Sociocultural Theory of Vygotsky

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Goals

- To understand Vygotsky's views of development

- Techniques and approaches that foster the application of Vygotsky's theories

Vygotsky

- 1930's

- Doubts about Piaget's theories as an answer to wide variations in the competencies of children

- Vygotsky – interactions between adults and successful peers with children are powerful sources of children's learning

Vygotsky

- Born with basic perceptual, attentional and memory capacities
  - Distinguish objects and people in environment
  - These entities continue to exist even when out of sight
  - Develop awareness of categories

- **B**asic perceptual, attentional and memory capacities
  - Lead to mental representation and efficient thinking

  - Become skilled at imitating others

Importance of Language

- Biologically set stage for language
  - Develops extremely fast after age 1
  - Skilled conversationalists by age 2 to 3

  - Mastered most grammar by age 6
  - Vocabularies of 10,000 words by age 6

Importance of Language

- Language allows children to represent objects and events with symbols
- Development switches from biology to:
  - Strong contacts with surrounding social context
  - Merges with social context
  - Is transformed by social context

Importance of Language

- Language is the major bridge between our social and mental worlds

- Language is the most significant milestone in children's cognitive development

- It is the means for communicating with others and representing our experiences

Social Interaction

- Higher forms of thinking first appear in social communication between the child and representatives of the culture

- Later appears within the child as an individual capacity or skill

Social Interaction

- All uniquely human, higher forms of thinking:
    - Controlled attention to tasks
    - Memory strategies
    - Reflections on experiences and ideas
    - Techniques for solving problems
    - Imagination
- Deeply affected by social experiences

Social Interaction

- Active engagement on part of both adult/more capable peer and child resulting in "meeting of the minds" is central to the process

Social Interaction

- Children bring to social situations
  - assumptions
  - purposes that grow out of their history in social experiences

Social Interaction

- They try to understand the **learning task** presented by the adult

- AND try to make sense of the **social relationship** in which the task is presented

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Social Interaction

- Teachers need to adjust classroom learning experiences
    - to acknowledge the past experiences of children
    - make productive use of the social histories of children

Social Learning

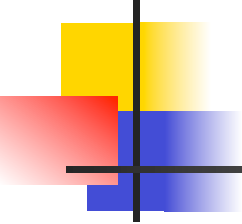- All children in all **cultures do not** face identical social tasks

Social Engagement

- Children learn and practice thinking by taking part in purposeful activities organized by their cultural community.

Social Engagement

as stimulus for cognitive development

Photo: Tero Pajukallio

- Social experience stimulates children's learning through **guided participation.**

- Guided participation involves **language exchange**

- Teacher's who foster meaningful collaboration

- Teachers who require solitary desk work

Compare the learning environment
Which assists higher level thinking? Why?
Which allows for cultural adjustment?

The Language Link

- **Language** is the critical **link** between

- social and
  - psychological functioning

The Language Link

- The purpose of speech is
  - **Communication**
  - **Social contact**
  - **Influencing surrounding individuals**

The Language Link

- Speech is a tool of the mind

- It allows for **higher level thinking**
- Results from stimulation and connections from inside and outside the individual

Zone of Proxymal Development

- Education **LEADS** development - Vygotsky

- Look at what children can do:
  - with the **help of others**
  - therefore, have the **potential** to learn

Zone of Proxymal Development

- ZPD is the "distance between:

  - **actual** developmental level when they solve problems by themselves

  - the level of **potential** development as determined through problem solving under **adult guidance** or in **collaboration** with more capable peers.

Zone of Proxymal Development

- **With help**, children can perform tasks beyond what they can perform **alone**

Zone of Proxymal Development

- **The role of education is**
  - to provide children with experiences that challenge them but
  - can be accomplished with sensitive adult guidance

Zone of Proxymal Development

- **The role of the teacher** is to keep tasks in children's…

- **Z**one of **P**roxymal **D**evelopment - **slightly above their level of independent functioning**

Scaffolding

- Has been shown to **assist all aspects of learning** and to increase **children's performance on a wide variety of tasks**

Scaffolding

- **Joint problem solving**

    Two participants who begin a task with a different understanding arrive at a **shared understanding** – a common ground for communications

Scaffolding

- **Warmth and responsiveness** – child leads and adult follows

- Keeping the child in the **Zone of Proxymal Development**

Scaffolding

- Promotes **<u>self-regulation</u>** – adult gives up control

Photo: Tero Pajukallio

Children's Private Speech

- Children's **self talk** is different from **social speech**

- **Private speech** is communication with the self to self-regulate or guide thought processes and actions

Children's Private Speech

- 2 – 3 years
  - Acquiring speech
  - Social and self-talk mix to get help
- Children age 3 – 10 use private speech 20 – 60% of the time
  - Private speech helps us deal with cognitive, emotional and social challenges
  - It grows from successful experiences in our ZPD
- By end of elementary school, 20 – 30% remain "private speech problem solvers"

Children's Private Speech

- Most social children use more private speech
  - Cutting children off from social opportunities, cuts down on private speech (guidance and learning) and social interaction
  - ZPD is diminished

Children's Private Speech

- Children who use more private speech:
  - Are more successful workers
  - Have had more positive ZPD interactions
  - Adults who are less controlling
    - Warm, sensitive and patient
    - Reasonable
    - Helpful assistance
  - More successful problem solvers
  - Master emotions more easily

Children's Private Speech

- The weaving of voices from the social world ensures transmission of:
  - Values
  - Strategies
  - Skills

Photo: Tero Pajukallio

From one generation to another

Children's Private Speech

- Each child's private speech is unique
  - Child's own active contribution
  - Verbal input of others

  To suit the individual needs of each child.

Children's Private Speech

- Private speech leads to the ability to regulate himself
  - Guide own thoughts
  - Guide own behavior

Children's Private Speech

- Often noticed as a "delay in responding"
  - Discuss alternatives with self
  - Formulate plans
  - Use information to guide action

- Piaget called it "egocentric" and immature – NOT SO – originates in social interaction

Children's Private Speech

- Begins as elaborate "self-talk"
- Becomes more "self-regulating"
  - Overcome impulsive actions
  - Assume conscious control over thoughts and actions
- Ends as simple, shortened "inner speech"

Children's Private Speech

- Later becomes quiet, self talk when working
- Eventually becomes "inner speech"

Children's Private Speech

- Children with learning challenges will use private speech at older ages for problems solving sue to the need for cognitive support

Children's Private Speech

- It then becomes **<u>verbal thinking</u>** and guides the person into **<u>reasoning within themselves</u>**

Children's Private Speech

- **Scaffolding** fosters private speech and self-regulation through the **modeling supplied during the teacher/child interaction**