT), as discussed by Richards and Rodgers (2020), emphasizes the importance of creating opportunities for students to practice speaking in authentic contexts. The classroom provides a controlled setting for learners to develop speaking skills, engage in role-play, and perform activities that mimic real-world communication. However, the ultimate goal of speaking in language learning is to be able to transfer these skills to real-life situations. As highlighted by MacIntyre and Gregersen (2020), opportunities to engage with native speakers and participate in authentic communication significantly improve

learners' speaking abilities. The more learners interact in real-world scenarios, the more they develop their communicative competence.

The rise of digital tools and technologies has also impacted the development of speaking skills. Online language platforms, virtual reality (VR) tools, and language exchange apps provide learners with opportunities to practice speaking with native speakers and fellow learners, bridging geographical gaps. A study by Wang and Xie (2022) found that language learners who engaged with online platforms to practice speaking showed significant improvements in fluency and pronunciation. The convenience and accessibility of these tools allow learners to practice speaking at their own pace, in a variety of contexts, and with diverse speakers, which enhances their ability to use the language spontaneously and in real-time interactions.

In conclusion, speaking is a crucial skill in language learning, comprising a combination of fluency, accuracy, pronunciation, and social appropriateness. Theoretical perspectives such as the Interaction Hypothesis, Sociocultural Theory, and Cognitive Theory highlight the importance of interaction, social context, and cognitive processes in developing speaking skills. Recent literature underscores the significance of providing learners with both classroom-based and real-world opportunities to engage in speaking activities. Additionally, the use of technology in language learning has become an important tool in facilitating the development of speaking skills. Ultimately, successful speaking involves not only linguistic proficiency but also the ability to interact meaningfully in diverse social contexts.

2.6.2 The Function of Speaking

Speaking serves as a fundamental communication tool in both first and second language acquisition, allowing individuals to convey thoughts, emotions, and information in real-time interactions. In the context of second language learning, speaking functions not only as a means of expressing oneself but also as a tool for cognitive development, social integration, and learning reinforcement. Speaking in language learning has various key functions, each contributing to a deeper understanding and fluency in the target language.

1. Communication Function

The primary function of speaking is communication. It enables learners to exchange ideas, ask questions, and engage in conversations, both in social and academic contexts. In a language learning environment, speaking provides opportunities for learners to practice using the language in meaningful ways, engaging in authentic communication. According to the Interaction Hypothesis (Long, 1983), engaging in real conversations is essential for language acquisition, as it allows learners to negotiate meaning, clarify doubts, and receive immediate feedback. This helps to increase the learner's fluency and ability to use the language spontaneously.

2. Cognitive Function

Speaking also plays a cognitive role in language learning. When learners speak, they activate their mental processes, which require the retrieval and application of vocabulary, grammar, and syntax. According to Cognitive Theory (Ellis, 2020), speaking involves several cognitive mechanisms such as memory, attention, and processing. Learners must quickly access linguistic knowledge, produce speech sounds, and formulate grammatically correct sentences. This process strengthens language skills by reinforcing learners' understanding of language structures and encouraging problem-solving skills. Through regular speaking practice, learners become more adept at organizing and producing language efficiently, which contributes to their overall proficiency.

3. Social and Emotional Function

Speaking in a second language serves a significant social function by facilitating social interaction and cultural integration. By engaging in conversation with others, learners develop their ability to interact within the target culture, understand cultural norms, and adapt their communication style accordingly. Social interaction, as emphasized by Vygotsky (1978) in his Sociocultural Theory, is a critical aspect of language learning. Speaking allows learners to build relationships, exchange cultural knowledge, and negotiate their identity in the new language. In this way, speaking fosters not only linguistic development but also emotional and social growth.

4. Learning Reinforcement Function

Speaking reinforces language learning by providing opportunities for practice and consolidation. When learners speak, they actively use the language they have learned, reinforcing their understanding of vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. According to Output Hypothesis (Swain, 2000), producing language through speaking helps learners internalize the language more effectively by forcing them to process and organize their thoughts in the target language. Speaking also provides opportunities for learners to experiment with new language structures and vocabulary, further reinforcing their learning through trial and error. This function of speaking allows for continual language development and adaptation.

5. Assessment Function

Speaking provides an essential means of assessing language learners' proficiency. Teachers and language instructors often evaluate speaking skills through oral exams, discussions, and presentations. These assessments help to measure learners' fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary use, and ability to engage in real-time communication. According to Brown and Abeywickrama (2021), oral assessments offer valuable insights into learners' ability to produce language in various contexts, from formal to informal settings. The act of speaking in assessments also helps learners gain awareness of their strengths and areas for improvement, guiding further study and practice.

6. Motivational Function

Finally, speaking plays a key role in motivation. As learners gain confidence in their speaking ability, they often feel more motivated to engage in language learning. Speaking opportunities, particularly those involving native speakers or peers, can foster a sense of achievement and encourage learners to continue practicing. Research by MacIntyre and Gardner (2021) suggests that positive speaking experiences, such as successful communication with native speakers, significantly boost learners' self-esteem and drive to keep improving. As learners gain competence in speaking, they are more likely to take on new challenges and explore additional aspects of the language.

In conclusion, speaking serves multiple functions in language learning, from communication and cognitive processing to social interaction and learning reinforcement. By engaging in speaking activities, learners not only practice using the language in real-world contexts but also strengthen their cognitive skills, social relationships, and cultural understanding. The function of speaking as a tool for assessment, motivation, and reinforcement further enhances its importance in second language acquisition. Teachers and learners alike must recognize the integral role of speaking in language learning, ensuring that speaking opportunities are integrated into the learning process to maximize language development.

2.6.3 The Purpose of Speaking

Speaking is a central aspect of communication and plays a critical role in second language acquisition (SLA). In language learning, speaking serves multiple purposes that contribute not only to language proficiency but also to social, cognitive, and emotional development. These purposes are foundational for learners to effectively communicate in the target language, practice acquired knowledge, and engage with others in meaningful ways.

1. Communication and Expression

The primary purpose of speaking is to communicate and express thoughts, ideas, and emotions. Speaking enables learners to convey information and share personal experiences with others. It is a direct mode of communication that allows individuals to ask questions, provide answers, and exchange ideas. For language learners, speaking serves as the primary tool for practicing communication in everyday contexts, both formal and informal. This is especially important for achieving fluency, where learners need to continuously engage with the language through speaking in real-time situations (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2020). As learners develop their speaking skills, they become more proficient in engaging in conversations and articulating their ideas effectively.

2. Cognitive and Mental Processing

Speaking also plays a vital role in cognitive development. When learners produce speech, they must quickly process and organize thoughts in the target language. This involves accessing vocabulary, constructing grammatical

structures, and applying language rules in real-time communication. Cognitive theories of language acquisition, such as Cognitive Load Theory (Sweller, 2020), suggest that speaking engages both working memory and long-term memory, encouraging learners to apply language structures actively. Through speaking, learners strengthen their cognitive abilities, which contributes to the consolidation and retrieval of linguistic knowledge.

3. Social Interaction and Engagement

Speaking facilitates social interaction, which is essential for building relationships and integrating into a linguistic community. In language learning, speaking allows learners to interact with peers, teachers, and native speakers of the target language, fostering a sense of connection to the culture associated with the language. As Vygotsky (1978) emphasizes in Sociocultural Theory, language learning is inherently social, and speaking helps learners interact and negotiate meaning with others. These social interactions enhance learners' ability to use the language appropriately in various contexts, thereby supporting both language learning and cultural immersion. In real-world settings, speaking is used to initiate, maintain, and close conversations, navigate social dynamics, and manage interpersonal relationships.

3. Learning Reinforcement

The act of speaking reinforces language learning. According to Swain's Output Hypothesis (2000), producing language through speaking helps learners internalize and reinforce language structures. When learners speak, they actively use what they have learned in both structured and spontaneous contexts, which helps to solidify their understanding of vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. Speaking also offers immediate opportunities for feedback, where learners can identify errors and correct them, further consolidating their language skills. This process of trial and error is crucial for language development, as learners refine their speaking ability through practice and self-correction (Zhang & Li, 2021).

4. Confidence Building and Motivation

Speaking serves as a means of building self-confidence and motivation in language learners. As learners gain proficiency in speaking, they develop a

sense of accomplishment, which boosts their self-esteem and encourages continued language practice. According to research by MacIntyre and Gregersen (2020), learners' willingness to speak in the target language is directly linked to their motivation to learn. As learners engage in more speaking activities, their confidence grows, and they become more willing to participate in conversations, even when mistakes are made. This ongoing process of speaking enhances intrinsic motivation and fosters a sense of achievement, especially when learners interact with native speakers or achieve meaningful communication.

5. Assessment of Language Proficiency

Speaking also serves an evaluative function. Teachers and language instructors use oral assessments to gauge learners' language proficiency in areas such as fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary usage, and grammatical accuracy. Through speaking tasks like presentations, debates, and oral exams, learners demonstrate their ability to produce language in real-time contexts, showcasing their communicative competence. Oral assessments are particularly effective in measuring practical language skills, as they provide insight into how well learners can apply their knowledge in spontaneous and dynamic communication situations (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2021). These evaluations offer valuable feedback to both learners and instructors regarding areas of strength and areas requiring further improvement.

In summary, the purpose of speaking in language learning is multifaceted, serving communication, cognitive processing, social engagement, learning reinforcement, and confidence building. Through speaking, learners practice their language skills, engage with others, and reinforce their linguistic knowledge. It is not only a key component of effective language learning but also a tool for personal and social development, fostering intercultural understanding and motivation. Teachers should create opportunities for learners to practice speaking in varied and authentic contexts, providing both structured tasks and informal conversations to maximize learning outcomes.

2.7 The Significance of Speaking Skills for EFL Learners

Speaking is considered one of the most important skills in learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL), as it directly impacts learners' ability to communicate effectively in real-world situations. According to Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (1978), language learning is inherently social, and speaking plays a central role in cognitive development. Vygotsky argued that learning occurs through social interaction, and speaking provides learners the opportunity to negotiate meaning and construct knowledge collaboratively with peers, teachers, and native speakers. As a result, the ability to speak fluently and accurately in the target language is a key indicator of language proficiency.

In Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), a dominant approach in EFL education, speaking is emphasized as a core component. CLT focuses on the use of language in real-life communication and encourages learners to engage in meaningful conversations. Krashen's Input Hypothesis (1982) also supports the importance of speaking in language learning, as it stresses that comprehensible input and output are essential for developing language skills. Speaking facilitates output, which allows learners to process and internalize language more effectively. By engaging in conversation, learners not only receive linguistic input but also produce language, reinforcing their language competence and fluency.

Swain's Output Hypothesis (2000) further emphasizes that speaking enables learners to produce language, which forces them to organize and retrieve vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. The act of speaking pushes learners to actively use language, which enhances retention and fluency. This theory asserts that the more learners engage in speaking, the more they will refine their language skills, especially in areas such as accuracy, fluency, and pronunciation.

Speaking is a crucial skill for EFL learners as it is directly linked to their ability to interact and engage with the English-speaking world. As research by Derakhshan et al. (2020) suggests, speaking skills are central to learners' ability to express themselves and understand others in both academic and social settings. In addition to being a vital tool for communication, speaking skills also contribute to

learners' confidence and motivation in language learning. According to MacIntyre and Gregersen (2021), learners who are able to speak confidently are more likely to participate in language learning activities, which fosters continuous improvement in other language skills such as reading, writing, and listening.

One of the key factors that influence the development of speaking skills in EFL learners is motivation. Gardner's (2020) theory of integrative motivation highlights that learners' desire to integrate into the culture of the language they are learning can significantly enhance their speaking abilities. EFL learners who are motivated by social and cultural integration tend to engage more in conversations with native speakers and peers, thereby increasing their exposure to authentic language use. According to Liu and Xu (2020), motivated learners show greater persistence in overcoming language barriers and are more likely to take risks in speaking, which accelerates language acquisition.

Research has consistently shown that speaking skills are closely related to overall language proficiency. Zhang and Wang (2021) found that students who actively participate in speaking activities tend to score higher in language proficiency assessments, particularly in areas such as listening comprehension, vocabulary retention, and grammatical accuracy. Speaking helps learners apply and reinforce the knowledge they acquire from other language skills, as it requires them to retrieve vocabulary, structure sentences, and use correct pronunciation in real-time communication. According to Wang and Xie (2021), learners who engage in regular speaking practice are more likely to develop a higher level of fluency, which positively impacts their overall language skills.

In EFL classrooms, various speaking activities have been found to enhance learners' speaking abilities. Task-based activities, debates, group discussions, role-playing, and presentations are effective in promoting speaking practice. According to Sadeghi and Motallebzadeh (2020), these activities not only encourage learners to use the language in context but also help them develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Task-based language teaching (TBLT) has been shown to improve speaking skills by providing learners with the opportunity to complete real-world tasks while using English as a medium of communication. In this approach, teachers act as facilitators, guiding students through tasks that require them to

collaborate and use language in meaningful ways.

Despite its importance, many EFL learners face challenges in developing their speaking skills. Language anxiety is one of the most common barriers that prevent learners from speaking confidently. According to MacIntyre and Gardner (2021), anxiety often leads to avoidance of speaking opportunities, which limits learners' chances to practice and improve. Teachers can address this issue by creating a supportive classroom environment where students feel comfortable making mistakes and engaging in conversation without fear of judgment. Another challenge faced by EFL learners is limited exposure to the language outside the classroom. As noted by Zhang (2021), learners in non-English-speaking countries often lack opportunities to interact with native speakers, which hampers their ability to develop fluency and pronunciation. Online language exchange platforms and social media groups offer learners valuable opportunities to practice speaking with native speakers and peers, helping to overcome this challenge.

In conclusion, speaking is an essential skill for EFL learners, directly impacting their ability to communicate, interact, and integrate into English-speaking environments. Speaking not only enhances learners' language proficiency but also boosts their confidence and motivation. Through regular speaking practice, learners can improve their fluency, pronunciation, and overall language competence. However, challenges such as language anxiety and limited exposure to native speakers may hinder speaking development, requiring teachers to implement effective strategies and create supportive environments for speaking practice. As the literature suggests, task-based activities, motivation, and social engagement are key factors that facilitate the improvement of speaking skills in EFL learners.

2.8 The Characteristics of Speaking

Speaking is a multifaceted skill that encompasses various characteristics, including fluency, accuracy, pronunciation, and the ability to convey meaning appropriately in social contexts. It is integral to communication and language learning. According to Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (1978), speaking serves as a tool for cognitive development and social interaction, and its characteristics are

shaped through interaction with more knowledgeable individuals and peers. Swain's Output Hypothesis (2000) highlights that speaking is an essential mechanism for language learners to produce output, negotiate meaning, and solidify their understanding of grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. This interaction helps learners internalize language structures and increase their fluency.

Speaking, as described by Cognitivist Theories (Ellis, 2020), involves the activation of mental processes required for language production, such as retrieving vocabulary, applying grammatical rules, and coordinating speech mechanisms. Furthermore, interactionist theories suggest that speaking also serves as a tool for negotiation of meaning, where learners adjust their speech to ensure mutual understanding, negotiate conversational roles, and co-construct meaning with others (Long, 1983). Therefore, the key characteristics of speaking in language learning include fluency, accuracy, appropriateness, and interaction.

1. Fluency in Speaking

Fluency refers to the ability to speak smoothly, without unnecessary pauses or hesitation, while maintaining a natural flow of speech. It is often seen as an indicator of proficiency in language learners, as it reflects their capacity to use the language without overthinking or struggling for words. According to Derakhshan and Karimian (2021), fluency is closely linked to a learner's comfort and confidence in the language, allowing them to use language spontaneously in communication. A study by Wang and Li (2021) found that fluency is one of the most desired characteristics in speaking for learners and teachers alike, as it signifies the ability to engage in authentic and real-time communication. The development of fluency is often fostered by immersive speaking activities, such as role-play, debates, and discussions, which encourage learners to focus on communication rather than perfection.

2. Accuracy in Speaking

Accuracy in speaking involves producing language that is grammatically correct and linguistically precise. This characteristic of speaking is crucial for ensuring that the speaker's message is conveyed clearly and understood by others. Zarei and Ghafournia (2021) emphasize that while fluency and communication are essential, accuracy is equally important in preventing misunderstandings in both

formal and informal settings. However, research has shown that there is often a trade-off between fluency and accuracy, as learners may sacrifice grammatical precision for smoother and faster speech. This dynamic is particularly noticeable in real-life communication, where learners may prioritize getting their message across rather than worrying about perfect grammar (Tavakol, 2020).

3. Pronunciation and Intonation

Pronunciation refers to how words are articulated, including aspects such as stress, rhythm, and pitch. Intonation, on the other hand, involves the rise and fall of pitch in speech, which can affect the meaning and emotion conveyed. Chen and Li (2022) found that pronunciation is a critical factor in effective communication, as poor pronunciation can lead to misunderstandings and hinder the clarity of speech. Correct pronunciation and appropriate use of intonation are vital for learners to sound natural and be easily understood by native speakers. Studies by Azabdaftari and Rafieyan (2022) have shown that consistent practice with native speakers or audio-visual materials that model correct pronunciation can significantly improve these aspects of speaking.

4. Appropriateness in Speaking

Appropriateness refers to the use of language that suits the social and cultural context in which communication takes place. This includes factors such as formality, politeness, and adherence to cultural norms. According to Liu and Zhang (2021), appropriateness in language use is critical for effective communication, as inappropriate language can result in social miscommunication. For instance, learners must adapt their speech when shifting between formal and informal settings, or when addressing individuals of different social statuses. Richards and Rodgers (2020) stress that teachers should emphasize not just grammatical accuracy but also cultural competence, helping learners understand when and how to use specific phrases, greetings, and expressions in appropriate contexts.

5. Interaction and Negotiation of Meaning

Interaction is an essential characteristic of speaking, as it allows learners to negotiate meaning, clarify information, and co-construct knowledge with others. According to Long's Interaction Hypothesis (1983), speaking provides

opportunities for learners to engage in authentic communication, where they must process input, produce output, and modify their language to ensure mutual understanding. This dynamic interaction, especially with native speakers or peers, enhances learners' ability to adjust their speech and understand others in real-time. Storch (2022) highlights that collaborative speaking activities, such as group discussions or pair work, allow learners to practice negotiating meaning, which is essential for developing communication skills.

6. Confidence and Motivation in Speaking

Confidence plays a pivotal role in learners' ability to speak in a foreign language. Learners with high confidence are more likely to engage in conversations, take risks with the language, and overcome language barriers. MacIntyre and Gregersen (2020) suggest that language anxiety and lack of confidence often inhibit learners from speaking freely, which can negatively affect their speaking development. A positive classroom environment, along with encouragement from teachers and peers, can significantly boost learners' confidence and motivation to speak. Learners who feel supported and valued are more likely to engage in speaking activities and improve their proficiency.

The characteristics of speaking, including fluency, accuracy, pronunciation, appropriateness, interaction, and confidence, are integral to the development of speaking skills in EFL learners. Each characteristic plays a distinct role in how learners use the language in real-world communication. Fluency and accuracy allow learners to express themselves smoothly and correctly, while pronunciation and intonation contribute to clarity and naturalness in speech. Appropriateness ensures that language is used in a culturally and socially acceptable manner, and interaction fosters meaning negotiation and communication. Confidence and motivation drive learners to participate in speaking activities and improve their skills over time. Understanding and addressing these characteristics can help language educators provide targeted instruction that enhances speaking proficiency in EFL learners.

2.9 English Speaking Proficiency

English speaking proficiency refers to a learner's ability to produce spoken English effectively and appropriately in various contexts. It involves not only the

ability to speak fluently but also accurately and comprehensively, with the appropriate use of vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and intonation. Speaking proficiency in English is often evaluated in terms of fluency, accuracy, and communicative competence (Canale & Swain, 1980).

The Communicative Competence framework, introduced by Canale and Swain (1980), emphasizes the interactional aspect of language use, which includes grammatical competence (the ability to use correct grammar), sociolinguistic competence (understanding how to use language in different social contexts), discourse competence (ability to organize language into coherent speech), and strategic competence (ability to overcome communication breakdowns). This framework highlights the multidimensional nature of speaking proficiency, which encompasses more than just grammatical knowledge but also includes the strategic and social aspects of language use.

According to Swain's Output Hypothesis (2000), speaking proficiency is closely related to producing language output. This theory suggests that producing language through speaking allows learners to engage in the process of "noticing" their language gaps, helping them to refine their language use and improve their speaking skills over time. Similarly, Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (1978) emphasizes the role of social interaction in language learning, suggesting that speaking proficiency is developed through meaningful interaction with others, particularly with more knowledgeable speakers. English speaking proficiency is a multifaceted concept that involves several components, including fluency, accuracy, vocabulary usage, pronunciation, and social appropriateness. Recent research has further defined these components and provided insights into how they contribute to overall speaking proficiency in EFL learners.

1. Fluency in English Speaking Proficiency

Fluency refers to the ability to produce speech smoothly without unnecessary hesitation or pauses. It is one of the core components of speaking proficiency, particularly in real-time communication. According to Derakhshan and Karimian (2020), fluency is often considered an indicator of speaking proficiency, as it reflects the learner's comfort and ease with speaking the language. Learners who can produce language effortlessly and maintain a natural

flow of conversation are typically considered more proficient speakers. A study by Zhang and Wang (2021) found that fluency is strongly correlated with the ability to participate in extended conversations and debates, suggesting that fluency is essential for learners to demonstrate higher levels of proficiency.

2. Accuracy in Speaking Proficiency

Accuracy, on the other hand, refers to the correct use of grammatical structures, vocabulary, and pronunciation. Liu and Xu (2020) emphasize that speaking proficiency involves the ability to use language accurately while ensuring that the message is communicated clearly. Inaccuracies in grammar, vocabulary, or pronunciation can lead to communication breakdowns, which hinder proficiency. Research by Tavakol (2020) suggests that while fluency is critical, accuracy plays an equally significant role, particularly in formal or academic contexts where precision is highly valued.

3. Pronunciation and Intonation

Pronunciation is an essential component of speaking proficiency. Azabdaftari and Rafieyan (2022) argue that the clarity of speech and correct articulation of sounds are crucial for effective communication. Intonation, which refers to the rise and fall of pitch in speech, is also an important factor that influences how speech is interpreted. Chen and Li (2022) highlight that good pronunciation and appropriate use of intonation contribute to comprehensibility and naturalness, making the speaker sound more native-like and understandable. Accurate pronunciation and intonation help avoid misunderstandings and ensure the speaker's message is communicated successfully.

4. Vocabulary and Lexical Resource

Vocabulary knowledge is a significant aspect of speaking proficiency. Liu and Zhang (2021) state that a wide range of vocabulary enables learners to express their ideas more precisely and in various contexts. The use of appropriate words and expressions is key to conveying meaning effectively and to ensuring clarity in communication. Wang and Xie (2021) emphasize the importance of lexical resource in speaking, suggesting that learners with a rich vocabulary can produce more fluent and accurate speech.

5. Interactional and Strategic Competence

Strategic competence is essential for learners to navigate challenging communication situations, particularly when they encounter gaps in their language knowledge. Vygotsky (1978) suggested that learners develop strategic competence through social interaction, which helps them manage communication breakdowns, such as using circumlocution, asking for clarification, or rephrasing sentences. Zhang (2021) highlights that effective speakers can successfully negotiate meaning and adjust their speech based on the listener's needs and the context of the conversation, which are vital elements of speaking proficiency. Learners who are able to adapt their language use based on context and social cues exhibit higher levels of proficiency in interactive speaking.

6. Assessing English Speaking Proficiency

The assessment of speaking proficiency is a critical aspect of language learning, as it allows instructors to evaluate the learner's ability to use the language in realistic scenarios. Several tools and frameworks have been developed for assessing speaking proficiency, such as the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and the International English Language Testing System (IELTS). According to Brown and Abeywickrama (2021), these frameworks evaluate speaking proficiency based on a range of criteria, including fluency, pronunciation, grammatical accuracy, lexical range, and interactive communication skills. Assessments typically involve tasks such as interviews, discussions, presentations, and role-plays, which test learners' ability to produce language in different contexts and demonstrate communicative competence.

English speaking proficiency is a complex and multidimensional concept that encompasses fluency, accuracy, pronunciation, vocabulary, interaction, and strategic competence. Theoretical frameworks such as Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory and Swain's Output Hypothesis emphasize the role of social interaction and language production in the development of speaking proficiency. Recent studies show that speaking proficiency is not only about producing grammatically correct language but also about engaging in effective communication, negotiating meaning, and adapting speech to different social

contexts. Teachers should focus on all aspects of speaking proficiency to support learners in becoming confident and competent speakers.

2.10 Speaking Courses in Tertiary Education in Indonesia

Speaking courses in tertiary education play a crucial role in developing students' communicative competence, which is essential for academic success and future professional engagement. In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education, speaking courses are designed to equip students with the ability to express themselves fluently and accurately in English, both for academic and real-world purposes. These courses aim to develop speaking proficiency through activities that promote interaction, fluency, accuracy, and sociocultural competence.

According to Canale and Swain's (1980) model of communicative competence, speaking proficiency is not merely about grammatical accuracy but involves several dimensions, including grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence. Grammatical competence refers to the ability to use correct grammar and vocabulary, while sociolinguistic competence emphasizes understanding the social context and appropriateness of language use. Discourse competence focuses on organizing and structuring language in coherent and effective ways, and strategic competence enables learners to overcome communication difficulties.

Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (1978) also plays a significant role in understanding the value of speaking courses in tertiary education. Vygotsky's concept of scaffolding emphasizes that language learning is a socially mediated process, where students develop their language skills through guided interaction with teachers and peers. In the context of speaking courses, scaffolding provides the necessary support for students to engage in communicative tasks, gradually increasing their proficiency and independence in speaking.

In Indonesia, the importance of speaking courses in tertiary education has been widely recognized as essential for improving students' English proficiency and preparing them for future careers. According to Dewi and Aulia (2020), speaking courses provide an interactive learning environment that promotes

communication skills, which are crucial for both academic achievement and professional success in an increasingly globalized world. Universities in Indonesia emphasize speaking proficiency as part of their English language curriculum, as it is vital for students' ability to participate in academic discussions, presentations, and research projects, all of which require effective oral communication.

Moreover, speaking courses contribute to the sociocultural competence of students. As Richards and Rodgers (2020) point out, speaking courses should not only focus on linguistic aspects of the language but also on cultural awareness, as this helps students navigate both local and global contexts. Understanding social norms and communication practices in English-speaking countries enhances students' ability to interact effectively in international academic and professional settings.

While speaking courses are critical, several challenges hinder their effectiveness in Indonesian universities. One significant challenge is language anxiety. As noted by MacIntyre and Gregersen (2020), many EFL learners, particularly in non-English-speaking countries like Indonesia, experience anxiety when speaking in the target language. This anxiety can lead to a lack of participation in speaking activities, inhibiting language development. The fear of making mistakes in front of peers or teachers often leads to avoidance of speaking opportunities, further hindering students' progress in acquiring speaking skills.

Another challenge in Indonesian speaking courses is the lack of authentic speaking practice. According to Zhang (2021), students in Indonesian universities often face limited opportunities to engage in real-world, interactive communication with native speakers or proficient English users. This lack of exposure to authentic speaking environments can result in a gap between theoretical knowledge and practical speaking ability. While some universities in Indonesia are incorporating online platforms and language exchange programs, many still rely on traditional classroom settings, where speaking activities are more structured and less spontaneous.

To address these challenges, various pedagogical approaches have been proposed to enhance the effectiveness of speaking courses in Indonesian universities. Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) has gained popularity as a

method that fosters meaningful language use through authentic tasks. According to Nunan (2020), TBLT emphasizes the use of real-world tasks that require learners to use the language creatively and interactively. Tasks such as role-playing, debates, and group discussions encourage students to engage in active communication, helping them improve their fluency and confidence in speaking.

Additionally, peer interaction and collaborative learning are emphasized as effective strategies in promoting speaking proficiency. Dewi and Aulia (2020) suggest that activities such as peer feedback, pair work, and group discussions encourage students to practice speaking in a low-pressure environment, fostering both fluency and accuracy. Collaborative tasks allow students to negotiate meaning, provide feedback, and support each other's language development.

The integration of technology in speaking courses has also shown positive results in Indonesian universities. Online platforms, language learning apps, and virtual exchanges with native speakers provide students with additional speaking opportunities outside the traditional classroom setting. According to Wang and Xie (2022), technology enhances the learning experience by allowing students to engage in speaking activities with a wider variety of speakers and contexts. This exposure to authentic language use helps students develop a more natural speaking style and increases their confidence.

Moreover, virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) have emerged as innovative tools to simulate real-world speaking situations. These technologies offer immersive environments where learners can practice speaking in dynamic, context-rich settings. Research by Chen and Li (2021) shows that VR and AR can significantly improve students' speaking proficiency by providing them with realistic simulations of communication scenarios, allowing them to practice without the constraints of traditional classroom settings.

Speaking courses in tertiary education in Indonesia play a vital role in developing students' communicative competence, preparing them for academic success and professional careers. Despite challenges such as language anxiety and limited opportunities for authentic speaking practice, there are effective pedagogical strategies and technological solutions that can enhance the effectiveness of these courses. Approaches such as Task-Based Language

Teaching, peer interaction, and the integration of technology offer promising ways to improve speaking proficiency in Indonesian universities. For these courses to be fully effective, it is essential to create an interactive, supportive, and immersive learning environment that encourages active participation and the use of English in real-world contexts.

2.11 Materials for Speaking Courses: Enhancing EFL Students' Proficiency at Mulawarman University

In the Strata 1 (undergraduate) program of the English Department at Mulawarman University, the Speaking course is offered across four semesters. Speaking 1 (Intensive Speaking) is taught in the first semester, followed by Speaking 2 (Intermediate Speaking) in the second semester, speaking 3 (Upper Intermediate Speaking) in the third semester, and Speaking 4 (Speaking for Specific Purposes) in the fourth semester. The materials for these speaking courses are developed and designed by a team of lecturers responsible for teaching the courses. After undergoing review and discussion, the materials are approved by the Head of the English Department, making them official for use by students enrolled in the Speaking courses.

The materials for the Speaking courses, once designed and approved, are outlined in the Rencana Pembelajaran Semester (RPS), or Semester Lesson Plan. This lesson plan provides a detailed overview of the course materials, including the course descriptions and objectives. It also outlines the teaching strategies, detailing the methods and instructions employed for each Speaking course (Speaking 1 through Speaking 4). The materials and the teaching strategies from the Semester Lesson Plans of each Speaking course are summarized as follows:

1. Intensive Speaking (Speaking 1)

- a) **Course Description:** The course focuses on improving self-confidence, pronunciation and vocabulary building through doing language games, role-playing, and discussion of various issues. Grammar and semantics will be discussed in Semantics. Various language functions and activities will also be used in this course. Original materials from different sources such as

magazines, newspapers, internet, songs and film will be used. Students are expected to do the assigned reading, listening, and observing on relevant topics to prepare the class discussion.

- b) Course Objectives: At the end of the course, students are expected to be able to: 1) express and enquire degrees of certainty; 2) express that someone is or isn't permitted, or permissible granting permission, withhold permission; 3) express hopes and wishes; 4) express interest, lack of interest, enquire interest; 5) invite, accept an offer or invitation, decline an offer or invitation, enquire whether an offer or invitation is accepted or not; 6) express obligation, enquire obligation; 7) express intention of self- efficacy; 8) express satisfaction and dissatisfaction, enquire satisfaction and dissatisfaction; 9) express regret and sympathy.
- c) Teaching Strategy (Model and Method): 1) listen to the lecturers' explanation independently; 2) discussion (small group discussion and whole class discussion); 3) self-assessment; 4) group assessment (presentation); 5) pair work and small group work; 6) role play.

2. Intermediate Speaking (Speaking 2)

- a) Course Description: This course provides students with materials about English phrases and idioms in daily conversation, role play, retelling the simple research article related to speaking skill, retelling story, interviewing the foreigner, and doing presentation effectively.
- b) Course Objectives: At the end of the course, students are expected to be able to: 1) describe how to do something and detailed instructions; 2) summarize and give his/her opinion about article and answer further questions in detail; 3) describe and discuss the events; 4) narrate a story; 5) express his/her belief; 6) give reason and explanation; 7) summarize and give his/her opinion about documentary; 8) follow and engage in extended conversation on career ambition; 9) describe country around the world comprehensively.
- c) Teaching Strategy (Model and Method): 1) lecturing; 2) discussion; 3) demonstration; 4) self-assessment; 5) group assessment; 6) presentation.

3. Upper Intermediate Speaking (Speaking 3)

- a) Course Description: This course aims to develop the students' ability to speak English at the intermediate and pre-advanced level which covers

promoting and selling products, speaking in public, presentation, and reporting news. Students will be reviewed orally on their vocabulary, fluency, content, and detail.

- b) Course Objectives: At the end of the course, students are expected to be able to: 1) respond to the questions and answer the interview properly; 2) apply oral communication for promoting and selling a product; 3) speak in forum; 4) do the interview and report news.
 - c) Teaching Strategy (Model and Method): 1) interview on an up-to-date topic; 2) conversation practice; 3) presentation (promote and sell products); 4) public speaking practice; 5) news report practice (reading and observing materials and videos, preparing topics).
4. Speaking for Specific Purposes (Speaking 4)
- a) Course Description: This course aims to develop students' ability to speak English at the pre-advanced level with materials consisting of all other language functions, seminars, panel discussions, public speaking, interviewing, developing ideas with no preparation for formal, informal, and small talk topics.
 - b) Course Objectives: After completing this course, students should be able to: 1) understand the concept of presenting information included in charts and graphs; 2) develop the ability to present information in the given charts and graphs; 3) understand the framework of British Parliamentary Debate; 4) understand certain expressions used in debate; 5) develop the ability to express and convince arguments in British Parliamentary Style Debate; 6) understand the framework of research presentation; 7) analyze the given articles; 8) report their reading on the chosen articles; 8) reflect on their learning done in a semester.
 - c) Teaching Strategy (Model and Method): Task-based teaching and discovery learning (discussion, group work, lectures, students' exploration, text analysis).

2.12 Speaking Assessment

In assessing students' speaking proficiency, the lecturers of the Speaking

classes at the English Department follow the assessment criteria outlined by Brown (2004), which consist of six key components: pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, comprehension, and task performance. These components are crucial for evaluating the effectiveness and appropriateness of the students' spoken language.

- a. Pronunciation refers to the clarity of speech, including the correct articulation of sounds, stress, and intonation. Effective pronunciation ensures that the speaker's message is understood by the listener.
- b. Grammar assesses the correct use of grammatical structures, which is essential for producing accurate sentences and conveying meaning clearly.
- c. Vocabulary focuses on the range and appropriateness of words used by the learner, ensuring that the speaker can express ideas accurately and with variety.
- d. Fluency measures the ability to speak smoothly without unnecessary hesitation or pauses, reflecting the learner's comfort and ease with the language.
- e. Comprehension evaluates the learner's understanding of spoken language, including the ability to follow conversations, grasp key ideas, and respond appropriately.
- f. Task performance assesses the student's ability to complete specific speaking tasks or activities in a way that meets the objectives, demonstrating their ability to use language appropriately and meaningfully.

These criteria are translated into a rubric for scoring speaking performance, which is commonly used in performance-based assessment. Performance-based assessment is an evaluative approach where learners are assessed based on real-world tasks that require them to use language in a natural and meaningful way. According to Hymes (1974), cited in Buck (2001), performance-based assessments ensure that learners are practicing producing the target language in a variety of social situations, which reflects communicative competence. This approach emphasizes the use of language beyond the classroom, promoting not only accuracy but also appropriateness in various social contexts.

In summary, the assessment criteria set by Brown (2004) serve as a guide for lecturers to evaluate the multifaceted aspects of students' speaking proficiency. These criteria are embedded within a performance-based framework, which aligns

with Hymes' concept of communicative competence, emphasizing the practical application of language skills in real-world contexts. By focusing on pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, comprehension, and task performance, lecturers are able to assess students' speaking abilities in a comprehensive and holistic manner.

These criteria are reflected in a rubric for scoring speaking performance, which is commonly used in performance-based assessments. Performance-based assessment is an evaluative method where learners are assessed through real-world tasks that require them to use language in natural and meaningful ways. According to **Hymes (1974)**, as cited in **Buck (2021)**, performance-based assessments ensure that learners practice using the target language in a variety of social situations, reflecting **communicative competence**. This approach emphasizes the use of language beyond the classroom setting, promoting not only grammatical accuracy but also appropriateness in various social contexts.

In summary, the assessment criteria proposed by **Brown (2004)** guide lecturers in evaluating the various components of students' speaking proficiency. These criteria are integrated within a performance-based framework, aligning with **Hymes' (1974)** concept of communicative competence, which emphasizes the practical application of language skills in real-world situations. By focusing on pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, comprehension, and task performance, lecturers are able to assess students' speaking abilities comprehensively and holistically.

The lecturers of the Speaking classes at the English Department have opted for performance-based assessments, as Richard (2022, p. 13-14) explains that such assessments encourage learners to demonstrate their fluent speech delivery by focusing on spontaneous and meaningful language use. This approach promotes communication, encourages the use of communication strategies, and manages unpredictable language output while ensuring relevance to the context in which the language is used. The choice of speaking activities is aligned with rating scales to define the specific oral language skills or abilities that the tasks should elicit (Luoma, 2023). As Heurta-Macias (2022), cited in Richards & Renandya (2022, p. 337), explains, assessment is an ongoing process involving both the student and the teacher in making judgments about the student's progress in language use through