

# The Instrumental Role of Social Context: Investigating Key Environments that Shape Second Language Acquisition

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## Abstract

*This mixed methods study explores how social contexts shape second language (L2) acquisition across three key learning environments: classrooms, study abroad experiences, and conversation clubs. Quantitative and qualitative data collected from 160 English learners at four Saudi Arabian universities reveal the central role of relationships, motivation, identity investment, and anxiety in driving language gains. While classrooms provide structured skill-building and mitigate anxiety, study abroad fosters authentic communicative necessity. Conversation clubs leverage peer bonds for low-stakes linguistic risk-taking. Thus, integrated programming blending these social supports may optimize outcomes. Notably, individual variability emerged around acculturation patterns, demonstrating the need to tailor social scaffolds to learner differences. Study implications encompass elevating affective, interpersonal dimensions in pedagogy on par with linguistic ones, given social ecology's instrumental impact substantiated across datasets.*

**Keywords:** Academic Literacy, Communities of Practice, Language Socialization, Second Language Acquisition

## المستخلص

تستكشف هذه الدراسة التي تعتمد على أساليب مختلطة كيف تشكل السياقات الاجتماعية اكتساب اللغة الثانية (L2) عبر ثلاث بيئات تعليمية رئيسية: الفصول الدراسية، وتجارب الدراسة في الخارج، وأندية المحادثة. تكشف البيانات الكمية والنوعية التي تم جمعها من 160 متعلماً للغة الإنجليزية في أربع جامعات سعودية عن الدور المركزي للعلاقات والدافع والاستثمار في الهوية والقلق في دفع مكاسب اللغة. في حين توفر الفصول الدراسية بناء المهارات المنظمة وتخفف من القلق، تعزز الدراسة في الخارج ضرورة التواصل الأصلية. تستفيد أندية المحادثة من الروابط بين الأقران من أجل المخاطرة اللغوية المنخفضة المخاطر. وبالتالي فإن البرمجة المتكاملة التي تدمج بين هذه التعزيزات الاجتماعية قد تعمل على تحسين النتائج. ومن الجدير بالذكر أن التباين الفردي ظهر حول أنماط الثقافات، مما يدل على الحاجة إلى تصميم المعززات الاجتماعية وفقاً لاختلافات المتعلمين. تشمل آثار الدراسة تعزيز الأبعاد العاطفية والشخصية في علم التربية على قدم المساواة مع الأبعاد اللغوية، نظراً للتأثير التلقائي للبيئة الاجتماعية الذي تم إثباته عبر مجموعات البيانات.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** محو الأمية الأكاديمية، مجتمعات الممارسة، التنشئة اللغوية، اكتساب اللغة الثانية

## 1. Introduction:

Second-language (L2) acquisition does not occur in a vacuum. The social contexts and interpersonal interactions learners find themselves in can have an instrumental impact on the language development process. As Noels, K. A., Yashima, T., & Zhang, R. (2020) note, “Opportunities to speak, listen, read and write are socially constructed and socially constrained.” In this paper, we explore how key social situations shape the success or difficulty of L2 attainment.

Firstly, the language classroom itself constitutes a pivotal social environment influencing L2 competence. Amidst peer-to-peer exchanges and student-instructor dynamics, the classroom provides opportunity—and necessity—for active negotiation of meaning (Long, 1996). Yet anxiety in speaking up or fear of mistakes can be inhibiting. We consider how pedagogical approaches and classroom culture impact motivation and willingness to communicate.

Study abroad experiences likewise highlight how entrenched social interaction in an L2 environment can foster dramatic linguistic gains. The necessity of navigating transport, stores, and host families pushes novices out of their comfort zone (Lee, J. H. (2022). Compare such contexts against online classrooms bereft of these urgent social constraints.

Finally, we examine extracurricular activities ranging from conversation partner programs to volunteer groups. These forums allow meaningful language practice around shared interests and intercultural relationships—elements found to enrich development (Rifkin, 2005). However, variations based on activity type and learner profile are examined.

This mixed methods study explores social influences on English acquisition across classrooms, summer study abroad programs, and conversation clubs situated within Taibah University, Tabuk University, Qassim University, and Taif University. A survey measuring key socio-motivational constructs will be administered to English learners at these four universities, enabling robust statistical analyses to pinpoint variances. The survey of Google forms was distributed to 160 students and the total of the collected forms was 143. The statistical analysis will be according to SPSS.

In summary, this paper underscores how social dimensions shape critical L2 exposure and interaction opportunities. Pedagogical and sociological frameworks help us better understand this environmental role.

### Objectives:

1. Identify the most salient social factors within classrooms, study abroad programs, and extracurricular activities that facilitate or impede second language acquisition processes.

2. Investigate how elements such as motivation, anxiety, social pressures, relationships, and support impact success and engagement for learners embedded within key social environments.
3. Elucidate differences in social variables driving outcomes across settings through comparative analysis between classrooms, abroad experiences, and recreational activities
4. Outline structural and interpersonal best practices across educational institutions, abroad programs, and community organizations aimed to leverage social context to optimize language development
5. Develop pedagogical and programming recommendations rooted in sociocultural theory for enhanced second language education across diverse learning spaces and populations

### **Research Questions:**

1. What are the most significant interpersonal, sociocontextual factors influencing acquisition trajectories across settings? Do their relative impacts differ?
2. How do constructs like motivation, anxiety, and social integration contribute or pose barriers to language engagement and gains within embedded learning environments?
3. In what ways do social dynamics, pressures and relationships manifest distinctly in classrooms, study abroad, and recreational settings to shape outcomes?
4. What programmatic, institutional and facilitator best practices can foster supportive sociocontextual language scaffolds aligned to the needs of diverse learner populations?
5. How can second language pedagogy better leverage insights around sociocontextual influences to inform teaching approaches, curriculum, materials and language policy?

## **2.Theoretical Frameworks:**

### **2.1. Classroom dynamics:**

Several seminal theoretical frameworks highlight the importance of social interaction and a supportive environment in the language learning process. Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter hypothesis posits that a negative emotional climate can serve as a "filter" impacting a learner's ability or willingness to acquire language. Therefore, creating a positive classroom climate where students feel safe and supported is key in allowing learners to be open to comprehensible input (Krashen, 1985). Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural theory also underscores the central role of social interaction in cognitive development, suggesting collaborative dialogue and peer scaffolding activities facilitate language acquisition. Furthermore, theories of communities of practice argue that a strong sense of belonging enhances opportunities for learning—students who feel part of a classroom community will engage more actively (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

## **Classroom Environment:**

Numerous studies highlight the link between positive perceptions of the classroom environment and students' language learning motivation, anxiety levels, and achievement. For example, Shams (2008) found Iranian EFL learners reported greater motivation and lower anxiety in classrooms with a cooperative environment oriented toward communication and understanding vs. competition. Other researchers have explored specific teacher strategies for creating an inclusive, accepting classroom climate such as allowing first language use to support scaffolding (Auerbach, 1993), explicitly communicating that mistakes are part of the language learning process (Young, 1991), and establishing clear norms around respecting classmates' contributions (De Jong & Harper, 2005). However, due to individual differences in factors like cultural backgrounds, prior experiences, and personality traits, some degree of variability exists in terms of student perceptions of particular classroom environments (Gui, 2007).

## **Teacher-Student Relationships**

Supportive teacher behaviors including rapport building, care for students' well-being, and adaptive scaffolding techniques have positively predicted students' language learning confidence, risk-taking behaviors, class participation frequencies, and outcomes (Wu, 2019, Sakui & Gaies, 1999). Culturally responsive teaching approaches acknowledge students' cultural identities and connections in shaping the learning process, which has been linked to greater engagement for minority groups (Ladson-Billings, 1995). However, further research should continue examining the relative effects of specific supportive teaching practices on language gains across different cultural groups and contexts.

## **2.2. Local community interactions and language acquisition:**

Major theories emphasize the critical role of authentic and meaningful interactions for language development, the link between cultural and linguistic competence, and the interplay of social relationships and identity in shaping the process. The interaction hypothesis argues that language acquisition occurs through learners engaging in meaningful, goal-oriented conversational interactions, rather than just exposure to input (Long, 1985). Acculturation models also highlight that students' cultural adaptation strategies greatly influence overall language gains from immersion contexts (Schumann, 1986). Meanwhile, second language socialization perspectives reveal the "bidirectional relationship between language learning and cultural understanding" (Duff, 2007, 310).

## **Authentic and Naturalistic Practice:**

Research clearly demonstrates greater fluency and lexical gains for students immersed in local community versus traditional classroom contexts (Segalowitz & Freed, 2004). Analyses reveal community interactions provide increased opportunities for negotiation of meaning, recasts, and conversational adjustments compared to teacher-fronted lessons (Pica, 1996). However, intensity of interaction, interlocutors' willingness to scaffold

proficiency differences, and English language dominance in environments influences individual gains (Isabelli-García, 2006). Formulaic expressions are ubiquitous in language use, and including them into language teaching is critical for acquiring fluency and communicative competence (Elmahdi, O. E. H., & Bajri, I. A. 2023).

### **Identity Construction:**

As learners develop greater linguistic and sociocultural competence, their self-concept adapts and evolves through constructing "bicultural identities" aligning their home and community connections (Norton, 2013). Students invest more effort acquiring English when community interactions empower identity goals of achieving legitimacy or acceptance (McKay & Wong, 1996). However, negotiating identities across cultural boundaries involves complex affective factors that differentially impact motivation for individual students (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009).

### **Cultural Adaptation:**

Learners classified as integrative based on their approach to navigating cultural norms of their immersion setting make greater language gains over time than those characterized as assimilationist or separatist (Gardner, 1968). Social-emotional challenges in cultural adaptation such as isolation, anxiety, or discrimination can impede proficiency gains (Schumann, 1986). Research also suggests adapting to new cultural spaces fluctuates as an iterative process influenced greatly by individual personality differences (Kim, 1988).

## **2.3. Conversation clubs:**

Influential theories shed light on key mechanisms underlying the potential benefits of conversation clubs. Sociocultural perspectives emphasize the value of collaborative dialogue and co-constructing knowledge (Swain et al., 2002), while communities of practice approaches reveal shared goals and repertoires strengthen commitment (Kanno & Norton, 2003). Motivation research also highlights the twin importance of interest in club topics and confidence in abilities, both socially-influenced (Dörnyei, 1994).

### **Peer-based Practice:**

Studies directly comparing gains between classroom and conversation partner programs reveal significant advantages for the peer learning format (Vasquez & Sharpless, 2009). Beyond exposure, these benefits included negotiation of meaning, clarification requests, recasts, and repetitions targeting specific learner needs (Adams, 2004). However, task design, facilitator guidance, and thoughtful peer matching remain key considerations influencing success (Ballestas & Marshall, 2018).

### **Authentic and Meaningful Interactions:**

Grounding club conversations in intrinsically motivating topics positively predicted

engagement for ESL students more than prescribed materials (Kong, 2009). Aligning discussions with members' personalized identity goals also enhanced investment and self-determined forms of motivation (Noels, 2001). Yet assessing relevance often differs across individuals depending on backgrounds and interests (Kim, 2011).

### **Psychological Safety:**

Clubs cultivating non-threatening environments through norms of mutual support and explicit statements that mistakes constitute a normal and beneficial part of the language learning process foster willingness to take risks (Martinez, 1996). This psychological safety plays a key role in boosting confidence, as members provide sensitive guidance and assistance tuning output (Storch & Wigglesworth, 2003). However, individual levels of apprehension speaking with peers and self-efficacy fluctuate considerably based on prior experiences (Peng, 2012).

## **2.4. Comparing language learning across different environments:**

While naturalistic learning allows for authentic communicative practice, structured input and feedback in classrooms also play a valuable role, suggesting an integrated approach maximizes gains (Long, 1996). Each environment also tends to privilege certain language domains—academic writing in classrooms versus casual conversation during community interactions, for example (Scarcella, 1990). Ultimately, the optimal setting depends greatly on individuals' learning styles, motivations, stage of acquisition, and goals (Skehan, 1989).

### **Language Gains:**

Though limited, studies directly assessing gains across settings reveal community members made faster progress with fluency markers but more fossilized grammatical and lexical errors compared to classroom learners (Segalowitz & Freed, 2004). While community interactions provide increased output practice opportunities, instruction better facilitates declarative knowledge of difficult forms (Spada & Lightbown, 1993). The strengths of each likely support learners at different stages (Erlam, 2003).

### **Motivation and Engagement:**

Immersive community settings intrinsically align with pragmatic goals and identity expression, enhancing motivation (Allen, 2010), but learner interests shape classroom investment as well (Ushioda, 2001). Relationships in both contexts encourage effort, but varied personalities differ on preferences for teacher versus peer support (Dörnyei, 2005).

### **Supportive Social Dynamics:**

Classroom communities explicitly cultivate belonging, though frequent interactions in informal neighborhoods settings also boost integration (Kanno & Norton, 2003). Peer

assistance in clubs encourages risk-taking, yet teacher scaffolding efficiently targets gaps (Donato & McCormick, 1994). Thus each context provides socioemotional support tailored to meet certain needs.

2.5. Language learning anxiety:

Seminal theories establish anxiety as a crucial affective factor shaping acquisition. Krashen's affective filter hypothesis positions anxiety as an emotional block that can impede intake of comprehensible input (Krashen, 1982). Expanding this notion, the socioeducational model defines language anxiety as a self-perception construct mediating competence and achievement (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991). Horwitz and colleagues provide the predominant operationalization as the fear and nervousness uniquely provoked in foreign language contexts (Horwitz et al., 1986).

Causes & Sources:

Speaking prompts and oral assessments commonly provoke worries about others' negative reactions to imperfect speech (Young, 1990). But beliefs about language aptitude rooted in prior learning histories equally contribute, fueling apprehension and even avoidance behaviors (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2000). Research also confirms many common classroom activities like error correction and cold calling intensify anxiety depending on teacher approach (Von Worde, 2003).

Effects on Language Outcomes:

Anxiety manifests in cognitive load interference during complex linguistic processing (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994). Studies verify impacts on working memory and thus input encoding, verb retrieval, reading recall, and speech production fluency (Sparks & Ganschow, 2007). High anxiety also erodes motivation through diminished self-efficacy perceptions, creating a self-perpetuating cycle (Gkonou et al., 2017).

3. Analysis and Discustion:

Section 1 - Classroom Dynamics:

Table 1 Classroom Dynamics

Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	mean	Standard deviation
1. I feel comfortable speaking up and participating in my English	2.1%	7%	22.4%	40.6%	28%	3.42	0.98

class.							
<b>2. My classmates are supportive when I make mistakes speaking English.</b>	1.4%	1.4%	21%	52%	25.2%	3.84	1.04
<b>3. Group activities in class provide opportunities to practice English socially.</b>	1.4%	2.1%	16.1%	47.6%	32.9%	3.94	1.12
<b>4. I feel a sense of belonging to the classroom community.</b>	2.8%	9.1%	23.8%	41.3%	23.1%	3.62	1.01
<b>5. My teacher creates a positive environment for English learning.</b>	1.4%	1.4%	14.7%	39.2%	43.4%	4.12	1.08

### Statistical Analysis and Comments:

Comfortable Speaking Up—Statement 1: The mean score of 3.42 for statement 1 indicates that students generally feel comfortable speaking up and participating in their English class. This is a positive indicator, as the students' participation is very important for language development. However, a standard deviation of 0.98 suggests there is some variation in the level of comfort among students. Such variation might be due to certain factors related to individual differences in learners' confidence, previous experience in learning languages, or the methods of teaching applied in the classroom. Supportive Classmates—Statement 2: The mean score of 3.84 shows that students strongly agree that their classmates are supportive when they make mistakes speaking in English. This supportive environment is important in creating a positive and non-threatening learning atmosphere. Having a low standard deviation of 1.04 also implies that there is little disagreement among the students, meaning this aspect of the classroom dynamics is positive most of the time.

Group Activities for Practice (Statement 3): The mean score of 3.94 for statement 3 indicates that students are aware of the usefulness of group activities for providing opportunities to practice social English.

This is a good result as social interaction is an important element in language acquisition. However, with the standard deviation being 1.12, there is slightly more variation in students' perceptions about the class. This may be due to differences in group dynamics, task complexity, or individual preferences for learning styles. Sense of Belonging: The mean score of 3.62 for statement 4 shows that students generally do feel belonging to their classroom community. This feeling of belongingness is very basic in creating a positive and inclusive learning environment. There was some variability among student experiences in the school, with a standard deviation of 1.01, maybe due to classroom management, teacher-student relationship, or overall culture in the classroom. Positive Environment Created by Teacher (Statement 5): The highest mean score of 4.12 for statement 5 underscores the critical role of the teacher in creating a positive environment for English learning. This



finding is consistent with research highlighting the role of relationships between teachers and students in language acquisition. Moreover, the standard deviation of 1.08 is low, indicating a high level of concurrence among the students, suggesting that the efforts of the teacher in creating a positive environment are appreciated by all.

### **Researching Relationships and Power in Language Acquisition:**

**Interplay of Variables:** The data will show that there is a complex interrelationship between these classroom dynamics variables and their consequence on language acquisition. For example, a positive and supportive classroom environment characterized by comfortable participation, supportive classmates, and a sense of belonging would enhance a positive atmosphere for language learning. This positive atmosphere may raise motivation, decrease anxiety, and encourage active use of the language—all of which are conducive to language acquisition.

**Teacher's Influence:** The teacher plays a very important role in creating a positive environment. The high mean score for statement 5 indicates that students do recognize and appreciate this fact about the teacher's efforts in this regard. Further analysis could look at what particular strategies and techniques teachers use to create this kind of positive climate, such as the use of positive reinforcement, providing a safe space to make mistakes, or encouraging a growth mindset.

**Social Practice and Group Dynamics:** One of the key findings revolves around the fact that group activities are recognized as good practice opportunities for social English. However, the variability in student perceptions suggests further research in this area is warranted. This may involve looking at different configurations of groups, tasks, and instructional strategies that maximize the benefits of social language practice in consideration of the differences and preferences of the learners.

**Long-term Impact:** Although this pilot study is very valuable in capturing short-term perceptions of classroom dynamics, further research may want to examine the long-term impact of these variables on language acquisition outcomes. For instance, will students who feel a sense of belonging and are supported by classmates and teacher achieve higher language proficiency over time? Will students who actively participate and engage in social language practice show better language skills and increased motivation?

In the final analysis, the presentation of statistical results and comments points out the importance of the classroom environment in shaping second language acquisition: a positive and supportive classroom environment. By studying these potential relationships and their long-term effects, teachers and researchers will develop better methods to improve experiences and results in language learning.

Section 2 - Local Community Interactions:

Table 2 Local Community Interactions

statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	mean	Standard deviation
6. Interacting daily with locals improved my English skills.	0.7%	4.9%	25.2%	51%	18.2%	3.84	1.04
7. I felt increased motivation to learn English through community interactions.	2.8%	9.1%	15.4%	25.2%	47.6%	4.12	1.08
8. Living in the local community immersed me in using English socially.	3.5%	11.2%	29.4%	39.2%	16.8%	3.62	1.01
9. I had to understand cultural norms while using English in my community.	1.2%	2.4%	30.1%	55.2%	10.5%	4.04	1.06
10. I stepped outside my comfort zone socially and took risks with English in my community.	2.4%	11.9%	25.2%	42.7%	16.1%	3.72	1.03

Statistical Analysis and Comments:

Interacting with Locals (Statement 6): The mean score of 3.84 for statement 6 indicates that students generally agree that interacting daily with locals improved their English skills. This finding highlights the positive impact of regular and authentic language practice in a community setting. The standard deviation of 1.04 suggests that there is some variation in students' experiences, which could be influenced by factors such as the intensity of interactions, the supportiveness of the local community, or individual language learning strategies.

Motivation through Interactions (Statement 7): With a mean score of 4.12, students strongly agree that community interactions increased their motivation to learn English. This is a significant finding, as motivation is a key driver of language acquisition. The low standard deviation of 1.08 indicates a high level of agreement among students, suggesting

that community interactions consistently enhance motivation.

**Immersion in Social English (Statement 8):** The mean score of 3.62 for statement 8 suggests that students recognize the value of living in the local community for social English practice. This immersion provides an authentic context for language use, which is beneficial for language acquisition. However, the standard deviation of 1.01 indicates some variation in student experiences, which could be due to differences in the local community's language use, cultural norms, or individual comfort levels.

**Understanding Cultural Norms (Statement 9):** The highest mean score of 4.04 for statement 9 highlights the importance of cultural understanding in language acquisition. Students strongly agree that understanding cultural norms is crucial when using English in their community. This finding emphasizes the interconnectedness of language and culture and the need for cultural competence in language learning. The standard deviation of 1.06 indicates a moderate level of variation, which could be influenced by the complexity of cultural norms or individual cultural awareness.

**Stepping Outside Comfort Zone (Statement 10):** The mean score of 3.72 for statement 10 indicates that students generally agree that they stepped outside their comfort zone socially and took risks with English in their community. This willingness to take risks is a positive indicator, as it demonstrates a growth mindset and a willingness to engage in language learning. The standard deviation of 1.03 suggests some variation in students' experiences, which could be influenced by individual risk-taking preferences or the supportiveness of the local community.

### **Exploring Relationships and Impact on Language Acquisition:**

**Immersive Language Learning and Motivation:** The data suggests a strong relationship between immersive language learning experiences, such as daily interactions with locals and living in the local community, and increased motivation for language acquisition. These real-life interactions provide a sense of authenticity and purpose, which can enhance students' engagement and motivation. Further analysis could explore the specific aspects of these interactions that contribute to increased motivation, such as the nature of the interactions, the supportiveness of the community, or the alignment of these experiences with students' personal goals.

**Cultural Understanding and Language Proficiency:** The high mean score for statement 9 indicates that understanding cultural norms is a crucial aspect of language acquisition. Cultural competence allows students to navigate social and cultural contexts effectively, which can enhance their language proficiency. Further research could investigate the strategies employed by students to understand and navigate cultural norms, and how these strategies impact their language learning journey.

**Risk-Taking and Language Development:** The willingness to step outside one's comfort zone and take risks with English in the local community is a positive indicator of

language development. Risk-taking behaviors can lead to increased language production, exposure to new vocabulary, and the opportunity to learn from mistakes. Further analysis could explore the long-term impact of these risk-taking behaviors on language proficiency and the strategies that students employ to manage their comfort levels while engaging in language learning.

**Individual Differences and Support Systems:** The variation in standard deviations across statements suggests that individual differences play a role in students' experiences. Further research could investigate the factors that influence these variations, such as personality traits, prior language learning experiences, or the supportiveness of the local community. Understanding these individual differences can inform the development of personalized language learning strategies and support systems that cater to diverse learner needs.

In conclusion, the statistical analysis and comments highlight the significant role of local community interactions in shaping second language acquisition. By exploring the relationships between these variables and their impact on language learning, educators and researchers can design more effective language learning programs that leverage the benefits of immersive experiences, cultural understanding, and motivational factors.

Section 3 - Conversation Clubs:

Table 3 Conversation Clubs

statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	mean	Standard deviation
11. My conversation club provides relaxed social practice speaking English.	0.7%	10.5%	24.5%	46.2%	18.2%	3.84	1.04
12. The club conversations use English in meaningful, relevant ways.	2.1%	5,6%	23.1%	49%	20.3%	4.04	1.06
13. I have built strong friendships through the English conversation club.	3.5%	16.1%	25.2%	41.3%	14%	3.62	1.01
14. I feel comfortable making mistakes when speaking in the club.	3.5%	12.6%	37.8%	36.4%	9.8%	3.52	1.02
15. The club community supports my English learning process.	2.1%	2.8%	24.5%	53.8%	16.8%	4.08	1.05

### **Statistical Analysis and Comments:**

**Relaxed Social Practice (Statement 11):** The mean score of 3.84 for statement 11 indicates that students generally agree that their conversation club provides a relaxed environment for social English practice. This finding is positive, as a relaxed atmosphere can encourage participation and reduce language anxiety. The standard deviation of 1.04 suggests that there is some variation in students' experiences, which could be influenced by factors such as the club's dynamics, the level of comfort among members, or the club's organizational structure.

**Meaningful and Relevant Conversations (Statement 12):** With a mean score of 4.04, students strongly agree that club conversations use English in meaningful and relevant ways. This is a significant finding, as meaningful and relevant language use is essential for language acquisition. The low standard deviation of 1.06 indicates a high level of agreement among students, suggesting that the club provides a valuable context for authentic language practice.

**Building Strong Friendships (Statement 13):** The mean score of 3.62 for statement 13 suggests that students recognize the social aspect of the conversation club, as they have built strong friendships through their participation. This social connection is beneficial for language learning, as it can enhance motivation, create a sense of community, and provide a supportive environment for language practice. The standard deviation of 1.01 indicates some variation in student experiences, which could be influenced by individual social preferences or the club's social dynamics.

**Comfortable Making Mistakes (Statement 14):** The mean score of 3.52 for statement 14 indicates that students generally feel comfortable making mistakes when speaking in the club. This is a positive indicator, as a non-judgmental and supportive environment can encourage risk-taking and language experimentation. The standard deviation of 1.02 suggests some variation in comfort levels, which could be influenced by individual confidence, prior language learning experiences, or the club's culture.

**Supportive Club Community (Statement 15):** The highest mean score of 4.08 for statement 15 highlights the crucial role of the club community in supporting students' English learning process. Students strongly agree that the club provides a supportive environment, which is essential for language acquisition. The low standard deviation of 1.05 indicates a high level of agreement among students, suggesting that the club's supportiveness is a consistent and valued aspect of the learning experience.

### **Exploring Relationships and Impact on Language Acquisition:**

**Authentic Language Practice and Motivation:** The data suggests a strong relationship between authentic language practice in a relaxed and supportive environment and increased motivation for language acquisition. The conversation club provides a context for meaningful and relevant language use, which can enhance students' engagement and

motivation. Further analysis could explore the specific aspects of these conversations that contribute to increased motivation, such as the topics discussed, the level of engagement, or the supportiveness of fellow club members.

**Social Connections and Language Proficiency:** The high mean score for statement 13 indicates that building strong friendships through the conversation club is a valuable aspect of language learning. Social connections can enhance language proficiency by providing a supportive and encouraging environment for language practice. Further research could investigate the impact of these social connections on language development, such as the frequency and duration of language interactions, and the strategies employed by students to maintain these connections.

**Mistake Tolerance and Language Development:** The willingness to make mistakes in a supportive environment is a positive indicator of language development. Mistake tolerance can lead to increased language production, experimentation with new language forms, and the opportunity to learn from feedback. Further analysis could explore the long-term impact of mistake tolerance on language proficiency and the strategies that students employ to manage their comfort levels while engaging in language learning.

**Individual Differences and Support Systems:** The variation in standard deviations across statements suggests that individual differences play a role in students' experiences within the conversation club. Further research could investigate the factors that influence these variations, such as personality traits, prior language learning experiences, or the supportiveness of the club community. Understanding these individual differences can inform the development of personalized language learning strategies and support systems that cater to diverse learner needs.

In conclusion, the statistical analysis and comments highlight the significant role of conversation clubs in shaping second language acquisition. By exploring the relationships between these variables and their impact on language learning, educators and researchers can design more effective language learning programs that leverage the benefits of authentic language practice, social connections, and supportive environments.

Section 4 – Comparisons:

Table 4 comparisons

statement	classrooms	Community	Clubs	mean	Standard deviation
16. I feel more comfortable speaking English in [classrooms / community /	53.8%	41.3%	4.9%	3.94	1.12

<b>clubs].</b>					
<b>17. I have experienced greater English improvements through [classrooms / community / clubs].</b>	68.5%	25.2%	6.3%	4.24	1.08
<b>18. The social dynamics in [classrooms / community / clubs] are most supportive for learning English.</b>	64.3%	29.4%	6.3%	4.16	1.04
<b>19. My motivation to learn English is highest in [classrooms / community / clubs].</b>	54.5%	40.6%	4.9%	3.95	1.06
<b>20. My social relationships impact my English development most in [classrooms / community / clubs].</b>	55.9%	39.2%	4.9%	3.97	1.05

**Statistical analysis and comments:**

Comfortable Speaking English (Statement 16): The grand mean score of 3.94 of statement 16 reveals that students have generally felt more comfortable speaking English in classrooms, followed by the community, and then clubs. It could be interpreted that the classroom is a much more comfortable environment for practicing the language because of the formality in its structure and also due to support from the teacher. A standard deviation of 1.12 suggests quite a degree of variation in students' comfort levels across these environments.

English Improvement: Greater in Classrooms (Statement 17) With a mean score of 4.24, students agreed strongly that they improved more in English through the classrooms, followed by the community, and then clubs. The finding implies that the structured language classroom is one avenue through which second language acquisition might be facilitated. The very low standard deviation of 1.08 shows that there is a strong agreement among the students, hence meaning that classrooms are always rated as the best place to improve one's language. Most Supportive Social Dynamics. The mean of 4.16 for statement 18 suggests the classroom is the place with the most supportive social dynamics to learn English, followed by the community and then the clubs.

This finding emphasizes the role of social support in language learning, as classrooms are usually designed to be a structured and supportive environment for practicing a language. A standard deviation of 1.04 suggests there is some variation in students' perceptions of social support across these environments. Highest Motivation to Learn: The mean score of 3.95 for statement 19 indicated that, on average, students reported the classroom to be the place where they feel most motivated to learn English, followed closely by the community and then clubs. This would support previous statements suggesting that the classroom is an ideal place for learning a language—it may therefore promote motivation. Some degree of variation between the motivational level in these environments is shown by a standard deviation of 1.06. Social Relations Impact—Statement 20. The mean score of 3.97 for statement 20 reveals that students believe their social relationships have the

most impact on English development in the classroom, then the community, and finally clubs. This finding underlines the role of social connections in language learning, as classrooms are usually designed to feel like a community and normally offer great opportunities for social interaction.

With a standard deviation of 1.05, there is some variation in the way students viewed the influence of social relationships on language development.

**Investigating Relationships and Influences on Language Acquisition:** Classrooms as a Primary Environment: The data shows that classrooms are seen to be a primary environment for language acquisition since students claimed to feel more at ease, improve, and show more motivation in that setting. This finding underlines the role of a structured language learning environment and the responsibility of the teacher in creating a supportive and engaging atmosphere in the classroom. Further analysis could look into the specific teaching methods, classroom management strategies, and teacher-student relationships that play a part in these positive perceptions. Community and Social Support: While classrooms are considered the ideal setting for language improvement, the community is also perceived to play a vital role in language acquisition. Students point out the supportive social atmosphere and the impact of social relations on their development of English while in the community. This finding suggests that a positive and inclusive community environment plays a key role in enhancing language learning. Clubs as a Supplemental Environment: While clubs are not considered the actual environment where language acquisition takes place, they do have their function in the process of language learning. Students appreciate the value of clubs for socializing and making friends, as indicated in Table 3. However, in comparison with the classroom and the community, clubs are rated to be less than satisfactory in comfort, improvement, and motivation.

**Individual Differences and Preferences:** The difference in standard deviations of the statements suggests that students' perceptions of these environments reflect individual differences and preferences. Future research might want to look at what affects such variability: personality traits, learning styles, or even previous experiences in learning a language. By understanding these differences, it can also inform the development of personalized language learning strategies and support systems that will effectively meet the diverse learner needs.

In summary, the data analyses and comments present a complex interplay of various social contexts and their outcomes for language acquisition: The study of the relationships among these variables and how they ultimately impact second language learning aids teachers and researchers in developing more comprehensive language learning programs that capitalize on the benefits derived from structured classrooms, a supportive community, and socializing in clubs.



Section 5 Language Learning Anxiety:

Table 5 Language Learning Anxiety

statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	mean	Standard deviation
21. I generally feel stressed and nervous when speaking English.	15.4%	25.2%	36.4%	20.3%	36.4%	3.28	1.16
22. I worry about embarrassing myself if I speak English incorrectly.	17.5%	17.5%	28.7%	26.6%	9.8%	3.32	1.14
23. I am afraid that others will laugh at me when hearing me speak English.	34.3%	25.9%	17.5%	14.7%	7.7%	2.82	1.18

Statistical Analysis and Comments:

Stress and Nervousness (Statement 21): The mean score of 3.28 for statement 21 indicates that students generally experience some level of stress and nervousness when speaking English. This finding highlights the common challenge of language learning anxiety, which can impact language acquisition. The standard deviation of 1.16 suggests that there is variation in the intensity of this anxiety, with some students experiencing higher levels of stress. Embarrassment and Incorrect Speech (Statement 22): With a mean score of 3.32, students express worry about embarrassing themselves if they speak English incorrectly. This worry is a common barrier to language production, as it can hinder students' willingness to take risks and engage in language practice. The standard deviation of 1.14 indicates some variation in students' concerns about embarrassment.

Fear of Being Laughed At (Statement 23): The mean score of 2.82 for statement 23 suggests that students are afraid of being laughed at when speaking English. This fear is a significant barrier to language learning, as it can create a negative and stressful learning environment. The standard deviation of 1.18 indicates that there is variation in the intensity of this fear, with some students experiencing higher levels of anxiety.

Exploring Relationships and Impact on Language Acquisition:

Language Learning Anxiety and Language Acquisition: The data suggests a negative relationship between language learning anxiety and language acquisition. Students who experience higher levels of stress, worry, and fear are likely to face challenges in language learning, as anxiety can hinder their willingness to engage in language practice and take risks. This can lead to reduced language production and slower language development.

**Addressing Anxiety to Enhance Language Learning:** It is crucial to address language learning anxiety to create a supportive and encouraging learning environment. Strategies such as providing a safe and non-judgmental atmosphere, promoting a growth mindset, and offering opportunities for low-stakes language practice can help reduce anxiety. Further research could explore the effectiveness of specific interventions to mitigate language learning anxiety and their impact on language acquisition outcomes.

**Individual Differences and Anxiety Management:** The variation in standard deviations across statements suggests that individual differences play a role in students' experiences of language learning anxiety. Further research could investigate the factors that influence these variations, such as personality traits, cultural background, or prior language learning experiences. Understanding these individual differences can inform the development of personalized anxiety management strategies and support systems.

**Creating a Positive Learning Environment:** To enhance language acquisition, it is essential to create a positive and supportive learning environment that fosters confidence and reduces anxiety. This can be achieved through teacher training on anxiety management techniques, the implementation of inclusive classroom practices, and the promotion of a community of learners who support and encourage each other.

In conclusion, the statistical analysis and comments highlight the impact of language learning anxiety on language acquisition. By exploring the relationships between anxiety and language learning, educators and researchers can develop strategies to mitigate anxiety, create positive learning environments, and ultimately enhance language acquisition outcomes.

#### **4. Conclusion:**

This mixed methods study exploring social influences on English acquisition makes several valuable contributions aligned with the stated objectives and research questions, while supporting key tenets of pertinent theoretical frameworks.

Objective 1 aimed to identify the most salient social factors shaping acquisition across key contexts. The data and analysis clearly demonstrate the primacy of relationships, support systems, autonomy, identity investment, and low anxiety in driving outcomes. Additional influential factors include interaction quality, belonging, and motivation.

Objective 2 focused on investigating how elements like motivation and anxiety manifest across settings. The findings reveal classroom climates and teacher rapport strongly mitigate anxiety, while immersive community living enhances identity motives. Conversation clubs leverage peer bonds to encourage risk-taking.

Objective 3 centered on comparative analysis between contexts, with classrooms deemed most improvement-focused, communities better aligning with pragmatic goals, and clubs providing low-stakes practice. Integrated experiences thus optimally blend these

strengths. These results validate tenets of seminal theories like Krashen's affective filter hypothesis emphasizing classroom emotional climate, Norton's identity theory highlighting community belonging, and Swain's output hypothesis applied to club conversations.

However, limitations of the narrow sample prevent broad generalizations, indicating opportunities for expanded mixed-methods research across learner profiles and institutional types. Specifically, the role of individual differences emerged as a key theme warranting deeper investigation. Nonetheless, the study makes meaningful strides toward Objective 4 of informing impactful practices for optimizing social dimensions. Tailoring teaching materials, faculty training, abroad programming, and club facilitation to target evidence-based social supports can significantly enrich language education.

In conclusion, by centering the social facets of second language acquisition across varied learning ecologies, this research expands theoretical outlooks while generating practical implications for boosting outcomes. The results underscore the potential for educational institutions, policy makers, and teachers to consider social-emotional, interpersonal, and community factors on par with linguistic ones.

Here are a couple ways this study makes a valuable contribution based on gaps and opportunities highlighted in the literature review:

1. Comparative analysis across key learning environments: The literature often explores social influences within a siloed context like study abroad programs or classrooms. But this study's comparative analysis of the distinct social dynamics at play across formal classes, local communities, and recreational conversation clubs helps identify relative strengths and weaknesses of these settings. This provides a more comprehensive perspective on optimizing social supports.
2. Exploring individual differences: The literature acknowledges things like motivation, anxiety, and investment fluctuate based on individual learner factors. But there is a lack of research actually investigating the roots and interacting effects of attributes like personality, prior experiences, identity, etc on shaping second language acquisition trajectories. The emergence of individual differences as a theme in this study's dataset suggests an opportunity to pursue mixed methods approaches addressing this underexplored area.
3. Generating recommendations aligned to context-specific needs: Much existing literature stays at the theoretical level rather than explicitly translating findings into actionable practices. But this study works toward tailored recommendations for leveraging social connections across diverse formal institutions and informal programming based on the distinct needs highlighted in each setting. This helps advance application for tangible support structures.
4. Centering socioemotional dimensions: Historically, pedagogical development centered linguistic elements over social ones in language acquisition models. But affective, interpersonal dimensions have gained recognition as equally instrumental recently. So this study helps substantiate calls to elevate sociocontextual factors in policy and praxis through supportive empirical evidence speaking to their central role.

In these ways, the study makes strides toward addressing meaningful gaps while adding robust evidence demonstrating the integral function of social ecology.

## **Recommendations:**

Here are some practical and impactful recommendations based on the study's findings exploring social influences on language acquisition:

### **For Educational Institutions:**

1. Provide teacher training workshops focused on fostering supportive classroom climates through rapport-building, growth mindset promotion, and anxiety mitigation techniques.
2. Structure class groupings and collaborative projects to intentionally build inclusion, belonging, and cultural exchange.
3. Develop validated survey tools measuring key social constructs like motivation and self-efficacy for regular student feedback.

### **For Abroad Programs:**

1. Enhance cultural orientation curriculum explaining adaptation challenges and coping methods such as identity negotiation tactics.
2. Facilitate community networking events, buddy systems, and homestay guidelines to ease isolation concerns and encourage local connections.
3. Incorporate reflective writing, discussion groups, and advising structures to process socioemotional study abroad hurdles.

### **For Conversation Clubs:**

1. Train facilitators on scaffolding techniques tailored for peer interactions to balance gentle correction with psychological safety.
2. Design icebreakers, prompts, and activities aligning with members' interests and goals to boost perceived relevance.
3. Display explicit value statements and norms around mistake tolerance and collaboration to reduce apprehension.

### **For Educators and Policymakers:**

1. Advocate for elevated focus and funding allocations supporting relationship-centered pedagogies and programming given social context's substantial role in language attainment.
2. Pursue mixed-methods research on variability in identity negotiation, acculturation stages, and motivational drivers based on individual differences.
3. Develop frameworks, curriculum standards, and assessments capturing socioemotional benchmarks and competencies alongside linguistic ones.

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