Social Development Theory

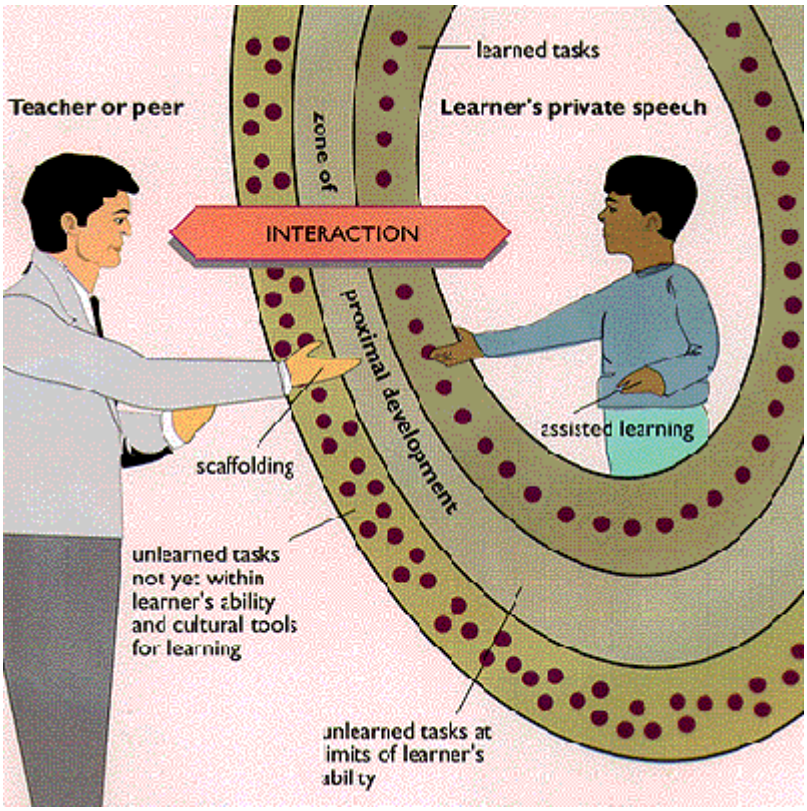
General

Social development theory was introduced in 1920s and 1930s by Lev Vygotsky. This theory, sometimes also called cultural-history theory gives a **framework for cognitive development** in children and argues that the **key role in cognition development** lies in **social interactions**. In his own words,

- "*every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first, between people (interpsychological) and then inside the child (intrapsychological). This applies equally to voluntary attention, to logical memory, and to the formation of concepts. All the higher functions originate as actual relationships between individuals*"[1].

What is social development theory?

Vygotsky's initial ideas on education and learning were influenced by Ivan Pavlov and behaviorist stimulus-response learning, yet these ideas later changed resulting in his social development theory. theory addresses three main themes[2]:



- **Social interaction** - which according to Vygotsky together with language and culture plays a **crucial role in the process of cognitive development**. Opposed to later Jean Piaget's stage theory of cognitive development where development precedes learning, Vygotsky believed that learning precedes development. Social interaction means that a more competent member of

the culture will *externalize* learned processes which will then be *internalized* and thereby learned by a less competent member.
- **The More Knowledgeable Other** (MKO) - a term that addresses a **person** (typically teacher or instructor, but others as well) or a machine that, when compared to the learner, has **more knowledge and skills related to a particular task**, process or concept. This person can help a child to learn new concepts and tasks, but only as long as those tasks and concepts don't exceed the zone of proximal development.
- **The Zone of Proximal Development** (ZPD) - a term to describe the *zone* **between** learners ability to **complete a task with guidance** or collaboration and ability to **solve it alone**. The ZPD is where learning occurs. Motivation for introduction of ZPD lies in observation that children could often accomplish tasks with the help of others that they could not accomplish alone. The **zone of proximal development** is the difference **between a child's current level of development and his or her potential level of development**, where full cognitive development is achieved through social interaction. According to Vygotsky, two children may be at the same level of actual development, but given the appropriate help from an adult, one might be able to solve many more problems than the other. This kind of performance was to Vygotsky much more important than performance of a child alone, like the one measured by intelligence tests.

Vygotsky believed that speech and writing are tools developed from the culture in order to mediate social environment. These tools first help children to communicate their needs and later to develop higher order thinking skills. Egocentric speech[3)] was according to Vygotsky a transition from social speech to internalized thoughts.

What is the practical meaning of social development theory?

First implication of Vygotsky's theory comes from the emphasized **importance of social interaction**. In accordance with that, **interaction**, collaboration and peer instruction between learners should be **encouraged** during the educational process, since it will enhance learning. Teacher should also collaborate with the learners and help them construct meaning and he should also try to encourage externalization:

- “*the teacher, working with the school child on a given question, explains, informs, inquires, corrects, and forces the child himself to explain.*”[4)]

The teacher or any higher-level partner in the educational process should always be aware of the development level of his partner.

Another effective form of teaching is ***scaffolding*** - providing learner with **help** when and as much **as needed**.

Criticisms

Criticisms of Vygotsky's theory usually emphasize that:

- it doesn't take into consideration **gender differences**,
- underestimates abilities of an individual,

- valuing performance children accomplish together may result in children **becoming lazy** and expecting help even when they can accomplish something on their own.[5)]

Keywords and most important names

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1)

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2)

Social Development Theory (Vygotsky) at Learning Theories.

3)

"*Egocentric speech is a form of speech that is observed typically in young children and involves them using speech without addressing anyone in particular. In the following article we shall learn more about egocentric speech and its many components.*" Source: Buzzle.com.

4)

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