

# **CHAPTER I**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **A. Background of Study**

Acquiring English as a Foreign Language (EFL) is a multifaceted undertaking that is impacted by various elements that go beyond linguistic competence, especially in Indonesia. Because most Indonesians only use English in certain situations, it is considered a foreign language in that country. As English is a foreign language, the study of grammar and semantics is of utmost importance. As stated by Daar (2020) students must grasp how native speakers employ the language in structured interpersonal exchanges, where numerous factors interact with one another. Social and cultural activities are closely linked to the overall and tangible development of humans. Mental development processes, such as memory, attention, and reasoning, are inclusive of learning through the products of society, as emphasized by Suardipa (2020)

English is utilized by individuals worldwide, but EFL learners encounter challenges and difficulties in acquiring it. Therefore, every issue and aspect pertaining to the instruction and learning of EFL should be taken into consideration and acknowledged by educators and specialists (Alsalihi, 2020) These challenges may include difficulties in communication, cultural barriers, varying levels of motivation, and

complex peer interactions. Understanding and addressing these social challenges is essential for improving the overall quality of EFL education and enhancing the effectiveness of language instruction.

In this context, a theory provided by Lev Vygotsky about Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) offers a valuable framework for comprehending and addressing the social aspects challenges in EFL learning. Vygotsky's theory of learning is a perspective that embraces the socio-cultural shifts within the theories of learning and education. According to Lev Vygotsky, understanding an individual's thought process should commence with their socio-cultural background and history. In other words, to comprehend one's thoughts, there is no need to delve into what is inside their mind or their soul; it is better to understand how their conscious actions stem from social interactions underpinned by their life history. It is not the individual that causes the enhancement of someone's mental functions, but rather their social life or group (Suardipa, 2020). Applying this theory to EFL education could provide insights into how social interactions, collaborative learning, and scaffolding can be leveraged to enhance language learning in a social context.

This research is set to take place at SMKN 1 Kertak Hanyar, as stated by the headmaster, where students unactively engage with English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in their daily lives. A preliminary observation conducted prior to this study revealed that many students

exhibited low participation during English lessons, tended to avoid speaking activities, and often appeared hesitant to collaborate with peers. These initial findings highlighted the need to understand their social situations more deeply and became the basis for selecting this research focus. This research endeavors to examine the social issues that are inherent in the context of EFL learning, guided by Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) theory. Determining and comprehending the different obstacles that students face when navigating linguistic and cultural barriers is a major area of focus when analyzing the complex dynamics of social interactions in an EFL classroom. By offering a comprehensive overview, this research aims to help teachers at SMKN 1 Kertak Hanyar understand their students' social situations better.

Through an exploration of these social challenges, the study not only contributes to the academic discourse on EFL education but also endeavors to provide practical recommendations for educators to create a more supportive and effective learning environment, ensuring that students can successfully navigate the complexities of language use in their daily lives. Recognizing the significance of social challenges and the potential advantages of employing the ZPD Theory in EFL instruction, a noticeable research gap persists in this realm. This study endeavors to address this void by conducting a comprehensive examination of social hurdles in EFL learning within the framework of

ZPD Theory. By doing so, it aims to identify effective strategies and interventions for educators and learners to navigate and surmount social challenges, thereby enhancing the EFL learning experience. The outcomes hold the potential to inform the development of more learner-centric and socially engaging EFL teaching practices, contributing to the broader advancement of EFL education.

The Qur'an elucidates in Al-Anfal verse 46

وَأَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَلَا تَنَازَعُوا فَتَفْشَلُوا وَتَذْهَبَ رِيحُكُمْ  
وَأَصْبِرُوا ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الصَّابِرِينَ

This verse emphasizes the importance of following the guidance of Allah and His Messenger, and avoiding disputes that can lead to weakness and loss of strength. This message can be interpreted in the context of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), where followers are expected to acquire more advanced knowledge and skills by following the guidance provided by Allah and His Messenger. By following this guidance, individuals can avoid unnecessary conflicts or difficulties in their learning and growth processes. Additionally, the message to be patient underscores that the learning process takes time and perseverance, and that patience is an important quality needed to achieve learning goals.

Although this study provides an explanation of the influence of ZPD on student learning challenges experiences, further research is still

needed. Future researchers could explore specific ways, like new teaching methods or technology integration, within the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) framework to better address social challenges in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning. One potential research gap lies in understanding the social challenges encountered by English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners when applying the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) theory. Specifically, there is limited exploration into the conflicts arising from students' unfamiliarity with the freedom and responsibility inherent in Heutagogical approaches compared to conventional learning methods within the EFL context (Lasmawan & Budiarta, 2020). While the current study acknowledges the importance of these challenges and the benefits of ZPD Theory, it doesn't go into detail about practical methods. By delving into concrete strategies, such as collaborative learning or using technology, researchers can provide more straightforward guidance for educators looking to create a supportive learning environment in EFL classrooms. This could help teachers overcome obstacles and enhance the language learning experience for students.

## **B. Definition of Key Terms**

1. **Social Aspect:** Internal factors within the ZPD framework include students' motivation, anxiety, willingness to learn, confidence, and personal learning strategies. Meanwhile, external factors cover the learning environment, curriculum, teacher support, peer relationships, and social background. In EFL learning, the social aspect refers to how these internal and external influences shape students' engagement. External challenges can involve limited opportunities to practice English, lack of supportive classroom atmosphere, unequal participation in group activities, cultural expectations that discourage speaking up, and insufficient guidance from teachers. Together, these factors affect how students interact and develop language skills.
2. **Challenges:** Challenges refer to obstacles, difficulties, or hindrances encountered by EFL learners. These can include barriers to effective communication, cultural differences, motivational issues, or complex social interactions that impact language acquisition. In the social aspect, challenges may involve fear of being judged by peers, lack of confidence when speaking, limited participation in group discussions, feelings of isolation in class activities, and difficulty building supportive relationships with classmates and teachers.

3. Learning EFL (English as a Foreign Language): Learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) refers to studying English in a context where it is not the primary language used in daily life. In EFL learning, the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is especially important for understanding social dynamics and supporting students' development. ZPD helps educators identify what language skills students can improve with guidance, emphasizing the role of collaborative learning and interaction. This approach enables teachers to design activities that match students' current abilities while offering support to build confidence and create an engaging language environment.
4. Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD): The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is a concept introduced by Lev Vygotsky, describing the gap between what a learner can do independently and what they can achieve with guidance. This theory highlights the importance of social interaction and cultural context in shaping cognitive development. In the context of learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL), ZPD provides valuable insights into how appropriate support and collaboration help students overcome social challenges, develop skills, and progress more effectively.

### **C. Research Questions**

1. What social aspect issues do students experience in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom?

2. How do the teachers manage the issues of social aspect in EFL classroom?

#### **D. Objectives of Study**

1. To identify the social aspect concerns that students experience in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom.
2. To explain how do the teacher manage the issues that affect students in EFL classroom.

#### **E. Significance of Study**

1. For teachers, the research is crucial as it provides insights into tailoring instructional approaches. This understanding allows educators to address specific social hurdles in EFL learning within the Zone of Proximal Development, fostering a supportive and collaborative classroom environment. The research empowers teachers to offer personalized support, contributing to more effective language acquisition and positive social development in their students.
2. For students, the research is significant as it deepens their understanding of the social difficulties in EFL learning. This insight enables students to adopt targeted learning strategies and receive personalized support. The research contributes to improved communication skills and heightened self-awareness, fostering a proactive and self-directed approach to language learning. Overall, it empowers students to navigate social challenges more effectively and enhances their overall language acquisition experience in the EFL context.



3. For researchers, this research can assist other researchers in comprehending the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), not only in the context of children within the school environment but also in relation to their growth at home and within their broader social environment outside the school setting.