



A Personal Narrative on Learning English and the Influence of Sociocultural Theories

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Abstract

This autoethnographic study explores my personal journey of learning English, framed through the lens of sociocultural theory. By reflecting on key stages of my life, from early childhood exposure and formal schooling to informal learning through media and peer interaction, the research describes how language development is not a linear or purely academic process, but one shaped by social relationships, cultural environments, and evolving identity. Drawing on Vygotsky's sociocultural theory and related scholarship, the narrative traces how various mediators, including family, teachers, technology, and community have influenced my motivation, confidence, and sense of belonging in English-speaking contexts. The findings reveal that language learning is deeply intertwined with identity negotiation and cultural integration, culminating in a sense of ownership over the English language. This study contributes to the field by emphasizing the emotional, reflective, and personal dimensions of language acquisition, which are often overlooked in traditional second language research. It suggests that incorporating learners' lived experiences, informal learning practices, and identity development into language education can foster more inclusive and meaningful pedagogies. The research also opens pathways for further studies using narrative and qualitative approaches to better understand the complex, socioculturally embedded nature of language learning.

Keywords: Autoethnographic Study, Personal Narrative, Sociocultural Theory, Language Learning,

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INTRODUCTION

Language learning is not merely a technical or cognitive process. It is deeply personal, shaped by the intricate web of social relationships, cultural environments, and individual identity. This autoethnographic study, titled A Personal Narrative on Learning English and the Influence of Sociocultural Theories, explores my lived experience of learning English as a second language. Rather than examining language development through detached observation, this research places the self at the center, using personal memory, reflection, and cultural context as sources of insight.

Autoethnography, a qualitative method that combines autobiography and ethnographic inquiry, provides the framework for this study. It allows for an exploration

of how language acquisition intersects with broader social forces family dynamics, education systems, media exposure, peer interaction, and cultural identity. This approach recognizes that the journey of learning English is not only academic but also emotional and transformative. By narrating and analyzing my experiences, I aim to contribute to the understanding of how language learning is situated within social worlds. Autoethnography, a qualitative method that merges autobiography with ethnographic analysis, offers a unique lens to examine the intersection between language learning and sociocultural dynamics (Ellis et al., 2011). Previous studies have highlighted the importance of social interaction in second language acquisition (Alkhudiry, 2022; J. P. Lantolf et al., 2021; Poehner & Lantolf, 2024; Vygotsky, 1978), as well as the role of identity in multilingual development (Pacheco, 2014). However, much of the existing literature still leans heavily on the experiences of learners in institutional or classroom settings, often generalizing across populations and overlooking the depth of individual narratives situated in diverse sociocultural realities.

This study addresses a key gap in the literature by providing a first-person, narrative-driven account of English language acquisition grounded in sociocultural theory. While researcher like (Norton, 2013) have called for more nuanced, identity-focused research, there remains limited exploration using autoethnography to critically connect personal experience with the constructs of Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), scaffolding, and communities of practice (Lave & Etienne Wenger., 1991). By documenting my own evolving relationship with English from early exposure to formal education and informal digital environments. I aim to deepen our understanding of how cultural tools, social agents, and lived experience converge in shaping language learning.

The theoretical foundation of this narrative lies in sociocultural theories of language development. These emphasize that language acquisition occurs through social interaction, guided participation, and the use of cultural artifacts within meaningful contexts (J. Lantolf, 2000; Vygotsky, 1978). This approach challenges the notion of the learner as an isolated cognitive subject, instead framing learning as embedded within social relationships and cultural histories. These theories challenge the notion of language learning as an isolated mental process and instead view it as a dynamic, socially embedded activity. In this study, I reflect on how these ideas are visible in my own life as I navigated classrooms, friendships, digital media, and shifting cultural identities. The central research question guiding this inquiry is: How has my personal journey of learning English been shaped by sociocultural influences across different stages of my life?. Through this lens, I seek to uncover not only how I acquired the language, but also how English became a medium for self-expression, identity negotiation, and cultural connection.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

Language acquisition is a deeply social and cultural process that cannot be fully understood through cognitive models alone. The sociocultural approach to language learning, rooted in the work of (Vygotsky, 1978), provides a compelling theoretical lens for examining how individuals acquire language through meaningful interaction and participation in social contexts. This theoretical framework emphasizes the interplay between individual development and sociocultural environments, making it especially relevant for understanding personal language learning journeys such as the one explored in this autoethnographic study.

Sociocultural Theory (SCT) and Language Learning

Sociocultural Theory (SCT), primarily developed by Lev Vygotsky, emphasizes the fundamental role of social interaction and cultural context in the process of cognitive development. In the realm of language learning, SCT has become a powerful lens through which the acquisition of a second language (L2) is understood, not merely as a mental process but as one deeply embedded in social practices. At the core of sociocultural theory

is the idea that all higher-order cognitive functions, including language development, originate in social interaction. (Vygotsky, 1978) argued that learning occurs first on a social level (interpsychological), and then within the individual (intrapsychological). One of his key concepts, the *Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)*, refers to the gap between what a learner can do independently and what they can achieve with the guidance of more knowledgeable others (J. Lantolf, 2000; “The Zone of Proximal Development as Basis for Instruction,” 2012). This theory highlights the importance of scaffolding, temporary support that helps learners bridge this gap (De Costa, 2007).

At the core of SCT is the concept of mediation, where tools especially language mediate human activity and cognition. From this perspective, language learning occurs most effectively when learners engage in meaningful interactions with more knowledgeable others, such as teachers or peers. This process is conceptualized in Vygotsky’s *Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)*, which describes the space between what learners can do independently and what they can achieve with assistance (Vygotsky, 1978). Within the ZPD, scaffolding provides necessary support that is gradually removed as learners gain autonomy (De Costa, 2007; J. P. Lantolf et al., 2014). In second language acquisition (SLA), ZPD manifests in classroom interactions, peer collaboration, and informal learning environments where learners receive support, feedback, and modeling (Gehlot, 2021; Nukus & Nukus, 2023). These processes enable learners to internalize language structures and communicative competence through meaningful engagement.

SCT also emphasizes the importance of internalization, the process through which social activities evolve into internal mental functions. Language learners first engage in social interaction using the target language and, through repeated mediated activity, internalize linguistic forms and functions. This view challenges traditional cognitivist models that focus solely on input and output, instead highlighting the dynamic, context-dependent nature of learning. In classroom settings, SCT suggests that collaborative tasks, peer interaction, and dialogue are critical for language development. These activities enable learners to co-construct meaning, negotiate understanding, and develop linguistic competence in authentic contexts (Pacheco, 2014; Swain, 2000). Furthermore, SCT aligns with a broader sociocultural turn in applied linguistics, which recognizes identity, power relations, and community participation as integral to the language learning process (Pacheco, 2014). Hence, Sociocultural Theory offers a holistic understanding of language learning that foregrounds the social, cultural, and interactive dimensions of development. By emphasizing mediation, the ZPD, and internalization, SCT provides valuable insights into how language is learned and taught, particularly in communicative and learner-centered environments.

Mediation and Cultural Tools

The concepts of mediation and cultural tools are central to Lev Vygotsky’s Sociocultural Theory, which posits that cognitive development is fundamentally shaped by social and cultural interactions (Johnson & Golombek, 2011; Vygotsky, 1978). According to this perspective, learning does not occur in isolation but through participation in socially meaningful activities, where individuals internalize knowledge through mediated interactions. Another essential aspect of Vygotskian theory is mediation. According to Vygotsky, humans do not interact with the world directly, but through cultural tools such as language, symbols, and artifacts. Language itself is both a tool for communication and a vehicle for thought development. In the context of English language learning, these tools can include textbooks, digital media, social networks, and even culturally specific expressions or norms. These mediating tools are not innate but are developed through historical and cultural processes (Daniels et al., 2007).

Cultural tools include both tangible objects (e.g., books, computers) and symbolic systems (e.g., language, numeracy, art). These tools are embedded in cultural practices and serve as resources for thinking and problem-solving. Language, in particular, plays a dual

role as both a communication medium and a cognitive tool that supports self-regulation and reflective thinking. (J. Lantolf, 2000) emphasizes that mediated learning environments, where learners engage with texts, technologies, and communities. It shapes not only linguistic ability but also cultural understanding. In this study, the use of English-language media (e.g., television, YouTube, online forums) serves as an example of how digital cultural tools mediate informal learning and identity construction.

Communities of Practice and Identity (COP)

The sociocultural view of language learning extends beyond individual development to include the concept of *communities of practice* (Lave & Etienne Wenger, 1991; Patel, 2018). A CoP is defined as a group of individuals who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better through regular interaction (Lave & Etienne Wenger., 1991; Patel, 2018). This framework shifts the focus from individual cognition to social participation, emphasizing that learning occurs through engagement, negotiation of meaning, and identity formation within a community. This theory posits that learning occurs through participation in social groups where language and knowledge are co-constructed through shared activities. Language learners gradually move from peripheral participation to full engagement in these communities as they gain proficiency and confidence.

Research has expanded on this by examining how identity and CoP interplay in educational and professional settings. For example (Holland, 2001), argue that identity is constructed within "figured worlds," where individuals navigate and negotiate their roles through cultural and social narratives. Similarly, (Gee, 2000) highlights the role of discourse in shaping identity, asserting that identity is formed through the enactment of specific Discourses within communities.

For language learners, these communities might include classrooms, peer groups, online communities, or work environments. Identity plays a crucial role here, as learners not only adopt new linguistic practices but also negotiate their sense of self in relation to others (Potowski, 2001). This process can be empowering or alienating, depending on the inclusivity of the learning environment and the learner's access to meaningful participation.

Relevance to Autoethnography

The theoretical principles of SCT align well with the autoethnographic approach of this study. By reflecting on personal experiences of learning English across various sociocultural settings, this narrative becomes a site of theoretical exploration. Autoethnography allows for a critical examination of how cultural tools, community participation, and social interactions influenced the development of language and identity over time (Ellis et al., 2011; Pavlenko, 2007). This perspective not only humanizes the learning process but also foregrounds the dynamic relationship between learner and environment.

METHOD

Research Design

This study adopts an autoethnographic research design, a qualitative method that combines elements of autobiography and ethnography to explore the researcher's personal experiences within broader cultural, social, and educational contexts. Autoethnography allows for a reflective and interpretive analysis of the self, positioning personal experience as a legitimate and valuable source of knowledge (Ellis et al., 2011).

The choice of autoethnography is grounded in the aim of this research: to explore how my own journey of learning English has been shaped by sociocultural influences over time. Rather than generalizing across populations, this study seeks to generate understanding through deep introspection and theoretically informed narrative. It offers a

nuanced view of language acquisition as a process shaped not only by formal instruction but also by interpersonal relationships, cultural identity, and lived experience.

Data Collection

The primary data source for this study is my personal memory and reflection, drawn from various stages of my life; from childhood exposure to English, to formal education, to informal learning experiences through media and digital environments. These memories were revisited and recorded through:

- Narrative writing, in which these memories were shaped into a coherent, chronological account of my experience;
- Retrospective analysis, where I examined how those experiences aligned with theoretical concepts such as the Zone of Proximal Development, scaffolding, and identity formation.

To enhance accuracy and depth, the writing process included reviewing old school records, photographs, and online interactions (e.g., social media posts, language learning apps) that served as memory prompts.

Data Analysis

Analysis followed a narrative thematic approach, where the stories were coded and interpreted through the lens of sociocultural theory. The steps included:

1. Identifying significant events and moments in the narrative that reflected learning experiences or cultural shifts;
2. Linking these experiences to key theoretical concepts such as Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, mediation, scaffolding, and communities of practice (Lave & Etienne Wenger., 1991; Vygotsky, 1978)
3. Reflecting critically on the emotional, social, and identity-related aspects of language learning, with attention to how these were influenced by context and interaction.

This analytical process allowed for an integration of personal narrative with broader theoretical insights, thereby enriching the academic understanding of how individuals experience second language acquisition within sociocultural environments.

Ethical Considerations

As this study is based entirely on my personal experience, issues of anonymity and consent are limited to the researcher. However, in instances where other individuals are mentioned (e.g., teachers, peers, family members), pseudonyms are used to protect their identity and privacy. The study was conducted with self-awareness, ethical responsibility, and sensitivity toward the communities and cultures represented.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results of this autoethnographic study are presented as a reflective narrative organized around key life stages. Each phase of my journey illustrates the ways sociocultural influences, involve people, environments, tools, and practices that shaped my experience of learning English and constructing identity as a second-language user.

My Childhood Experiences, Family, and Curiosity

My journey with English began long before I could fully understand the language. As a child, I was surrounded by fragments of English in my daily environment not through formal teaching, but through the subtle presence of media, music, and my parents' aspirations. Neither of my parents spoke English fluently, but they believed in its power. To them, English was more than a language; it was a symbol of intelligence, global access, and future success.

I vividly remember sitting on the floor watching my favorite animated shows like Popeye and Scooby Doo. I didn't always grasp what was being said, but I was fascinated by the sounds, the characters, and the way words seemed to come alive. I would mimic the intonation of the characters, repeating catchy phrases even if I didn't know their

meanings. My parents encouraged this habit with smiles and applause, reinforcing my curiosity and giving me a sense of pride. They bought me English alphabet posters, children's storybooks, and cassette tapes with nursery rhymes, even if they couldn't explain the content. Their encouragement wasn't instructional. It was emotional scaffolding that gave me the confidence to keep exploring.

Unlike school, which came later with structured lessons and grammar rules, these early experiences were filled with play, sound, and imagination. I remember pretending to be a TV host, creating my own English sentences and proudly showing off my "skills" to relatives. Looking back, I realize how meaningful that informal exposure was. Even without understanding the theoretical frameworks at the time, I was already engaged in mediated learning—with cartoons, songs, and family interaction acting as my first cultural tools.

This phase planted the seeds of motivation. It shaped not just how I approached English later in life, but also how I saw myself in relation to it, not as a passive learner, but as someone who was already participating in a global language community, even from the corner of my living room.

My first encounter with the English language was shaped by indirect exposure at home. Although no one in my immediate family was fluent in English, there was a cultural respect for the language; seen as a marker of intelligence, modernity, and success. I remember my parents encouraging me to watch English cartoons, buy English-language books, and sing along to pop songs even when I didn't fully understand the words.

This phase marked the beginning of my motivational scaffolding, where encouragement from family acted as an effective tool. It also planted early notions of language as cultural capital, something to be admired, desired, and pursued. Though I lacked formal instruction, my curiosity was socially nurtured. The initial motivation and engagement with English were sparked not by formal instruction, but by family encouragement and curiosity toward media. This stage highlights the significance of emotional support and early informal exposure in fostering intrinsic motivation.

Classroom and Teachers as Mediators in Formal Education

My formal relationship with English began in the classroom where learning shifted from playful curiosity to structured instruction. I remember sitting at a wooden desk in primary school, my feet barely touching the floor, flipping through pages of English textbooks filled with bright illustrations and new words. These were my first real encounters with English as a subject to be studied, not just a sound to be mimicked.

At first, English felt like a puzzle. I was eager to solve it, to connect the dots between the songs I sang at home and the rules now being explained on the blackboard. My first English teacher was warm and patient. She would draw pictures to explain meanings, act out verbs with hand gestures, and celebrate our small victories, like pronouncing "vegetable" correctly or remembering the days of the week. She wasn't just teaching language; she was scaffolding my understanding, helping me bridge what I already knew with what I was capable of learning next. In hindsight, she played the role of a "more capable other" in Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development, guiding me step by step through unfamiliar territory.

As I moved into secondary school, the environment changed. English classes became more demanding that focused on grammar drills, reading comprehension, and essay writing. Some teachers treated English as a subject to be mastered for exams, rather than a living language to be used. While this approach made me more technically proficient, it often left me feeling disconnected from the language. I became cautious, more focused on correctness than communication. The pressure to perform in exams sometimes overshadowed the joy of learning. I started to view English as a tool for academic achievement rather than personal expression.

Still, not all classroom experiences were rigid. One teacher in high school stood out, he brought English to life by incorporating storytelling, debates, and even movie clips into our lessons. He encouraged us to use English to share our opinions, to express ourselves, to question ideas. For the first time, I saw English as a means to think, feel, and belong. His classroom was not just a learning space. It was a community of practice where I began to shape my identity as an English user, not just a learner.

Peer interaction also played a crucial role. Speaking English with classmates, preparing group presentations, and even laughing at our shared mistakes helped me develop confidence. These interactions weren't always fluent or polished, but they were meaningful. They reinforced the idea that language learning is deeply social something built together through shared experiences and mutual support.

Looking back, my formal education in English was a journey of contrasts between rules and expression, structure and creativity, pressure and inspiration. But through it all, my teachers and peers served as cultural mediators, shaping my evolving relationship with the language. They didn't just teach me English. They helped me become someone in English. The teachers played a crucial mediating role, scaffolding learning and guiding development. However, the contrast between exam-focused instruction and creative pedagogy revealed that rigid systems could hinder deeper engagement, while interactive methods fostered more meaningful language use.

Media, Technology, and Self-Directed Practice in Informal Learning

While formal education laid the foundation for my English learning, it was outside the classroom through media and self-driven curiosity that the language truly came alive for me. The walls of the classroom couldn't contain the dynamic, colorful, and sometimes chaotic way English existed in the real world. It was in these informal spaces that I began to connect emotionally, socially, and personally with the language.

My earliest memory of informal learning was with music. I became obsessed with English pop songs, memorizing lyrics from artists like Bryan Adam and Scorpion song. I didn't always understand the words at first, but I would replay the songs over and over, eventually looking up the lyrics online and translating them line by line. Singing helped me improve my pronunciation, but more than that, it connected me to emotions and stories in English. These weren't vocabulary lists or grammar drills, they were narratives that I wanted to understand, because I felt something in them.

Later, I turned to movies and TV shows. Watching series like *The Big Bang Theory*, or *Harry Potter* became a kind of immersive classroom. At first, I used subtitles in my native language, then switched to English subtitles, and eventually challenged myself to watch without any help. These shows introduced me to natural speech, cultural references, humor, and idioms, things that no textbook had ever explained. I learned how people actually talked, not just how they were "supposed" to speak.

Technology gave me access to unlimited resources. YouTube became one of my most powerful teachers. I followed English-speaking vloggers, and pronunciation channels. I paused videos, rewound them, mimicked sentences, and practiced intonation. I also began writing comments, joining discussions on forums, and even creating short journal entries in English. This was self-directed practice, motivated not by grades or exams, but by my desire to express myself and be part of a global conversation.

These experiences transformed my learning from passive to active. I was no longer just receiving knowledge. I was engaging, experimenting, and producing. English was no longer a school subject; it became a tool for connection. I chatted with online friends from different countries, played multiplayer games where English was the only shared language, and followed international content creators. Each interaction became a small but meaningful moment of language practice.

Looking back, informal learning gave me something the classroom couldn't: freedom and authenticity. It allowed me to learn at my own pace, follow my interests, and make mistakes without fear. It also helped me form a more personal, emotional connection to English. The digital world was my playground, and in it, I built not just my language skills but my identity as someone who could live in more than one linguistic world. Digital media and self-guided exploration significantly shaped fluency and confidence. Informal environments allowed for flexible, interest-driven learning that extended beyond the limitations of school curricula.

Peer Interaction and Identity Development

As I progressed in my English learning journey, one of the most powerful forces shaping both my skills and my self-perception was my interaction with peers. Whether in classrooms, extracurricular spaces, or online communities, peer interaction became a mirror through which I began to see myself as an English speaker, not just a learner struggling with grammar, but a communicator, a collaborator, and eventually, a participant in a global dialogue.

In school, peer influence played a significant role in building my confidence. I remember feeling hesitant in early group work, worried that my English wasn't "good enough." But working on group presentations or role-play activities gradually pushed me out of my comfort zone. My classmates weren't fluent either we were all learning, but that shared vulnerability made the space feel safe. We would laugh at each other's pronunciation mistakes, invent English-sounding words when we forgot the right one, and sometimes switch back to our first language to clarify meaning. This hybrid interaction wasn't a failure of learning. It was a real example of language negotiation and identity construction.

I particularly remember one friend who was slightly more fluent in English than the rest of us. She naturally took the lead during group activities, and instead of being intimidated, I was inspired. I began imitating her way of speaking, noticing how she used intonation and body language to support her communication. Over time, our friendship became a space for mutual learning. We shared English articles, corrected each other's writing, and exchanged voice notes for practice. She was more than a peer, she became a mediator, helping me see English not as a distant, foreign skill, but as something we could own and shape together.

Outside of school, online friendships expanded my linguistic and cultural boundaries even more. On platforms like Instagram, gaming apps, and language exchange forums, I interacted with people from different parts of the world. These conversations weren't graded or corrected. They were messy, spontaneous, and deeply human. I learned to use slang, emojis, abbreviations, and expressions I'd never find in textbooks. I also realized how my personality shifted when I spoke in English, I was more direct, more confident, sometimes even funnier. This wasn't just language learning; it was identity transformation.

Through peer interaction, I began to see myself not just as a learner of English, but as someone who could belong in English-speaking spaces. I was no longer translating thoughts from my native language. I was thinking in English, feeling in English, even dreaming in English. The social nature of language helped dissolve the boundary between "me" and the language I once saw as foreign. English became part of my self-expression, and every conversation, every shared laugh, every inside joke with a peer in English helped solidify this shift.

In these interactions, I found both my voice and my evolving identity; one that was not simply bilingual, but bicultural and globally connected. The interaction with peers, both in physical and digital spaces. It was central to developing communicative

competence and shaping linguistic identity. Language learning occurred socially and collaboratively, contributing to the learner's evolving sense of self.

Cultural Transitions and Language Ownership

Looking back on my journey of learning English, I realize that it has been much more than acquiring vocabulary or mastering grammar. It has been a profound journey of self-discovery and identity formation. English has become more than just a tool for communication. It is now part of how I understand myself and relate to the world around me.

When I was younger, English felt like something external something that belonged to others. I saw it as the language of textbooks, exams, and Western culture. Speaking English used to make me feel like I was pretending to be someone I wasn't. But over the years, as I moved through different learning environments; family, school, media, peers. I started to see English not as something foreign, but as something I could shape and make my own. I wasn't just learning to speak English; I was learning to exist within it.

This shift didn't happen overnight. It came through small, powerful moments: the first time I held a conversation in English without translating in my head, the first time I wrote a journal entry and felt like my thoughts flowed naturally, or the first time someone told me, "You sound like a native." These moments gave me a sense of belonging, not only in the language but in the cultures and communities that use it.

English has also given me access to different worlds books, films, friendships, and ideas that I might never have encountered otherwise. It has expanded my worldview and allowed me to understand perspectives beyond my own. At the same time, it has made me more aware of my own cultural identity. Paradoxically, learning another language has helped me appreciate my own culture more deeply. I've learned to navigate between languages, switching codes and adjusting tones not to hide who I am, but to express myself more fully in different contexts.

Still, the journey has not been without inner conflict. There have been moments when I questioned whether using English too much would make me lose touch with my native language or cultural roots. I worried about sounding "too Western" or "not authentic enough." But over time, I've come to understand that language is not about replacing one identity with another. It's about expanding the space where identities can coexist.

Today, I see myself as a bridge between cultures. English has become a space where my local and global identities intersect. I don't have to choose between them. I am both shaped by my own cultural background and by the global influences that English has brought into my life. Through English, I've learned that belonging doesn't always mean fitting in; sometimes, it means creating a space where you feel at home in your own way.

And in that space, I continue to grow not just as an English speaker, but as a global citizen with a voice that carries across cultures. Over time, English shifted from being perceived as a foreign tool to becoming part of personal identity. This reflected a deeper negotiation between cultural heritage and global belonging, leading to a sense of ownership over the language

DISCUSSION

The main finding of this autoethnographic study reveals that my journey of learning English has been a dynamic, socioculturally influenced process shaped across different stages of life. From early childhood curiosity encouraged by family exposure, to structured learning in formal educational settings, and later through informal engagement with media, self-directed practice, and peer interactions, English evolved from being a foreign language into a personal tool for expression and identity. The result illustrates how language acquisition is not merely cognitive but is shaped by social relationships,

cultural contexts, and personal meaning-making. Each phase was marked by unique sociocultural influences that not only shaped my language proficiency but also contributed to how I saw myself in relation to others and the world. Importantly, the process of language learning was not linear or purely academic. It was deeply emotional, relational, and reflective. Through navigating various cultural contexts and interacting with different communities, I gradually developed a sense of ownership over the English language, which now plays an essential role in my identity and cultural belonging. This finding underscores the idea that language learning is not merely about acquiring linguistic competence, but also about constructing meaning, negotiating identity, and developing a sense of global citizenship within sociocultural frameworks.

The finding on English language acquisition, especially from a sociocultural lens, has often emphasized the importance of social interaction (Alkhudiry, 2022; Johnson & Golombek, 2011; Vygotsky, 1978), the Zone of Proximal Development, and the role of scaffolding by more knowledgeable others. While these studies underline external support systems such as teachers and peer groups, my experience adds a more nuanced, personal lens by showing how these support systems also function emotionally and culturally, not just cognitively. Unlike many studies that examine learners in institutional settings or through large-scale surveys (Duff, 2008; Norton & Toohey, 2011; Pacheco, 2014), this research captures the fluid, nonlinear nature of language learning that moves across family life, digital environments, peer relationships, and identity development. The role of technology and media as “unofficial teachers” is particularly underrepresented in traditional sociocultural studies but emerged in my narrative as a major driver of linguistic growth and learner autonomy. Furthermore, while prior research frequently treats identity as a category of analysis (e.g., gender, ethnicity, or immigrant status). My narrative emphasizes identity as a process that constantly shaped and reshaped by ongoing interaction with English across contexts. This continuous negotiation between the local self and the global speaker identity represents a unique contribution. It foregrounds the ownership of English as a deeply personal, culturally intertwined experience, not merely a pedagogical goal. Finally, the holistic integration of emotional, cultural, and reflective dimensions throughout my language journey offers a fresh perspective to the field. It supports calls for more subjective, narrative-based approaches (Arndt & Tesar, 2017; Canagarajah, 2012), that highlight the learner’s voice, especially those navigating between multiple cultures.

The findings of this autoethnographic study carry meaningful implications for language learning, teaching practices, and the broader application of sociocultural theory. First and foremost, the research highlights the importance of recognizing language learners as individuals whose identities are in constant negotiation, shaped by their social environments, cultural backgrounds, and emotional experiences. Learning English was not just a cognitive process, but a deeply personal and cultural journey that unfolded across various contexts, that was from early family encouragement and classroom interactions to digital engagement and peer relationships. This suggests a need for educators to embrace pedagogical approaches that are identity-sensitive and inclusive, encouraging students to express themselves authentically. The narrative also underscores the value of informal learning through media and self-directed activities, emphasizing that meaningful language development often occurs beyond the classroom. Teachers and institutions should acknowledge and integrate students’ real-world language experiences into formal instruction, creating bridges between academic content and everyday communication. Furthermore, the role of peers as co-constructors of meaning and identity development indicates that language learning thrives in collaborative, emotionally safe environments. This study also affirms the relevance of sociocultural theory in capturing the complexity of language learning, while showing that autoethnography offers a powerful complementary lens by centering the learner’s voice and lived experience. Ultimately, this research calls

for a more holistic, flexible, and human-centered approach to English language education. One that validates multiple pathways to learning, supports learner agency, and promotes a sense of ownership over language. By doing so, I can foster environments where learners feel empowered to navigate and shape their identities through the languages they speak.

Reflecting on past experiences may involve memory biases or selective emphasis, which could influence how events and interactions are interpreted. Additionally, while sociocultural theory frames the analysis, the study does not quantitatively measure the impact of specific sociocultural factors (e.g., peer support, media exposure, or teacher interaction), which might be explored more systematically in future research. To build on the insights of this research, future studies could adopt a comparative autoethnographic approach involving multiple participants from varied backgrounds. This would allow for a more collective understanding of how identity, language, and culture intersect in language learning. Moreover, integrating mixed methods, combining narrative inquiry with surveys, interviews, or classroom observations could enhance the reliability and richness of findings.

Further exploration is also needed into informal and digital learning environments, especially as technology continues to reshape how learners' access, practice, and internalize language. Finally, future research might examine how learners navigate multilingual identities in globalized societies, particularly how they balance local linguistic heritage with the global reach of English. Such research would deepen our understanding of language learning as a complex, identity-forming, and culturally embedded experience.

CONLUSSION

This autoethnographic study has explored my personal journey of learning English as a socioculturally influenced process that evolved through various stages of life, beginning with early family support and curiosity, continuing through formal education and informal self-directed learning, and deepening through peer interaction and cultural transitions. The findings underscore that language acquisition is not merely a technical or cognitive process but a deeply human experience shaped by identity, emotion, and social context. My evolving relationship with English reflects how sociocultural influences mediate learning, shape personal meaning, and contribute to the construction of linguistic and cultural identity. Through this narrative, it becomes clear that language learning is a lifelong process of negotiation between the self and the social world, leading to the internalization and eventual ownership of the language. The study described the importance of recognizing the learner as an active participant in meaning-making, who draws from various sociocultural resources teachers, peers, media, family, and cultural experiences. This insight supports the use of learner-centered, flexible pedagogies that consider students' diverse backgrounds and lived experiences.

Suggestions for future research include encouraging educators to integrate learners' informal and personal experiences into classroom practices, fostering identity-safe environments, and promoting collaborative learning through peer engagement. Moreover, future research could expand on this work by including multiple voices through comparative or collective autoethnography to capture diverse perspectives on how sociocultural contexts shape language development. Mixed-method approaches combining narrative inquiry with interviews or observations may also enrich understanding. Finally, given the increasing influence of digital media, further exploration into how online spaces shape language learning and identity would be valuable. Embracing such multidimensional views of language learning can lead to more inclusive, empowering, and culturally responsive educational practices.

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