

## **Learning08: Methodologies and Practices for Approaching Learning as a Social Phenomenon Inside and Outside of School**

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### **Cognitive-social debate in second language acquisition from learner's perspective**

In the past couple of decades Sociocultural theory of SLA and its implications in EFL contexts have attracted attentions of research circles worldwide and aroused some controversies. Firth and Wagner (1997) have questioned the principles of the cognitive view which gives importance to mental constructs in favor of sociocultural view which highlights social and contextual constructs. But if sociocultural view considers social-contextual factors as important as individual-cognitive factors, what will the learners own perspective be in this respect? How do learners look at language, as a social phenomenon or cognitive one? In this study we explore learners' attitudes towards the language as a cognitive-individual or social-contextual phenomenon and the way their learning is affected differentially by the two perspectives in language teaching. To this end, a questionnaire was administered to 120 male high school students in one of the rural schools of Zanjan, Iran, who apart from their school classes, optionally participated in an out-of-school class after regular school hours. It should be noted that in school setting learners were involved mostly in cognitive activities like any other learning discipline in school, whereas in out-of-school situation they looked at learning as a kind of social activity, being taught by the same teacher and following the same syllabus. The interpretation of data suggests that as the nature of these two classes are different, learner's perspective towards the learning English was different too. In the first class students looked at language as a means to fulfill their educational purposes like success in universities entrance exam, whereas in the other class they were trying to be socialized, being able to communicate with some Japanese engineers working in their village. My findings show that the difference in learner's perspective can affect the way of their language learning.