

Sociocultural Perspectives on Language Learning
UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY—Spring 2013

COURSE: LING 6800

TIME: Thursday

4:30-7:00pm

LOCATION: Old Main 203

PROFESSOR: Jim Rogers

E-MAIL: jim.rogers@usu.edu

OFFICE HOURS: Mondays 2:30-3:30 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 and 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

The Zone of Proximal Development

Identity and language learning communities

Dynamic Assessment

Scaffolding

*Activity Theory as a lens to better understand the language classroom

*time permitting

This course is largely divided into two 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. Then 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. I will lead much of this discussion based on the Saturday papers that the students turn in. During the second part of the class we will look at a collection of chapters which explores how SCT has been applied to a variety of language learning situations. 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://lhc.ucsd.edu/mca/> for searchable discussions on 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 learning tasks

For classes on:

Along the sociocultural tradition, I will ask you to do this in pairs. 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 **Saturday evening 9:00 p.m.** write up a three to four page (double spaced) resume of the assigned readings including reflections on 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 some of the ideas in the reading rather than provide me a summary of facts that were presented in the reading.

By Wednesday evening 9:00 p.m. write up a reflection on the ensuing discussion from the Monday 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. These reflections should provide a basis upon which you can write your midterm paper.

For classes on:

Pairs of students will be largely responsible for leading discussion on one or two different topics (2 chapters- see schedule).

I will again ask you to read the chapter and then respond (individually) with a three to four page (double spaced) resume of the assigned readings including reflections on the main concepts presented and how they exemplify SCT. Please have these posted by **Friday** at midnight so the students presenting the chapter have time to review them for the following Monday class.

Please post all these to Canvas- I will have the class website set up by Jan 18th and will send you an e-mail to indicate where to put them. Please check your USU e-mail address to ensure that you receive the e-mails.

Please note that I reserve the right to make changes in the way these tasks are implemented.

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 (i.e. spacing) jump off the page at me.

A 4-5 page midterm paper in which you return to the ideas in the paper you wrote at the beginning of the class in order to refine it and reflect on it. This should be a paper 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.

A 10-12 page final paper (excluding references and abstract) in which you explore a 'teaching point' 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.

During our last meeting during Finals week (may 2), 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.

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 10	Syllabus	Introduction	What is learning reflection?
Jan 17	Lantolf 1, Lantolf 2, Zeungler	Foundations of SCT	Resume and reflection
Jan 24	LEV p 1-37	Overview/tools and symbols/ perception	Resume and reflection
Jan 31	LEV p 38- 75	Mediation/ Internalization	Resume and reflection
Feb 7	Lev p 79-104,121-133	Applications to Education	Resume and reflection
Feb 14			Answer Lantolf Qs
Feb 21	Smagorinsky, reread Lantolf 1, SCT intro	Review of learning and SCT	Learning reflection paper
Feb 28	SCT ch 1, 2	ZPD	Present, Resume and reflection
March 7	SCT ch 4, 5	ZPD	
March 14	Spring Break		
March 21	TESOL- No readings	e-mediated meetings- initial ideas for final paper	Present, Resume and reflection
March 28	SCT ch 6 + reading	Identity	Present, Resume and reflection Topic- Abstract draft
April 4	SCT ch 7, 8	Concept Based teaching	Present, Resume and reflection
April 11	SCT ch 10, 11	Concept based teaching	Present, Resume and reflection
April 18	SCT ch 12, 13	Extending SCT	Present, Resume and reflection Full Abstract
April 25	No readings	Individual meetings	Working draft
May 2	Finals Week		Final Paper/Presentation

Other important dates: April 5- abstracts due for the Student Research Symposium on Friday, April 26th.

