Sociocultural Perspectives on Language Learning

COURSE: LING 6600
TIME: Thursday 4:30-7:00pm
LOCATION: Old Main 201
PROFESSOR: Jim Rogers
OFFICE: M071
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OFFICE HOURS: TTH 2:45-3:30 or by appointment

Required texts:

L. S. Vygotsky. 1978. Mind in Society: Development of Higher Psychological Processes.
Edited by Michael Cole,Vera John-Steiner,Sylvia Scribner, Ellen Souberman. Harvard University Press.

Lantolf & Poehner (eds). 2008. Sociocultural Theory and the teaching of second languages. Equinox Publishing.

Course Description:

The main issue we will focus on in this class revolves around: How do people learn (a language, in our case) and what are the implications for teaching? In order to create effective language learning activities in the classroom; you, as a future educator, should have your own perspective on how people learn. The perspective on learning that we will explore over the semester is one based on the seminal work of Lev Vygotsky. Over the years, depending on one's particular orientation, this perspective has been termed sociocultural, cultural psychology, cultural historical, cultural historical activity theory, etc.

A sociocultural framework provides a lens which situates individual learning in the larger cultural historical context in which it occurs. We will start off by looking at the question: how do people learn? From this important epistemological question, we will explore the implication for teaching a second or foreign language. Throughout the course, we will cover some of the key concepts in a sociocultural perspective on learning and discuss how they are related to teaching.

Topics will include but are not limited to:

> The role of mediation in learning
> Psychological and Physical tools
> Identity and language learning communities
> Dynamic Assessment/ The Zone of Proximal Development
> The role of Play
> Scaffolding
> *Activity Theory as a lens to better understand the language classroom
>
> *time permitting

This course is largely divided into two interrelated parts. In the first part we will start by exploring some of the fundamental issues related to a sociocultural perspective of language learning and teaching. We will go directly to the source and read Vygotsky's *Mind in Society*. In this collection of essays, Vygotsky lays out many of the fundamental issues related to learning. In addition to the Vygotsky chapters, I will also assign a reading that covers the main topic in Mind in Society to better help you understand the conceptual foundations of SCT. I will lead much of this discussion based on the Wednesday papers that the students turn in. During the second part of the class we will look at a collection of chapters which explores how key concepts in SCT has been applied to a variety of language learning situations. In these chapters we will revisit many of the issues covered in the first part of the class. Students will present these chapters and lead discussion on them. This section will culminate in the students choosing a specific teaching related topic and writing a paper on it.

How to succeed in this class:

-First and foremost: read and reflect. I expect you to come to class having thoroughly read the assigned readings. Read them more than once- don't expect to understand these texts with a cursory reading. I expect you to have both questions and insights which I would like you to share in our class discussions.

- Participate in class discussion. Since you will be coming to class prepared, share your thoughts with other students. The 'socio' in sociocultural means that learning occurs in social situations, my own penchant for this is reflected in my grading criteria.

-Come to class on time and don't ask to leave early (of course you can leave any time you like so don't ask me). Participation is part of your grade; if you don't attend fully and/or participate, don't expect to get full credit.

- Keep track of ideas, perspectives, and authors that interest you. This will help you pick a topic for your final paper. Perusing the chapters in the SCT book will also help. Go to http://language.la.psu.edu/pages/sct--l2-learning-searchable-bibliography--pdf for an excellent list of topics and references or to http://lchc.ucsd.edu/mca/ for searchable discussions ton CHAT issues.

- Read the pioneers (Cole, Cazden, Bruner, etc.); don't be afraid of older articles.

- Ask questions: in class, in my office, by e-mail.

- Have someone else look at your papers, preferably the writing center.

Weekly activities:

For classes through February 20 (Mind in Society and related readings)

Along the sociocultural tradition, I will ask you to do this in pairs/groups of three. I will randomly pair each of you up each week so that everyone has a chance to work with everyone else at some point (I hope). I realize that this will take some coordination on your part so please be considerate of your busy classmates.   By **Wednesday evening 9:00 p.m.** write up a three to four page (double spaced) resume of

the assigned readings including your understanding of the main concepts presented, including some insights (ah ha's!). In addition, note any major conceptual questions you have. In order to receive full credit for this assignment I would expect you to explore (i.e. critically reflect on) some of the ideas in the reading rather than provide me a summary of facts that were presented in the reading. I will use these papers to organize the class on Thursday so be thorough in your paper and questions so I have a sense of your understanding.

By **Saturday evening 9:00 p.m.** write up a reflection on the ensuing discussion from the Thursday evening class. This should be a personal learning reflection, including insights and lingering questions. Again, to get full credit I expect the discussion to be on a more conceptual level. Do take some time to develop these ideas as they should provide a basis upon which you can write your midterm paper. Each week I will respond to these reflections, providing critiques of your understanding and questions to help you extend your understanding. If you take the time to thoughtfully write these papers, then your midterm paper should be much easier to write.

For classes from Feb 27-April 17 (SCT and the teaching of Second Languages)

Pairs/groups of students will be largely responsible for leading discussion on <u>two</u> different topics. I will provide some guidance by outlining some points to think about for each of the readings and will meet with each group before the class meets.

<u>For the presenters:</u> As with the LEV readings, read the chapters and work collaboratively to write a three to four page (double spaced) resume of the assigned readings including reflections on the main concepts presented and how they exemplify SCT (I will provide some guidance on this). Also have some questions prepared for us to consider on Thursday. This will be due the **Wednesday** preceding the class, please post your resume and questions on Canvas.

In order to help you navigate this chapter, I would like to meet with each group the Monday or Tuesday preceding the class. In general, my Mondays are pretty open but Tuesday afternoons 1:30-2:45 and (occasionally) 4:30-6:15 are booked. If evenings are the best time to meet, then I would be willing to do that.

<u>For the others:</u> Please read the chapters and post 3-4 conceptual questions about the reading in Canvas by **Tuesday** to help the presenters incorporate some of the ideas in class.

After class by Saturday, please post a 2 page reflection of the readings, focusing on how SCT was exemplified in the classroom.

Papers:

There will be two papers required in this class. Please follow APA style and make sure you have someone or the writing center review your paper. I teach writing and look at a lot of papers- this means that even simple mistakes (e.g. spacing) jump off the page at me.

A 7-10 page midterm paper in which you return to the ideas in the reflective paper on learning that you wrote at the beginning of the class in order to refine it and reflect on it. This should be a paper in which you articulate your understanding of learning (and how it might relate to your teaching philosophy) as well as your own reflection on how this understanding has evolved. Use your weekly writings to help you with this paper. This should fit nicely into your Thesis Portfolio.

A 12-15 page final paper (excluding references and abstract) in which you explore some aspect of learning that is grounded in sociocultural theory. I have left this topic fairly open to allow you to follow your particular interests but it can be a lesson plan (the actual plans should be in the appendix and not part of the main paper), an idea or approach that you would like to take, or some other teaching related research topic. In this paper you should demonstrate your understanding of SCT and how it can be applied to a particular language learning situation. For students not in the MSLT program, you can explore other learning situations. In the past, students have also used this paper as part of their Thesis/Portfolios. During our last meeting during Finals week (May 1), you will also give a 15 min conference type presentation in which you outline the main parts of this paper. Your paper will be due on this date also. Please consider submitting your paper abstract for the Graduate Student Symposium or the Lackstrom symposium.

Evaluation

Class participation	15%
Sat/Wed reflection papers	15%
SCT chapter presentations and reflections	15%
Midterm paper	20%
Final Paper	30%
Final Paper presentation	5%

Grading scale

94-100 % = A	87-89% = B+	77-79% = C+	60-69% = D
90-93% = A-	84-86% = B	74-76% = C	0- 59% = F
	80-83% = B-	70-73% = C-	

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY
All work for this class should reflect YOUR work. Please see the Student Code (Article 5, Section 3) for official USU definitions of academic dishonesty:
http://www.usu.edu/stuserv/SCode/article5.html#sec3.Penalties and sanctions for violating these rules are also described in the Student Code (Article 6,Section 5)
http://www.usu.edu/stuserv/SCode/article6.html#sec5.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES
If you have a documented disability and anticipate needing accommodations in this course, please make arrangements to meet with me soon. Please provide the necessary form from the Disability Resource Center (online at: http://www.usu.edu/drc/) to validate the need for the accommodation.

Ling 6800- tentative schedule

Please note I reserve the right to make changes to best suit your learning but will only do so after discussion with the class and appropriate prior notice.

Date	Readings	Topic	Tasks
Jan 9	Syllabus	Introduction	What is learning reflection?
Jan 16	Lantolf /Thorne Zeungler	Situating SCT in the field: Overview and Comparison.	Resume and reflection
Jan 23	LEV p 1-37	Overview/tools and symbols/ perception	Resume and reflection
Jan 30	LEV p 38- 51 Article	Mediation	Resume and reflection
Feb 6???	LEV 52-75 Article	Internalization	Resume and reflection
Feb 13	Lev p 79-91 Article	Learning/Development ZPD	Resume and reflection
Feb 20	Lev p92-104,121-133, article	Role of Play Review	Resume and reflection
Feb 27	SCT ch 1, 2	ZPD/Dynamic Assessment	Present, Resume and reflection **Learning reflection paper draft**
March 6	SCT ch 4, 5	ZPD	Present, Resume and reflection
March 13	Spring Break		
March 20	SCT ch 6 + reading	Identity	**Learning reflection final paper**
March 27	TESOL- No readings No F2F class	Initial ideas for final paper	Present, Resume and reflection **Topic- Abstract draft**
April 3	SCT ch 7, 8	Concept Based teaching, Internalization/mediation	Present, Resume and reflection
April 10	SCT ch 10, 11	Concept based teaching, Internalization/mediation	Present, Resume and reflection
April 17	SCT ch 12, 13	Extending SCT	Present, Resume and reflection **Full Abstract**
April 24	No readings	Individual meetings	**Working draft**
May 1	Finals Week		**Final Paper/Presentation**

Other important dates: April abstracts due for the Student Research Symposium.

Readings:
For Foundations of SCT (for Jan 16)
Required:
Zuengler, J. & Miller, E.R. (2006) Cognitive and Socicultural Perspectives: Two Parallel Worlds? TESOL
　　　Quarterly, Vol 40. No.1. pp. 35-58.
Lantolf, J.P. (2011) The Sociocultural approach to Second Language Acquisition. In D. Atkinson (Ed.)
Alternative Approaches to second Language Acquisition. P. 24-47.

Optional:
Lantolf, J. P., & Thorne, S. L. (2007). Sociocultural theory and second language acquisition. In. B. van
　　　Patten & J. Williams (Eds.), Theories in second language acquisition (pp. 201-224). Mahwah, NJ:
　　　Erlbaum.

For LEV 38-51: Mediation (for Jan 30)
Required:
Kozulin, A. (2003). Psychological tools and mediated learning. In Vygotsky's educational theory in
　　　cultural context, Cambridge, UK ; New York : Cambridge University Press, 2003. pp. 15-38.

Optional:
This is a somewhat theoretical article that also examines Activity Theory. It looks at the role of discourse
(language) in educational activities.
Gordon Wells (2007): The Mediating Role of Discoursing in Activity, Mind, Culture, and Activity, 14:3,
　　　160-177

These articles focus on how the teacher can serve as a mediator in the L2 classroom. More practical
with examples from L2 classrooms:
Pauline Gibbons (2003) Mediating Language Learning: Teacher Interactions with ESL Students in a
　　　Content-Based Classroom Author(s): Source: TESOL Quarterly, Vol. 37, No. 2, pp. 247-273
Simona Pekarek Doehler (2002): Mediation Revisited: The Interactive Organization of Mediation in
　　　Learning Environments, Mind, Culture, and Activity, 9:1, 22-42

LEV 52-75 (for Feb 6??)
Required:
Excerpt from Kouzlin, A. (1990). Vygotsky's Psychology: A biography of Ideas. Harvard University Press.
Chapter 4 Tool and Symbol, pp. 110-123.

Optional:
This article goes into more detail on signs and meaning in SCT:
Mahn, H. (2013). Vygotsky and Second Language Acquisition. In The Encyclopedia of Applied Linguistics
 Edited by Carol A. Chapelle. Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

For LEV 79-91 ZPD (for Feb 13)
Required:
Although this article is not actually about the ZPD there is so much confusion about scaffolding and its
connection to the ZPD, I wanted you to read the original. Note: see Kouzlin article to see where he puts
scaffolding.

Wood, D., Bruner, J.S., & Ross, G. (1976). The role of tutoring in problem solving. *Journal of Psychology and Psychiatry*. 17.

Optional:
This article provides a nice overview of the issues surrounding ZPD from one of my favorite interpreters of SCT:
Chaiklin, S. (2003). The zone of proximal development in Vygotsky's analysis of learning and Instruction. In Kozulin, A., Gindis, B., Ageyev, V., Miller, S. (Eds): *Vygotsky's educational theory and practice in cultural context.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Articles related to L2 teaching and 'collective' ZPD (considering the ZPD of the entire class and not an individual student).
Guk, I. & Kellogg, D. (2007). The ZPD and whole class teaching: Teacher-led and student-led interactional mediation of tasks. *Language Teaching Research*; 11; 281.
Donato, R. (1994). Collective scaffolding in second language learning. In J. Lantolf & G. Appel (Eds.), Vygotskian approaches to second language learning research (pp.33-56). Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

For LEV 92-104: Play (for Feb 20)
Required:
Since many of you are teaching adults, this extends Vygtosky's discussion on play into the adult world of pretend play.

Göncü, A; Perone, A. (2005) Pretend Play as a Life-span Activity. Topoi, Volume 24, Number 2, pp. 137-147(11)

Optional:
Here are a couple of related articles that discussion the intersection of play and zpd.

Hakkarainen, P. & Bredikyte, M. (nd) Why play creates the zone of proximal development?
Available at http://www.iccp-play.org/documents/brno/bredikyte_hakkarainen.pdf
(this is a paper followed by presentation slides)

Hakkarainen, P. & Bredikyte, M. (2008). The zone of proximal development in play and learning.
Available at http://lchc.ucsd.edu/MCA/Mail/xmcamail.2010_11.dir/pdf1GzfHp0kIH.pdf
(this is a more technical article that also address motivation)

Creativity is related to play so here are a couple of authors/sources:

Holzman, L. (2011). Without Creating ZPDs There is No Creativity. In Dancing with the Muses: A CHAT Approach to Play, Meaningmaking, and Creativity, edited by Cathrene Connery, Vera John-Steiner and Ana Marjanovic-Shane. Peter Lang Publishers.

Moran, S. & John-Steiner, V. (2003) Creativity in the Making: Vygotsky's Contemporary Contribution to the Dialectic of Creativity & Development in (K. Sawyer et al, eds) Creativity and Development.

R.K. Sawyer. (2004) Creative Teaching: Collaborative Discussion as Disciplined Improvisation. EDUCATIONAL RESEARCHER. vol. 33 no. 2 12-20

Focusing
Ch 1 & 2
These chapters look at the dynamic interplay between a mediator and a student in the language classroom. Although Vygotsky doesn't directly refer to "other mediation" in Mind and Society we did talk briefly about it when talking about scaffolding (also see the Lantolf / Thorne article and the Kouzlin article). As you read through these chapters think about your role as a teacher in mediating student learning within the ZPD. Also think about the focus on the lesson: what is the student learning in these examples.