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A Sociocultural Approach in Teaching Less-Commonly-Taught Languages: A Case of Tok Pisin Instruction for Chinese Undergraduates

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Abstract: *This study explores a sociocultural approach to teaching less-commonly-taught languages (LCTLs) through a case study of Tok Pisin instruction for Chinese undergraduates at Beijing Foreign Studies University. Delivering Tok Pisin presents several challenges, including linguistic distance from Mandarin, cultural variations, and affective barriers. The facts that the students have little exposure to the language and that they learn Tok Pisin as L3 or L4 may have posed more challenges. Grounded in Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, this study employs a qualitative, practitioner research to examine how mediation and scaffolding techniques can facilitate students' learning in a low exposure language environment. Findings suggest that cross-linguistic mediation, cultural contextualisation, and structured participation mechanisms effectively bridged typological divides, enhanced motivation, and fostered intercultural awareness. The teacher worked as a collaborative mediator rather than an authoritative message sender creates a dialogic and emotionally supportive environment. This study extends the applicability of sociocultural theory to LCTL pedagogy, especially Tok Pisin education, within Chinese higher education, highlighting the importance of affective mediation and collaborative learning.*

Keywords: *Sociocultural Theory; Tok Pisin; Less-Commonly-Taught Languages*

1. Introduction

Tok Pisin is one of the official languages in Papua New Guinea (PNG) and functions as a national lingua franca. Its development and spread have shown a special process of creolisation and cultural adaptation [1][2]. This language has been delivered as elective courses open for all the undergraduates in Beijing Foreign Studies University (BFSU) since 2022, but delivering the course to Chinese undergraduates faces linguistic and socio-cultural challenges.

Unlike English or other languages that the students get familiar with from their studies, Tok Pisin is less known. It comes from a country that boasts a huge cultural diversity, and it has a structure fundamentally different from the students' mother tongue Mandarin. The students usually come to this elective course with little knowledge of the language and the target cultures, only learning it as their third or even fourth language for credits. It's more challenging considering that Tok Pisin is under-resourced, lacking easily accessible audio-visual materials. Furthermore, the classroom culture of tending not to speak up in fear of mistakes could contribute to students' potential silence to in-class questions. These cultural, linguistic and affective challenge has confronted the Tok Pisin teacher at BFSU, making the task of teaching go beyond enforced single-way knowledge delivery.

The Sociocultural Theory (SCT) offers an effective approach to addressing the challenges. It suggests that mental activities such as language acquisition are not individual acts but socially constructed [3][4]. The theory highlights interactive collaborations between teachers and students to guide to a better learning result. There is a Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) between a learner's capability and the individual growth he or she can achieve with others' support[5]. The teacher provides fair, context-based scaffolding to mediate students' learning and assist students to develop skills and grasp certain concepts.

This article, grounded in the sociocultural approach, presents a practitioner study that examines the efficacy of mediation for Tok Pisin teaching in this special context. It seeks to answer how sociocultural mediation and scaffolding strategies can enhance Tok Pisin learning outcomes among Chinese undergraduates in a low-exposure context. The analysis is based on observations from the most recent semester-long elective course involving 19 beginner Chinese undergraduates at BFSU. It will depict a practical theoretical framework based on the key concepts of mediation and scaffolding, expanding it

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also to the reciprocal relationship between students and teacher[6]. Next, it will map out the specific linguistic, cultural and affective challenges in this context, with the following section then presenting the application of mediation strategies in the class. The goal of the study is to share the practices of teaching Tok Pisin in the special context of a Chinese university, and to discuss the implications for developing better course for Tok Pisin.

2. Theoretical Framework

The SCT considers learning activity as a social process mediated by material and symbolic means until development is achieved by the individual[3][4]. This theory provides strong support to delivering Tok Pisin course to the Chinese undergraduates, because it goes beyond monodirectional teacher-student transfer and individual focus to promote an interactive, context-based model that helps bridge over linguistic, cultural and affective gaps. There are three fundamental interconnected concepts: mediation for the learning mechanism, scaffolding for the practice that assist mediated language acquisition, and a dialogic teacher-students relationship of collaboration. All can be organised within the idea of the ZPD.

The ZPD is a supposed development gap between the actual development level defined by the individual capability and the potential level that the individual is expected to achieve with guidance from an "expert'. The expert can be teacher but also peers[3][5]. The ZPD requires the "expert" and the learner to negotiate and collaborate to encourage cognitive development. Lacking such common understanding would impede the construction of the zone and development will not proceed[4]. From this perspective, teachers apply socially mediated strategies to enact a ZPD and provide guidance. Without a definite route for language acquisition during a ZPD, teachers observe and address any emerging learning needs. Developmental progress then can be achieved above the level that the students could have reached without the "expert'. Sometimes, within this framework, teachers can provide support and immediate, "just-in-time assistance" to help the students get specific development[4].

Underlying the ZPD is the fundamental concept of mediation, the basics for people to interact with the world. According to Vygotsky, such cognitive processes are shaped by socially and culturally constructed mediational means rather than directly formed[3]. In language acquisition process, there are material means such as textbooks, dictionaries and audio-visual materials, linguistic means such as learner's first language and cross-linguistic connections, as well as social interactions with teacher or other proficient speakers. For Tok Pisin learners, cross-linguistic and cultural mediations are involved to bridge gaps between the strange and the familiar elements. For example, Tok Pisin vocabulary connection with English can be mediated through comparisons, and traditional numeral patterns such and *wanpela ten wan* can be comprehended by comparing it with the numeral system in Chinese. Furthermore, cultural mediation is important for making sense of linguistic expressions, such as the term *wantok* needs to be explained with the cultural values of kinship and community in Melanesian societies[1].

Scaffolding is closely related to mediation and the ZPD in terms of implementation. Wood et al., when first mentioned the concept, suggested scaffolding as the process of implementing mediational strategies that support the learners to solve problems or achieve tasks that could be beyond their individual efforts[7]. Assistance is offered to help address needs and is gradually withdrawn when the learner becomes competent and ensures self-regulation[4]. In this context, scaffolding involves pre-planned sequencing of tasks and contents from simple to challenging, to encourage further development. It also includes the design of participatory mechanisms like turn-taking that provides a safe and predictable zone for students to interact.

Though a powerful teaching tool, scaffolding is not necessarily given by the teacher. Students can also carry out effective scaffolding among themselves when they scaffold each other[8]. In this sense, students' communications during the class may be attempts to scaffold to an appropriate expression rather than distractive noises. For the Tok Pisin students, in-class conversations are observed and allowed, so they are encouraged to assist one another in face of challenging tasks.

The interrelation of mediation and scaffolding within the ZPD leads to a dialogic, fluid teacher-student relationship that forms the third element in the framework which highlights the bidirectional loop between the expert and learner. As the teacher assist development, the students' performances also give continuous feedback that would scaffold the teacher's understanding of students' level and make decisions about what to assist next. In this interactive teacher-student loop, adjustable support can be ensured to meet the students' actual needs based on observations of their puzzles, errors and successes. The teacher works as a reflexive mediator, and the classroom is transformed into a collaborative space where teaching and learning support each other to effectively accomplish the ZPD[5].

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This integrated framework provides the theoretical foundation for the strategies applied in the BFSU Tok Pisin classroom. It manifests the synergy of mediation and scaffolding within the ZPD to address the contextual challenges, while the dialogic relationship ensures the support is attuned to emerging needs.

3. Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative practitioner research design to examine how sociocultural mediation and scaffolding strategies can enhance the learning effect of Tok Pisin in a low-exposure university context. The research was set in an undergraduate elective course at BFSU, where the teacher was also the researcher. This practitioner-based research allowed continuous reflections on practices and adjustment of teaching strategies to adapt to emerging pedagogical needs.

The Tok Pisin course for the research ran for one semester with 19 undergraduate students, all of whom had English skills. The majority, 12 out of 19 students, had non-English foreign language majors, other 4 students majored in English or English translation. The rest 3 students did not major in languages. Tok Pisin represented a new linguistic system for all the participants, and they knew little about the Pacific island region.

The data for this study were drawn from teacher journals and classroom video recordings. The journals documented the teacher's insights, observations and reflections, while the videos allowed the teacher to review the classroom. Analyses were conducted with a reflective cycle of reviewing, reflecting and action[9]. They provided a hint of how teaching strategies were developed, implemented and adjusted.

4. Contextual Challenges

The attempt to teach Tok Pisin faces contextual challenges that cannot simply be solved by acquisition of vocabulary or grammar rules. These challenges are rooted in the linguistic divergence between Chinese Mandarin and Tok Pisin, the varied nature of students' multilingualism, and affective and social-cultural learning attitudes.

4.1. Linguistic Challenges

The most seemingly apparent challenge comes from the typological differences between the Sino-Tibetan language, Mandarin, and the English-lexified creole, Tok Pisin. Mandarin is basically an isolating language that relies largely on word order to convey grammatical relations. Though Tok Pisin is also analytic, it shows distinct morphological and functional features unfamiliar to Mandarin speakers[2][10]. A typical example is the use of the predicate marker *i*, which precedes the verb under certain conditions, usually with third-person subjects[10]. For example, in the sentence *Em i kaikai pis* (He/She eats the fish), the *i* signals the coming of the predicate. The grammatical concept does not have a direct equivalent in Mandarin syntax, and it often requires explicit explanation for learners[10].

Previous studies have highlighted these Tok Pisin features, emphasising that Tok Pisin has developed special functional markers and particles different from its superstrate and the creole continuum[11]. For learner whose L1 lacks morphological markers, such features thus often form gaps that should be bridged thorugh cross-linguistic scaffolding strategies to link new forms to known linguistic concepts[11]. To address this challenge, the teacher did not only throw out new concepts but rather adopted etymology and related exercise to help understand the new structures and their forms and meanings.

4.2. Multilingual Interference

Closely related to the typological differences is the students' multilingual background. For these students at the BFSU, Tok Pisin is not a second but a third or even fourth language, acquired after Mandarin (L1) and English (L2), and sometimes another foreign language that they are majoring in. This multilingualism leads to a complex cross-linguistic situation where the L1, L2 and other language can act as both facilitators and interferences[12]. De Angelis describes this process as a holistic interaction of different language systems in the learner's mind[13] . The English-derived lexicon of Tok Pisin manifests the phenomenon. While the etymology of many Tok Pisin words such as *pis* (fish) or *pik* (pig) might initially give the students a sense of relief, it could lead to overgeneralisation. The students might assume that English-derived words keep their original meanings or grammatical functions, which eventually becomes a hurdle to understanding Tok Pisin. Thus, the teacher should carefully mediate the students'

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English knowledge where it is beneficial but also highlighting divergence to prevent misunderstanding.

Furthermore, other languages may also interfere as interlingual homographs. For instance, students from French major might have to struggle with the pronunciation and meaning of *tu* ("too" in Tok Pisin and "you" in French), while the students with English knowledge take *i* so easily as "I", especially when it appears in capital letter at the beginning of a sentence. However, these interferences may not necessarily be negative. In all, the pedagogical approach should therefore be multilingual, acknowledging the students' linguistic background to facilitate learning rather than regarding it as an obstacle.

4.3. Affective and Cultural Challenges

Finally, and perhaps most essentially, are the effective, social-cultural barriers in the context. The traditional education in China has been influenced by Confucianism which highlights a culture that respect the teacher as an authority and the knowledge is mainly transferred, and students are less likely to challenge the authority in the classroom. A common outcome of this tradition is that Chinese students may feel reluctant to speak up in class or even raise questions[14]. Study has also shown that emotion could impede rather than advance learning[4] – this explains students' potential silence in fear of making mistakes and then lose face in the class. The emotion of shame attached to mistakes added to anxiety and threatened the students from voluntary responses.

This reluctance is a significant affective barrier to language acquisition, which requires attempts, lessons from error-making, and communication. Though the students at the BFSU are in large not strange with language learning, it does not fundamentally change their behaviour which was cultivated before the university, not to mention some students do not major in a foreign language program. Thus, teaching attempts that simply rely on voluntary, impromptu responses would probably face silence and anxiety, failing to fulfil the teaching targets. A workable approach must consider the socio-cultural norms and create a classroom environment that regards errors as valuable parts in learning and provides structured safe zones for participation.

The other affective barrier exists initially when Tok Pisin, as a young elective and less-commonly-taught course, is thought to have little immediate instrumental value. The students have little exposure to the language's linguistic and cultural environment, and their studies have little to do with the Pacific. There is no established pathway to future academic study, professional development or social use, so the students may find little tangible outcome or source of economic achievement from the learning process. Research in language acquisition has shown that perceived instrumental value influences the investment and efforts learners put in the learning[15]. The students may come to Tok Pisin only to meet curricular requirement rather than achieve cognitive development, thereby showing less motivation in participation. To address this challenge, the teacher must explicitly demonstrate the language's cultural and cognitive values beyond mere instrumental value to stimulate learners' interest.

5. Practitional Application

5.1. Linguistic Mediation

The primary approach to scaffold typological gaps was to build conceptual bridges that use the students' existing knowledge as a foundation for acquiring new concepts. Instead of isolating the linguistic features of Tok Pisin, the teacher used their language repertoire to connect with Tok Pisin structure, in this way demystifying the unfamiliar elements in Tok Pisin.

One of the special structures in Tok Pisin were serial verb constructions. In Tok Pisin, verbs like go and come could be chained together with transfer verbs to express direction[16], as in *Em i karim bek i kam* (He / She carries a bag coming here). Verb serialisation is less common in European languages. For Mandarin speakers, mediational strategy to help them understand this phenomenon started with the similar directional complements like "bring-come" and "take-go".

The other similar serial verb construction in Tok Pisin was for tense markers, as in *Em i wok i stap* (He/She is working) and *Em i wok pinis* (He has finished working)[16]. This was compared to Mandarin tense forms to assist the students. Mandarin has similar structure that indicate tense by a complement without change the verbal forms, such as "work finish" and "in work", though the grammatical ideas were different – the Mandarin does not necessarily use verb chains for this purpose. These comparative analyses and translation practice thus enabled the students to understand the new grammatical concept of verb serialisation in Tok Pisin through something familiar yet keeping in mind the different

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characteristics.

Scaffolding through cross-lingual bridges was provided in numerals as well. Tok Pisin's traditional numeral system adopts a logical pattern that shares similarity with Mandarin. For example, *tupela ten wan* (twenty-one) has a structure similar to Mandarin number 21 (literally reads as "two-ten-one"). The teacher drew upon this connection to facilitate acquisition, creating visual aids comparing corresponding components and training the students until they could give instant number translation. The students played well with this similar structure across languages while still acknowledging the difference in forms.

Considering the students' multilingual background, they were invited to compare Tok Pisin numbers with the numbers in their L2 or L3. While languages like Tamil demonstrated a close numeral system as English as combining the base number with the unit number, there were languages like French that presented unique numerals, such as *quatre-vingt-huit* (literally "four-twenty-eight', eighty-eight). This comparative and communicative approach allowed students to appreciate the closer connection between traditional Tok Pisin and Chinese numerals. Meanwhile, the students were involved to mediate the lesson and, in this way, co-constructed the learning process.

Nating was another example in mediation. Though derived from English word "nothing", this Tok Pisin element functions way beyond this literal meaning as a special semantic modifier – it is usually attached to a verb or noun to indicate lack of purpose and futility, such as in *sindaun nating* (sit with absent mind, just sitting), *bun nating* (extremely thin) or *kaikai nating* (just eating / tasteless food)[10]. There is no equivalent in Mandarin, so students were challenged with both the grammatical function and cultural connotation.

Recognising the students' English knowledge, the teacher began with the literal meaning of *nating* but quickly introduced examples with extended connotations. Students invited to guess the meanings often fell into direct translation, for example, to understand *kaikai nating* as "eat nothing", or failed to make sense of the expression, such as in *sindaun nating* where "sit nothing" clearly did not fit. Scaffolding was then offered to address this false understanding or inconsistency in meaning. The teacher illustrated the special function of *nating* and provided contextualised examples for students to examine. Cross-lingual bridge was also discussed to find similar meanings in other languages to help understand the logic of *nating*. For instance, the meaning of *bun nating* as extremely thin came from the metaphor that "except skeleton, there is nothing", a description widely used as in the Chinese idioms meaning "skin and bones" and "thin as lath, skeletal". In this way, the students were scaffolded to develop a proper understanding from concrete usage to abstract logic underlying *nating*. The essence of these mediational strategies was to provide cognitive support that facilitated the students' cross-linguistic comprehension of seemingly strange Tok Pisin elements.

5.2. Cultural and Affective Mediation

Beyond linguistic challenges, the course faced significant affective barriers rooted in the students' attitude toward Tok Pisin and the socially embedded learning culture. The primary effort to enhance motivation was to highlight the course's relevance through socio-cultural mediation, which involved stimuli to promote student engagement by emphasising the cultural significance of Tok Pisin and PNG. The teacher intentionally introduced the diverse cultures of PNG and the wider Pacific region, while also drawing attention to often-overlooked historical and contemporary ties between China and PNG. These included the early migrations of Austronesian peoples, the presence of the Chinese diaspora in PNG, and recent cooperations in domains such as infrastructure development, mining and agriculture. Also, it was discussed that a growing number of PNG people were studying and working in China. In this socio-cultural context, Tok Pisin is not merely an elective item, but a key to understanding the connections and to possible future communication.

Efforts were also made to implement a structured turn-taking mechanism as a specific mediational strategy to address affective barrier. Instead of voluntary participation which usually involved few most proactive students in the Chinese classroom culture, every student had predictable opportunities to contribute to the Tok Pisin class. Speaking up in the public then became a regular chance of practice. The students could predict their turn and prepare their responses with less anxiety, being assured that the classroom culture was supportive. Gradually, the approach would involve more peer comments and voluntary participation to avoid students' exclusive attention on their own exercise.

In this strategy, mistake normalisation was significant. From the beginning of the course, mistakes were structured as an intrinsic part of learning and a valuable path to knowledge acquisition. Students were encouraged to participate, being assured not to be teased for any mistakes; rather, the mistakes

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would be analysed and help all learners to improve. The teacher also used her own experience to reason this approach, in which her struggles, such as saying *as bilong mi* (my ass) to the classmates when trying to say *asples bilong mi* (my hometown), were shared with the students as indications of learning through mistakes. Perhaps more significantly, this storytelling served to create an environment where the teacher was not regarded as a perfect authority, but an expert collaborator with whom they might felt more relaxed in acknowledging the uncertainties and raising questions.

Indeed, this pedagogical approach adjusted the authoritative teacher into a collaborative role and hereby altered the traditional teacher-centred dynamic. Students were encouraged to spot mistakes that the teacher made. There were occasions when the students pointed out errors in spelling or expressions in the exercise, and they became more comfortable raising questions in the class or during the break, which in turn helped improve the whole course design. The collaborative dynamic was also formed through student-student scaffoldings. The students assisted each other in the practice, with the more expert ones providing and the other adjusting the Tok Pisin expressions in their discussion. For example:

A: What is "sweet potato" in Tok Pisin?

B: I think it's *kaukau*.

A: Right. Then "He wants to have sweet potato" would be *Em i laikim kaukau*, I guess?

B: I don't think so. *Laikim* mean "like'. I think it should be *laik kaikai*.

A: Oh, that's it! *Em i laik kaikai kaukau*)

The peers co-constructed the knowledge during their own discussions as the more experienced scaffolded the other, and scaffolding withdrew when they internalised the knowledge.

5.3. Dialogic Mediation

The reconstructed role of the teacher as a collaborator reshaped the Tok Pisin course dynamic where the students' performance and reactions kept scaffolding the teacher's mediation. In the pedagogical bidirectional, dialogic zone, the teacher received both linguistic and emotional scaffoldings.

Persistent errors assisted in the teacher's understanding of the learning performance. While some grammatical concepts were assumed as rather straightforward and easy to internalise for the students, and students might initially remain silent over their weakness, persistent errors in the related exercises revealed the learning challenge and led to adjustments to instructions and learning activities. For example, the predicate marker i was considered a straightforward grammatical pattern for the students, but constant missing or mis-attachment to pronouns like mi indicated that the students had not internalised the concept. The teacher thus adopted more exercises to better assist their acquisition.

Silence and facial expressions also helped constructed the teaching mediation in this sense. Not only errors, but the student's silence in activities or puzzled faces also hinted an unfinished internalizing process that needed the teacher's in-time assistance. For example, in a task to read aloud the text *Yumi gat traim long tu kilok*, a third-year student from French major, got stuck in the middle, remained silent and seemed puzzled for a while. Noticing this, the teacher cut in to scaffold with the pronunciation, and it was learned that he was influenced by the pronunciations and even the meaning of long and tu in French, as he quickly explained after the sentence. With more sentences following this, he was able to express these properly in the later classes.

The students also scaffolded the teacher emotionally. Their eye contact and interactions with the teacher helped co-constructed a socially embedded identity of a responsible and capable instructor, thus motivating the teacher to continue in caring for and being more responsive to students' needs, leading to a more effective learning context[4].

6. Discussion

The findings from this practitioner research demonstrate that sociocultural mediation through structured scaffolding strategies can effectively address the linguistic, cultural, and affective challenges in teaching Tok Pisin to Chinese undergraduates. Drawing on Vygotsky's sociocultural concept, the study confirms that language learning is not an isolated individual activity but a socially mediated process that relies on interactive collaboration from teachers and peers[3]. The implementation of cross-linguistic comparisons, cultural contextualization, and structured participation mechanisms facilitated students'

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comprehension and engagement, allowing them to overcome typological unfamiliarity and classroom anxiety. These outcomes support the view that mediation in the form of both cognitive and affective scaffolding can bridge the gaps caused by limited exposure and resource constraints.

In this study, the teacher's mediation was carried out not only through explicit linguistic explanations but also through the creation of a supportive and dialogic learning environment. This confirms that scaffolding is not merely a temporary aid but an evolving interaction that transforms the classroom into a collaborative ZPD. Moreover, the emotions embedded in the classroom interaction supported the affective theory, which is an extended dimension of sociocultural theory and has been underexplored in existing literature. The students' willingness to participate, their reduced anxiety, and the normalization of mistakes illustrate how affective scaffolding can play an equally critical role as cognitive support in achieving effective learning.

Compared with previous research on scaffolding in second language acquisition, this study extends the application of sociocultural theory to a low-exposure environment and LCTL. It highlights the necessity of cultural and emotional mediation in contexts where learners lack authentic exposure and instrumental motivation. The use of cross-linguistic mediation between Mandarin, English, Tok Pisin, and even a L4 also expands the theoretical understanding of multilingual scaffolding, showing that learners' existing language systems can serve as valuable cognitive resources rather than sources of interference when properly guided. This supports De Angelis's argument that multilingual learners possess interconnected linguistic repertoires that can be leveraged for new language acquisition[13].

For pedagogy, this research suggests that sociocultural mediation offers a practical framework for teachers delivering LCTLs in Chinese universities. Cross-linguistic scaffolding can be deliberately embedded in course design, linking students' linguistic backgrounds to new target structures to facilitate comprehension. Similarly, structured turn-taking and mistake normalization mechanisms can help reshape traditional teacher-centred classroom culture into a dialogic and psychologically safe space. The teacher's transformation from an authoritative knowledge transmitter to a collaborative mediator not only enhances learner autonomy but also nurtures an inclusive classroom culture where uncertainty and error are accepted as integral to learning. This approach may also provide reference models for the pedagogy of other under-resourced languages in higher education, where limited exposure and affective resistance commonly hinder learning progress.

This study also enriches sociocultural theory by highlighting the inter-relations between cognitive, cultural, and affective mediation. It suggests that the ZPD should be viewed not only as a cognitive developmental zone but also as an affective and intercultural space where emotions, identities, and values are co-constructed. The teacher's reflections and adaptive responses based on students' facial expressions, silence, and participation further illustrate the dynamic feedback loop between teacher and learners. This bidirectional process, in which students also scaffold the teacher's mediation, exemplifies the fluid and reflexive nature of the ZPD in a multicultural classroom.

Nevertheless, several limitations should be acknowledged. The study was conducted within a single institution with a small number of participants, and its findings are primarily based on qualitative classroom observations. Therefore, the results may not be generalisable to other contexts without adaptation. In addition, the short duration of the course restricts the ability to examine long-term effects of the scaffolding strategies on students' language acquisition or intercultural competence. Future research could adopt mixed-method or longitudinal designs to explore how sustained sociocultural mediation influences learners' cognitive and affective development over time. Comparative studies across institutions or involving digital-mediated scaffolding tools may also provide valuable insights into the adaptability of this pedagogical model in other LCTL contexts.

7. Conclusions

Delivering the Tok Pisin course to BFSU undergraduates faces intertwined linguistic, cultural, and affective challenges due to the language's distance, limited exposure, and students' multilingual backgrounds. Grounded in Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, this study applied mediation and scaffolding techniques to transform a traditional teacher-centred class into a collaborative learning environment. Strategies such as cross-linguistic connection, cultural contextualization, and structured participation proved effective in bridging typological gaps, reducing anxiety, and fostering intercultural understanding. The findings suggest that sociocultural mediation can enhance both cognitive and emotional engagement even in low-resource contexts. This research contributes to the emerging field of Tok Pisin pedagogy in China and illustrates the adaptability of the sociocultural approach to less-commonly-taught languages.

ISSN 2663-8169 Vol. 7, Issue 12: 44-51, DOI: 10.25236/IJNDE.2025.071207

Future efforts may focus on longitudinal studies, digital mediation, and institutional cooperation to further develop Tok Pisin teaching and extend sociocultural pedagogy to broader multilingual education.

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