From the Classroom to the Global Stage: Enhancing Saudi EFL Pedagogy through the Lens of Sociocultural Theory

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Abstract

This paper explores the applications of Sociocultural Theory (SCT) to English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning in Saudi Arabian higher education. Grounded in Lev Vygotsky's principles, SCT views language acquisition as a socially situated process involving interaction and collaboration. Given the cultural context of Saudi Arabia, EFL learners face unique challenges that complicate the attainment of language proficiency. Drawing on extensive personal experience in the Saudi education system, this study identifies cultural factors impeding effective language learning and proposes solutions rooted in SCT. Key concepts such as social mediation and the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) are examined in relation to their impact on second language acquisition. The paper argues that overcoming cultural barriers requires employing collaborative activities, scaffolded instruction, and culturally responsive teaching methods. By integrating interactive instructional techniques and enhancing students' exposure to English-speaking cultures, educators can boost student engagement, motivation, and proficiency. This study aims to provide practical recommendations for leveraging SCT to improve EFL outcomes for Saudi Arabian learners.

Keywords: *Sociocultural Theory (SCT), second language acquisition (SLA), English as a Foreign Language (EFL), Saudi Arabian education, Lev Vygotsky, social mediation zone of proximal development (ZPD), collaborative learning scaffolded instruction, culturally responsive, teaching language proficiency, cultural barriers, interactive instructional techniques, student engagement, language, learning motivation.*

Introduction

Sociocultural Theory (SCT) offers a paradigm through which people can view L2 acquisition (second language acquisition) as a social process that is locally situated. The Sociocultural Theory, which has its proponent, Lev Vygotsky, involves learning to happen within a cultural system through interaction and collaboration (Kilag et al., 2024). Most students in Saudi Arabia's college level are learning English as a foreign language (EFL) in college instruction. Nonetheless, gaining competence is complex because of some cultural aspects that will be discussed. I am living in Saudi Arabia, and I teach English as a foreign language. Therefore, the depictions on this paper are based on massive experience especially from personal experience. By introducing the critical ideas of SCT, people could take steps toward overcoming the challenges mentioned above and successfully help students learn foreign languages. This paper will examine how SCT, and its different aspects affect Saudi Arabian EFL learners. First, the denotations will explain what SCT is and give the context of Vygotsky's sociocultural learning theory. The explanation will be followed by discussing how these views correlate to the acquisition of second languages. One of the most essential parts of SCT is that learning happens via social mediation in the learner's development zone with help and guidance from more capable peers. The cultural norms of Saudi Arabia may prevent the creation of an environment that would allow for a deeper connection. Moreover, college education in Saudi Arabia often needs to match cultural and social premises. This paper aims to illustrate how a sociocultural approach can solve some challenges by using collaborative activities, scaffolded instruction, and culturally responsive teaching. By purposely utilizing interactive instructional techniques and increasing students' familiarity with England and the USA, their involvement, incentive, and ultimate competence might be stepped up. For this purpose, the study will recommend ways to utilize SCT better to facilitate Saudi Arabia's EFL learners.

Definition of Sociocultural Theory

Sociocultural theory (SCT) is a social process through which people gain knowledge and develop cognitively. It is mediated by culture, and people collaborate with their peers. SCT is attributed to the famous Soviet psychologist Lev Vygotsky, who pioneered the theory (Glaveanu, 2020). Vygotsky declared that learning and higher mental functions, such as thinking, are rooted in social interactions and initially occur on an interpersonal basis and then on an intrapersonal basis as skills are internalized. He rejected the argument that cognitive development is just a result of biological maturation, instead stating that environmental and cultural factors are also involved in creating thoughts and development.

The main idea Vygotsky stated is that, for every child, there is a specific "zone of proximal development" in which learning is taking place. This distinction is between the learner's independent capabilities and what they can complete with the help of and with a teacher or peer who is a more experienced person. Learning is most effective when activated in this 'zone' since it provides a scaffolding that allows learners to advance to a level higher than they could reach without assistance. Vygotsky also postulated the function of tools and signs, or cultural artifacts like language, and how they shape cognition and concept acquisition (Radford, 2021). From the sociocultural perspective, sharing, collaborative learning within the ZPD, and the role of cultural tools and signs are the main factors responsible for cognitive development and acquisition of new skills or new information. SCT asserts that the learning process should be regarded as a primarily social matter that involves discussion, instructions, and participation inside the cultural context.

Vygotsky's Views on Learning

Lev Vygotsky's theory should be considered the cornerstone of the sociocultural approach, which revolutionized the way we see cognitive processes from a social point of view. As Vygotsky puts it, the learning process is not only the gaining of knowledge by individuals but also the passing on knowledge through long-term relationships and interactions (Graham et al., 2023). They theorized that such higher mental functions are transformed and revamped by intellectual behavior, which includes verbal communication, social interaction, and participation in various symbolic systems of meaning. Vygotsky considered these devices to be tools of a cultural and historical nature that are continuously assimilated by the learner on the plane of social thinking and development into concrete thinking and behavior.

Vygotsky believed that there were two linked levels of development. The first happens on the social plane through joint participation with more capable others, and then, the skills are internalized on the inner psychological plane. Vygotsky's theory is based on the notion that learning is most effective when it takes place within a learner's "zone of proximal development," which is the learning zone where a learner cannot accomplish a task independently but can achieve it by working with others and applying peer-to-peer modeling (Hewitt, 2023). This zone stimulates learners to constantly use problem-solving abilities, which helps them develop higher cognitive functioning that could not be achieved alone. The ZPD is the stage where learning is a trigger for development. Students learn to perform several tasks independently as they internalize the knowledge and skills they were assisted to comprehend.

Furthermore, Vygotsky examined language as the critical factor, concluding that it facilitates the formation and development of thinking processes. He explained that we have developed languages because they are a social activity through which thinking reaches higher levels of intelligence (Taber, 2020). The Vygotskian opinion is that the classification of thought relates more to participation, collaboration, and language. This lens implies learning happens when learners interact with others and shape their meaning with the teacher while operating within their zone of proximal development.

Historical Perspectives

Vygotsky's contribution to the field not only pioneered but also changed the way scholars approached the field of educational psychology in the early 20th century. During this period, learning theories were behavioristic. Learning was viewed as observable behavior change through conditioning between stimuli and response (Singer, 2022). Vygotsky opposed these views by arguing that the processes of the higher mental type have social origins and by denying the idea that cognitive development is a natural phenomenon that depends on only biological maturation. He espoused a different point of view that provided an alternative to the predominant Western paradigm by emphasizing cultural, historical, and social factors in learning and development.

Vygotsky's ideas appeared in the context of the Russian Empire in the 1920s and 30s. Back then, psychologists in Russia primarily researched the link between the individual and society (Vasileva & Balyasnikova, 2019). Vygotsky and other researchers were

researching how the human mind was stimulated by the activities constructed by culture. As a result, such practice brought Vygotsky to the conclusion that the community is a factor in forming how a child thinks and perceives the world. Nevertheless, Vygotsky's unorthodox views and approaches diverged from those of Stalinists. Hence, most of his works were not published during his lifetime.

However, the impact of Vygotsky was profound, and his theory influenced other theorists. He started to gain popularity in the West when his work was translated into the 1960s. As the pioneer of the social origin of cognition, he provided the basis for developing such approaches as cultural-historical psychology, which differed from behaviorism. The social-cultural theory by Vygotsky took root as a fundamental paradigm for understanding learning and development (Tzuriel & Tzuriel, 2021). Vygotsky's historical-cultural contextualized perspective on cognitive development was a great challenge to the traditional understanding of learning and is still the cornerstone of educational thinking.

Challenges for Saudi Learners
In recent years, the application of sociocultural theory (SCT) in language education has gained significant attention for its emphasis on social interaction, cultural context, and collaborative learning. However, the integration of SCT principles in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms in Saudi Arabian higher education remains underexplored. The traditional teacher-centered approaches prevalent in the Saudi context often contrast with the learner-centered, interactive methods promoted by SCT. Furthermore, challenges such as limited teacher training, the absence of culturally relevant teaching materials, and assessment systems that prioritize rote memorization over meaningful interaction and performance create significant barriers to implementing SCT-based practices. Despite these challenges, Saudi Arabia's unique cultural and educational landscape also presents opportunities for adopting SCT to enhance EFL teaching and learning. There is a lack of comprehensive research examining how sociocultural principles can be effectively incorporated in this context, as well as the challenges and potential benefits associated with such efforts. This study seeks to address this gap by exploring the possibilities and obstacles of applying sociocultural perspectives in Saudi higher education EFL classrooms, aiming to provide insights that can improve teaching practices and language learning outcomes.

However, my extensive review of literature and my teaching experiences show that there are many researchers indicated that teaching English as a foreign language in Saudi Arabia faces many challenges. In Saudi Arabia, language anxiety poses a significant challenge to English language learning, particularly in large class settings where students may attend with negative listening attitudes (Alrabai, 2014). Alkubaidi (2014) stated that Saudi academic culture and teacher-centered methods impacted students' language proficiency. English instructors dominate the learning process, and teachers spend most of the lesson talking while students rarely participate, leading to anxiety and creating a negative environment, and students take a passive role in the learning process. Moreover, the dominant role of the instructors and the use of Arabic language in teaching English have resulted in students' reliance on inappropriate learning strategies such as memorization and rote learning. In addition, Ashraf (2018) highlighted several factors affecting English language teaching, including the influence of the mother tongue, limited exposure to English in daily life, attitudes towards teaching and learning English, the absence of contemporary EFL teaching approaches, large class sizes in EFL courses, and the challenge of establishing effective teaching environments.

Saudi EFL learners overcome some unique challenges in their quest to be proficient in English since they learn it in a foreign context and in their country's educational system. One problem is that students receive only exposure and little practice speaking English in the classroom since Arabic is the primary language in Saudi Arabia (Masri, 2019). Besides, most of the students have yet to have a chance to dive into a cultural journey abroad. This SCT's need for authentic communicative contact is a barrier to language learning.

Moreover, traditional teaching techniques in Saudi schools usually center on instructive rather than collaborative learning. According to (Aseery, 2020), the classrooms encourage rote learning, memorization, and testing rather than encouraging students to work in groups. SCT takes cognizance of the social learning aspect in the process of development. It must be pointed out that the Saudi cultural tradition of humble obedience can also be an obstacle to free and productive collaboration with teachers in the classroom because of the need to respect them.

The Saudi learners might feel that the difference between their cultural references and the target English language contexts is also an obstacle to their learning. Cultures worldwide are distinct in terms of values, behavior, and communication approach (Luppicini & Walabe, 2021). This distance is the same as a cultural gap that can be challenging without the necessary understanding. The significant obstacles students encounter while learning EFL in Saudi Arabia include insufficient usage, traditional language teaching methods, and cultural barriers, according to a sociocultural perspective.

More than the challenges discussed earlier, Saudi students also encounter language proficiency standards and less chance of being exposed to quality resources. Secondly, the English proficiency standard in some areas may be low, whereas in others, it may be high, causing a variation in language skills among students (Aizawa et al., 2020). If a person does not practice the language enough, he might experience trouble keeping pace with learning and communicating in English fluently. Secondly, sourcing quality resources, like textbooks, language learning materials, and proficient English teachers, can be challenging in some areas of Saudi Arabia. Rural areas or underprivileged regions may not have enough infrastructure, making it difficult for students to use English frequently and preventing them from improving their language skills.

In addition, technical barriers in some areas might be another factor slowing down online learning resources and platforms used for language learning that are now considered valuable tools for language acquisition. Ultimately, society's attitudes toward English learning may be a potent obstacle for some Saudi learners (Zrekat & Sobhani, 2022). Although English skills are highly appreciated in academic and professional settings, cultural habits may still support better studying of traditional subjects or perceive English as less significant.

Concept of Mediation
A fundamental idea in Vygotsky's sociocultural theory is mediation, which is related to the point that higher-level mental processes in people emerge from the internalization of cultural

tools and symbols. As Vygotsky understands them, the psychological tools encompass artifacts, including language, writing, diagrams, signs, and symbols that humans use to regulate their mental functioning (Alkhudiry, 2022). The researcher suggested that knowledge of the world is not a direct result of sensory experience but only an interface between culture and the human mind. These instruments first arise in the social plane due to the interaction, but then they are absorbed on the psychological plane as the cognition matures.

In the opinion of Vygotsky, language is one of the primary psychological means of mediating learning and development. He asserted that it opens up new forms of cognition through social interaction, while the children internalize communication to have willful control over their mental processes (Poehner et al., 2019). When users can use language to communicate and cooperate with others, they can take advantage of this socialization process, which helps them mediate their psychological development by verbalizing and working through problems. A long time has passed since language mutates from a social communication tool to a personal thinking, problem-solving, and self-regulation mechanism. Vygotsky held a private speech, or when one talks to himself, as proof speaking is the tool by which thinking is mediated during internalization.

Apart from the language, Vygotsky assumed that the other symbolic systems, such as numbers, sets of diagrams, maps, and scientific concepts, are all psychological tools that mediate the intellect (Drain, 2020). These tools are embedded within us due to their social use; we can restructure our mental structure more abstractly. In this way, mediation exemplifies Vygotsky's central idea that people can develop higher mental functions by using social tools instead of acquiring them naturally or instinctively. Mediation determines the cognitive starting point from the social environment.

Zone of Proximal Development

One of Vygotsky's most valid and influential notions is the zone of proximal development (ZPD), also known as the zone of potential growth. As Vygotsky proposes, ZPD stands for the gap in a child's ability to solve problems independently and the level of intellectual development they can achieve with an adult's help or through interaction with more experienced peers (Silalahi, 2019). This factor shows the parts that are difficult to work on alone but are more accessible with help. According to Vygotsky, the learning process is the most effective when carried out in the collaborative environment of the ZPD, which involves children's social interactions with more capable peers, allowing them to internalize new concepts and develop cognitively.

One of the aspects of the ZPD is that the learners' zone is in motion and is being revised all the time, which is based on gaining new skills. Scaffolding, by providing appropriate assistance and by modeling, promotes ZPD for each child, thereby leading him to develop new potential levels. Instruction at this level of difficulty should be aimed at the upper bounds of the zone of proximal development, according to Minor (2023). This way, students get the maximum challenge and learn effectively. The work within the ZPD entails our dynamic assessment and instruction specifically tailored to each student's ripening abilities. Vygotsky saw the tasks and lessons falling into the ZPD as an intermediate phase of the social plane to the individual plane as the learner performs independently after the ability has been fully adopted. In this way, the ZPD leads to integrative development as a shared challenge.

Role of Social Interaction

Vygotsky treats social interactions as an essential element of development and intelligence formation. The philosopher contended that consciousness of higher mental processes surfaces first on the collective level through communication and cooperation and is only later internalized on an individual level (Rubstov, 2020). Vygotsky believed that knowledge and strategies are shared through the dialogic processes and the participatory activities between learners and the people who better understand learners or their teachers. After an individual internalizes these social foundations, there is an ongoing reorganization and adaptation of their cognitive process.

According to a Vygotskian approach, social learning happens through various mediating actions like helping others, sharing skills, guiding, and modeling suitable actions. These social sources of information serve as a resource to solve the problems that learners will keep in their memory and will use later on by themselves (Hussin et al., 2019). Vygotsky understood the broader use of collaboration with more experienced members to devise new thinking instruments and expand the learners' proximal development zones. Peer interactions and group work are the best ways to learn since peers can build on each other's knowledge level.

Indeed, Vygotsky promoted that social interactions play a crucial role in shaping the interpretations, meanings, and structures of information a learner develops concerning the world (Minor, 2023). These theoretically constructed realities are the embodiment of advanced thinking techniques. However, what Vygotsky calls social interaction is the cultural and historical process of intellectual development.

Benefits of Collaboration

Collaborative learning activities are a way sociocultural theory cites in overcoming some obstacles Saudi EFL learners face. SCT highlights that knowledge is cultivated in social interactions when learners help each other form a scaffold (Chirkov, 2020). Groupwork is a platform that allows for constructive speech practice, which is often in short supply for learners when they are out of the classroom. The Jigsaw teaching method is a cooperative learning technique that enables students to take ownership of a certain topic and as a result, share their knowledge with the rest of the class (Jainal & Shahrill, 2021). Cooperating to complete tasks happens naturally when students do this, they automatically use English for authentic communicative purposes as they share ideas and solve problems together.

Furthermore, collaboration creates an environment based on mutual support where individuals can feel secure to take chances while using the language. Teamwork enables learners to experiment with sentence formulation in a low-stress environment like a class with peers, which is confidence-boosting. Students obtain individual developmental assistance every time group members who are more advanced in the learning process model target structures. They also learn social skills by cooperatively planning joint activities and resolving conflicts. Moreover, it is a form of bridging cultural gaps as students can get firsthand interaction with their classmates from varied backgrounds. Talking about cultural differences and intercommunication with people of different backgrounds will broaden your horizons (Cogburn, 2019). The principle of balanced teacher-student interaction is the main idea to be provided by such a strategy to avoid the one-way effect of strict constructivist ideas. Given the fact that the regular practice

of interactive group tasks offers plenty of chances for scaffolded learning, authentic language practice, cultural knowledge building, and the development of independent skills by being assisted by others, it is evident that the significance of such tasks can never be underestimated in the process of learning.

Significance of Scaffolding

Scaffolding instruction designed according to learners' zones of proximal development is another educational concept that stems from sociocultural theory. Vygotsky stressed that the advisory role of the instructors or more experienced peers played a vital role in the development (Bordova & Leong, 2024). Scaffolding is the temporary assistance provided to the students to help them achieve tasks beyond their capability without external help. The professor thoroughly analyzes a student's ZPD through formative assessment and the right amount of help to complete complex new tasks within this ripe zone of proximal development. Illustrations of scaffolding are modeling, prompting, giving hints or pointed questions, breaking down tasks into bite-size pieces, and highlighting critical points for learners to concentrate. When learners start to show signs of improvement, the teacher gradually reduces guidance to their level of proficiency, and eventually, they can perform the task alone. This gradual progression enables students to accumulate new information on top of their previous understanding rather than lose motivation or be overly dependent on others.

In the case of EFL, scaffolding could include strategies like Think-Alouds, when the teacher voices cognitive processes in a language-related task. The method of bridging can make the learning process more accessible by connecting new concepts to already-known ideas. With their pre-structured support, sentence starters, templates, and word banks are the best starting point for composition tasks. The co-construction process, which starts with guiding students to do complex tasks, helps them complete tasks themselves with further facilitation. Expansive multimedia like images, Venn diagrams, and movement promotes independent exploration and actual conceptual change. Proper scaffolding that matches a student's abilities ensures that the overloading of learners will be avoided, and repetition of the same task will be prevented (Tran, 2020). It takes into consideration people's preferred speeds and requirements. SCT provides Scaffolding support to supplement the learning process instead of learning by vote alone. Through specific scaffolds, proficiency in English is more prominent in the ZPD of each learner with the help of guided involvement in complex, meaningful activities.

Developing Cultural Knowledge

Becoming utterly fluent in a language that incorporates sociocultural skills and cultural knowledge about regions where the target language is used is vital. According to Vygotsky, development depends on historical accumulation, i.e., tools developed in a specific society (Burner & Svendsen, 2020). Saudi EFL learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) experience difficulties overcoming the cultural distances they are immersed in regarding their home context. Using sociocultural strategies, the instructors can shape learning activities in such a way that they can consciously increase students' cultural awareness.

Integrating multicultural subjects, stories, and cultures into collaborative activities involves this. Explaining cultural values and traditions through the texts is a good way of expanding your comprehension of cultural values (Jacobsen, 2023). Teachers can include cross-cultural comparison projects in the students' assignments to analyze similarities and dissimilarities. Videos,

digital social platforms, and cultural interviews give online learners virtual cultural immersion experiences. Lecturers can also use interactive web-based tools to facilitate students' contact with foreign discussion partners. During emails, video calls, or discussion boards, the learners transmit their ideas in English to English-speaking speakers with different origins. A way to encompass the interactions is to lend a sauce to the activities and unearth the culture of Saudi Arabia.

Hands-on experience of trips in other countries provides the best cultural training genuinely. Even the very short homestays provide students with plenty of opportunities to meet with the host and host family members (Stinimetz, 2019). Host families can show many of that place's cultural norms and traditions. Lastly, the teachers aim to adopt the idea of culturally sustaining pedagogy. Providing added texts that include various cultures is part of showing respect. By analyzing one's own assumed ideas, one can avoid projecting only a one-sided point of view. SCT understands that a solid cultural identity is a reasonable basis for acquiring language skills in the long run. Students' cultural cognitive aid of English contexts, which in turn may make distances smaller through this theoretical prism.

Applications

Collaborative learning is an effective model of knowledge building that students can acquire through social interaction, a key element of sociocultural theory. Also, teamwork, divided into tasks that need collaboration and knowledge sharing, is done together, giving the best chance for language practice (Bounken & Aslam, 2019). For instance, jigsaw activities of a complex reading, or assignment are divided into several sections, each for an individual group. Pupils are tasked with studying their sections in detail to the extent that they can teach other groups. This phenomenon then demands close listening, shared discourse, and cooperation among all group members. In addition, teachers can create project work in which students are divided into teams and work for extended periods to investigate issues, conduct experiments, or create multimedia presentations in English. The group-learning process of preparation, sharing, solving problems, and blending the contributions of group members increases the level of language development among members.

Using formative assessment methods helps teachers develop the learning pathway and appropriately support students' zones of proximal development. Pre-assessments performed at the beginning of the new unit through entry tickets, bell ringers, or online surveys are used to determine the current level of readiness (Weinlein, 2019). Students' observation in group work can demonstrate their comprehension and help uncover unresolved struggles. Conferences are an excellent tool that teachers can use after the assessments or assignments to provide targeted assistance, such as giving students the reasons for their misconceptions on a practice test item and providing further examples of the correct way to correct their misconceptions directly. Assessment of student work, too, e.g., draft compositions or lab reports, can be done in a formative way to provide feedback and help with independence.

Therefore, going beyond the texts in course materials is a learning booster that offers more authentic resources about different cultures. To make the class more interactive, teachers can create playlists of TED Talks, podcasts, or interviews for short periods on the course theme. Using scaffolding resources such as directed questions, or graphic organizers will enhance the interaction and trigger debate. Students may also be encouraged to read articles

from National Geographic or online publications about cultures. While fed with engaging content, students will be exposed to different accents, words, and expressions sensibly. Digital portfolios offer an opportunity to supplement text with media such as photos, audio recordings, or student-created videos, which enable us to see the students' skills progression over time (Stewart, 2023). A selection of trendy, multiple-modal resources inspire the learners to be consistent with their development.

Positionality

As an EFL teacher from Saudi Arabia, my role carries profound responsibility, especially when considering the integration of sociocultural perspectives into educational practices. My position as both a practitioner and a researcher places me at the forefront of pedagogical innovation, particularly in a context where cultural sensitivity and responsiveness are essential. My responsibility goes beyond delivering linguistic knowledge. As a teacher, I act as a cultural mediator, guiding students not only in acquiring language skills but also in understanding the cultural nuances and global contexts where English is used. This involves fostering an environment where students feel their cultural backgrounds are valued and respected while encouraging them to explore new perspectives.

Incorporating sociocultural theory into my teaching practices adds a layer of responsibility to ensure that my methods align with students' diverse needs, cultural identities, and learning preferences. This means actively creating learning opportunities that are collaborative, contextually meaningful, and relevant to their social and cultural realities.

Additionally, my role involves being a reflective practitioner. This requires me to continually assess and adapt my methods, considering the dynamic nature of both language acquisition and sociocultural contexts. By advocating for and modeling culturally sensitive practices, I inspire both my students and fellow educators to prioritize inclusivity and responsiveness in education. My responsibility also includes empowering my students to become active participants in their learning journeys. This involves equipping them with not just linguistic competence but also the critical thinking skills necessary to navigate and contribute to global conversations effectively.

Conclusion

This paper has explored how the sociocultural approach can support Saudi learners in acquiring English proficiency. Sociocultural theory (SCT) emphasizes that learning is deeply rooted in social interactions, cultural tools, and the presence of others in one's environment. These elements are the foundation for developing higher-order thinking. The application of SCT offers a promising framework for addressing the challenges Saudi EFL students face, particularly in overcoming competence issues and transforming traditional, teacher-centered instructional practices.

SCT views knowledge as a social phenomenon that emerges through collaboration and interaction. By working in teams and participating in group projects, students are exposed to authentic language use that they might not encounter in traditional classrooms. These collaborative efforts allow learners to stay within their Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), where they can grow by imitating and learning from one another. Such practices not only enhance language acquisition but also promote cultural awareness and mutual respect.

To support students effectively, individualized scaffolding based on their unique ZPDs is vital. This can be achieved through formative assessment, which provides ongoing feedback and highlights areas where students need further support. Rather than relying solely on cumulative scores, educators can adopt a more nuanced approach by evaluating progress through multiple perspectives. Digital student portfolios, for instance, offer a practical way to track and assess students' progress toward their goals while encouraging reflection and self-improvement.

Another key recommendation is to prioritize cultural awareness and sensitivity in teaching. Incorporating topics and materials that connect local and global contexts helps students see the relevance of English in a multicultural world. Virtual exchanges and digital media provide opportunities for students to engage with diverse cultures, sparking interest and motivation. Technology, such as simulation tools and interactive collaboration platforms, can recreate real-life scenarios and enable students to participate in global interactions. These tools are particularly effective for today's digital-native learners, who thrive in immersive and interactive environments.

Incorporating SCT principles into the classroom requires multimodal-rich materials, clear modeling of target language processes, structured scaffolding tools, and diversified evaluation methods. By creating a democratic and socially responsive learning environment, teachers can empower students to become active participants in their education. This approach not only improves language competence but also fosters critical 21st-century skills, such as self-directed learning, collaboration, and cultural adaptability.

In conclusion, sociocultural theory provides a strong foundation for transforming English language education in Saudi Arabia. By focusing on collaboration, cultural sensitivity, and personalized learning strategies, educators can help students overcome traditional constraints and develop the skills they need to succeed in a globalized world.

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