

# The Relationship Between Language Acquisition and Theory of Social Interactionist

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Received 1 August 2022, Revised 15 August 2022, Accepted 29 August 2022, Available online 30 August 2022

## To Cite This Article:

<https://doi.org/10.53797/iccmjssh.v1i4.9.2022>

**Abstract:** Language is one of the mediums used in the process of communication among people. An articulation device that makes sounds to form a meaning or something of speech that can be understood by the people around. This process of language acquisition that takes place can illustrate that the occurrence of developmental processes on one of the important functions of the human body. This is because, along with the physical growth of a child, their language development also develops naturally. This process of language acquisition occurs in children's brains when they acquire their first language, the native language. Fundamentally, this theory of language acquisition from a psycholinguistic point of view was pioneered by several famous figures such as Skinner (Behaviorist), Chomsky (Nativist), Piaget (Cognitive) and Vygotsky (Social Constructivist). However, researchers will focus this paper on the paradigm of language acquisition using the theory of Social Interactionist) which is fundamentally based on Vygotsky. The Theory of Social Interactionist assumes that environmental factors and experiences gained through social interaction are contributing to the child's language acquisition. With support from an interactive environment, children will be able to improve their language achievement and knowledge to a higher level. The process of interaction between parents and children can also help them strengthen the child's knowledge. The child's language acquisition process will also develop to the maximum when there is a process of positive interaction and relationships established in the family environment, peers, and the environment at school. In conclusion, a constructive environment and positive social interaction in the environment that surrounds children will help them further improve their language abilities.

**Keywords:** Language, Language Acquisition, Theory of Social Interactionist, Environmental Influence

## 1. Introduction

Language is one of the mediums used during the process of communication among people. Language is also said to serve as a mixture of indispensable abilities for the purpose of communicating, speaking and interacting with each other. (Nur Nadirah Zukefli & Subramaniam, 2018). The articulation tool will make a sound to form a meaning or something of speech that can be understood by the people around him. This process of language acquisition that takes place can illustrate that the occurrence of developmental processes on one of the important functions of the human body. This is because, along with the physical growth of a child, their language development also develops naturally.

This proves that man is indeed endowed with unique language abilities. This process of language acquisition will occur from childhood and grow according to their age level (Zalikha Mat Saad & Normahdiah Syeik Said, 2015). A child with normal growth will be able to produce language sounds that can be understood by those around them such as parents or guardians starting at the age of three months (Mahzan Arshad, 2012). The communication that takes place between these people can also occur in various ways for example using body signals.

According to Muradi (2018) the process of language acquisition that takes place in the human brain results from a response from external interactions and is then processed in accordance with the capabilities and growth of the human

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brain. A child will experience significant language development at the age of three to five years. Children will be able to improve their interaction style such as being able to describe and express actions and become better able to master their native language at this age (Nor Hashimah Jalaluddin, 1999). However, exposure should be given such as increasing language activities and regularly communicating among immediate family members to ensure that the language can be obtained naturally

## 2. Literature Review

The process of language acquisition occurs in children's brains as they begin to acquire their first language. This amazing acquisition of language proves that man is an extraordinary creature (Saeparno, 2015). Children have also been able to understand the rules of the language since they were born. This is also considered very interesting for researchers to study in the field of linguistics because until now this process has not been proven in detail. Various theories and disciplines are trying to be introduced, however, there is still no exact answer to explain this phenomenon.

In general, all admit that neither knowing nor not, a child will be able to master the linguistic system at a rapid pace even without involving formal learning. Before reaching the age of five, they were also able to understand the linguistic systems of the first language even with limited stimulation. A child will learn to speak starting from the lowest level such as in the form of cries, converges, one syllable, and will eventually build a meaningful word that then becomes more complex (Carolyn, 1976). This proves that without formal education, children remain able to speak and go through the process of language acquisition on their own. Children will also continue to grow up and will then get a more extensive language education through formal learning at school.

Fundamentally, this theory of language acquisition from a psycholinguistic point of view was pioneered by several famous figures such as Skinner (Behaviorist), Chomsky (Nativist), Piaget (Cognitive) and Vygotsky (Social Constructivist). The pioneers of behaviorism look at the acquisition of children's language from behavioral aspects. They believe that a child will be able to obtain a word if they repeat continuously (Noor Hasnoor, 2002). Various rewards such as gifts and compliments can be used to help the process happen faster.

Nevertheless, this trend is different from the opinion of linguists such as Noam Chomsky (1957, 1968) who believe that the biological apparatus for the development of language abilities has existed naturally in the human body since birth. A tool known as Language Acquisition Device (LAD) will be able to help language acquisition happen faster. In addition, Piaget, who is known for his theory of constructivism (Utami, 2016), believes that the general mechanical tools that children have can help them master their language abilities. Piaget also claims that learning is a process of self-discovery, and this process is experienced by a child to interact and observe his environment. With this, the child will learn and build their own knowledge.

Meanwhile, Vygotsky believes that children's interaction with the surrounding environment and society will help improve their cognitive development. He also believes that social and cultural aspects also help shape the cognitive development of an individual. This theory brought by Vygotsky is known as Social Constructivist theory. Vygotsky's theory of constructivism also emphasizes the assisted-discovery learning (Ormord, 2007) which also supports that the learning process will be easier to take place in the social context of one's culture.

The ideas of Vygotsky's theory can be seen by the creation of two of his most famous books and have been guided by the whole world, *Mind in Society* and *Thought and Language*. (Yohanes, 2010) related to the role of social interactionist in cognitive development, scaffolding and zone of proximal development. Therefore, this paper will focus on the trends pioneered by Vygotsky that is Social Constructivist in relation to the Theory of Social Interactionist in more detail. Vygotsky's theory makes social interaction the focus in the development of children especially interactions that involve individuals who are more intellectually skilled and can help children to learn (Tudge & Rogoff, 1989). He also emphasized cultural and social influences in learning and supported the exposure learning model (Forrester, 1992). Vygotsky's theory is built on the belief that the development of an individual especially the child cannot be understood without reference to their social environment.

The Theory of Social Interactionist also assumes that environmental factors and experiences gained through social interaction are contributing to the child's language acquisition. With support from an interactive environment, children will be able to improve their language achievement and knowledge to a higher level. The process of interaction between parents and children is also very important to help children build their knowledge. A child still does not have a high cognitive level. However, through interaction with more experienced adults, children will be able to be helped to solve their problems correctly.

In conclusion, a good interaction between family and peers, positive relationships involving such an environment as the school environment will be able to improve the child's language abilities. With support from an interactive environment, children will be able to improve their language achievement and knowledge at a higher level. A constructive environment and positive social interaction in an environment that surrounds children will also help them further improve their language ability.

### 3. Methodology

This study was conducted to identify the association of language acquisition with the Theory of Social Interactionist. Literature review has been used to collect and obtain relevant information. The required information was collected through the reading of relevant articles involving past studies by local scholars and foreign scholars. This method coincides with what Mohamad Rozi Kasim (2021) has stated to use literature review to obtain information in order to improve the quality of the study and to see the strengths and weaknesses of the study. Therefore, researchers have selected significant and relevant articles in this study to be analyzed in more detail.

### 4. Findings

#### 4.1 Relationship between Language Acquisition and Theory of Social Interactionist

Vygotsky in his studies has defined man as a primary sociability (Van Der Veer, 1999). The idea was in tandem and was also agreed by Wallon (1959) who stated that man was born genetically to socialize. When the idea was first put forward, it was simply considered hypothetical. But now, various studies have been carried out to see the relevance and try to justify the hypothesis that Vygotsky has presented. Among them, there are studies conducted on how the brain plays a role in regulating human social functions such as perception of the human face or voice, the degree of maturity as well as related to the social development of children by attaching evidence of the occurrence of social processes during the early childhood (Mahn & John-Steiner, 2012).

Theoretically, this analysis presented by Vygotsky has given an idea in relation to the process of social interaction that occurs in children and how it affects the process of their development. According to Vygotsky, the behavior manifested by the child is influenced by social interaction. Through the mediation of adults such as parents, children will begin to interact with their social sphere. Vygotsky also pointed out that during the infancy stage, children experience the highest processes of social interaction (Vygotsky, 1982-84).

This theory put forward by Vygotsky has also become the basis for the formation of a relevant and dynamic theory of learning. Vygotsky's contribution to the field of educational psychology is also undeniable primarily related to the influence of sociocultural approaches to the learning and development of children. Vygotsky has emphasized the important role that an individual plays in creating their sociocultural context and studying how there is interaction between an individual and their environment. The study also involved the process of language acquisition, the use of symbols and the formation of concepts in the relationship between learning and the development of children.

Incredible research has also been done by Vygotsky based on the idea that there is a connection between thought and language which has been a central theme in his book entitled *Thought and Language*. According to Vygotsky the ability of children to acquire a language is very closely related to the social environment and the learning process that passes by them. This learning process involves interaction as the child performs an activity or socializes. Through preverbal collaboration, adults will introduce language to children that can help them to build a foundation in communication and thus encourage the occurrence of social interaction processes.

Vygotsky's analysis of the relationship between development and learning and its association with language acquisition has been able to introduce us to the first model of development. In the process of children's natural development, learning has been shown to help strengthen the natural process. With the availability of culturally generated tools, it will be possible to further expand the possibilities for an individual to restructure their mental functions. The role of adults as representatives of culture in the process of language acquisition of children can also help the process of their assimilation of such a cultural part as the native language. With this, an important process that Vygotsky has emphasized will occur, that is, the process of social interaction that is also influenced by sociocultural factors.

This coincides with the study of Noor Adzli Ishak (2011) which described the relevance of family social class factors towards the process of language acquisition of preschoolers involving the aspect of reading. The study proved that the socio-economic level of the family, children's interaction with peers, spoken language at home as well as relationships between family members can influence children's language ability. They are easier to understand grammatical sentences well. Mansoor & Mohammad Amerian (2015) also agreed that communication with more adult people with children will help the child in both cognitive and linguistic aspects.

The relationship between the family and the environment will also indirectly help children be more exposed to the language and improve their language acquisition. A well-developed language acquisition proves that the child's growth process takes place perfectly (Zalikha Mat Saad & Normahdiah Syeik Said, 2015). Children are also able to absorb new words if they hear the word spoken by adults. The findings of the study conducted by Vijayaletchumy (2000) also prove that the process of language acquisition also involves simplification strategies that can describe the meaning of a word.

## 4.2 Influence of Family, Teacher and School Factors on Language Acquisition

The family is a key element in the development of children's language acquisition. The family also plays a role in educating and instilling good values in the family members. This is because, the family is the first educational institution for a child before they get an actual education in an official educational institution. A child's success in living social relations with the surrounding community is also influenced by the upbringing and behavior shown by their parents at home.

Social interaction or communication processes that take place in the family at home will be much more effective if spoken using polite and full manner. This coincides with what Saeparno (2015) put forward that the development of the child's language and academic performance at school are influenced by the interaction of the child while at home. From that, it is the duty of parents to educate and improve their children's language abilities to the maximum so that they are always trained to speak and communicate politely with those around them. Parents need to set a good example so that their children are also educated to use polite speech in everyday conversation. With this, the personality of the formed children is also positive. Parents who actively communicate with their children from an early age can also facilitate the interaction of the child when they start school.

In addition, quality families should also play a role in supporting the growth and development of children's abilities to develop better. Parents should carry out their responsibilities well. Children need to be well educated so that they can be independent on their own. This is because, the upbringing that children receive from an early age will indirectly affect their thinking and behavior patterns after adulthood. The study of Rohayati Junaidi et al. (2018) proves that children who are constantly cared for and followed by their development will be more successful in academics as well as more balanced in their emotional development, personality, behavior. This is because, children's academic success cannot be easily achieved. All of this involves a long process and needs to be started by the family fundamentally. Sufriadi's study (2016) proves that a harmonious family will be able to give birth to children who are academically excellent and emotionally stable.

The social interaction formed in the school also guarantees quality education. Muhamad Aizat Md Nasir's study (2016) proves the role of social interaction in creating an environment of quality learning outcomes and teaching and learning sessions that can achieve the expected goals. Interaction in the classroom plays an important role in establishing positive relationships. This is because, the dominative interaction between the teacher and the students in the classroom will disable social interaction in the teaching process and will indirectly hinder the performance of the students (Mohd Khairuddin et al., 2014). A good teacher should always be sensitive and be able to assess the changes that are happening to their pupils. Teachers should also have criteria that can develop the potential and talents of pupils. This clearly proves that teachers play a big role in producing a generation of heirs who not only have good academic achievements but also have good morals.

In addition, the social interaction of pupils with classmates also affects their language acquisition. This is because, the assessment of communication in the form of negative criticism during the learning process among classmates will reduce the confidence and reliability of the social interaction of the students (Mohamed Zain & Nur Ashikin, 2015). Indirectly, this situation will hinder the learning environment and thus reduce the ability of students to improve social interaction skills in the classroom. Therefore, it is also the responsibility of the teacher to ensure that the classroom environment is always conducive.

Pupils should always be educated and formed to constantly use positive communication in the classroom so that their language acquisition is better developed. The active elevation shown by pupils while in the classroom will have a more positive impact on them. They will be able to master important skills especially language skills. Therefore, an important role should be played by the teacher in providing an effective learning experience and being able to have a positive impact on the students. This is because, the success and failure factor of the students is dependent on the hands of a teacher (Che Nidzam Che Ahmad et al., 2016).

## 5. Discussions

Social interaction is an important thing that parents need to emphasize from the early stages of child growth. The environmental factors surrounding a child's life will also shape the style and way a person interacts. The upbringing that children acquire from an early age will affect the development of their social interaction. So, the role of parents is important in shaping good behavior and values in their children. Every word spoken by parents and how they communicate with their children will be absorbed and imitated by children. Therefore, parents need to form positive social interactions so that the language acquisition that is formed in their children can develop better and more positively.

In addition, children will learn how to interact and communicate when they start learning to make friends. Social partners will help them build communication skills through the interaction that takes place. Children will also go through new experiences when they start to enter school. There are many new situations that they have never experienced during their schooling. At this time, their world is no longer surrounded by parents and family members only. They will begin to learn to interact with friends and teachers. They will also start observing new things around them and will start trying new things like imitating their friends' behavior. This is where the effective role of teachers is necessary to monitor the activities of their students and to form positive behavior in the classroom. With this, children will be able to form constructive social interactions and in turn help them acquire the language more effectively.

In conclusion, the teacher can be considered the second parent of the pupils at school. Teachers are responsible for them of developing various skills such as language skills as well as the role of inculcating good values and morals. With this, students can know and imitate good behavior. However, the role of parents is also no exception in this regard. This is because, children spent more times with parents than their friends and teachers in school. Of course, children sincerely hope to be endowed with parents who understand them and teachers with extensive experience. With this, the application of skills and the formation of positive behaviors will be able to help the child develop into a more intelligent and active individual. Thus, there is no denying that a constructive environment and positive social interaction in the environment that surrounds children will help them further improve their language skills and in turn develop good behavior.

## Acknowledgement

The authors would like to thank the fellow authors and organizations whose intellectual properties were utilized for this study.

## Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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