社会文化理論から見た外国語学習における相互行為
L2 Classroom Interaction: A Sociocultural Theoretical Perspective

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ABSTRACT

　本稿は，社会文化理論から見た外国語学習における教室内相互行為を考察する。まず，学習者の認知的発達が社会的かつ文化的に形成されると論じるヴィゴツキーの社会文化理論の4つの概念である媒介，最近接発達領域，足場掛け，ランゲージングについて論じる。次に社会文化理論からみた外国語学習における相互行為の先行研究を紹介する。ここでは上級者主導の相互行為，異なる母語の学習者間の相互行為，また一人の学習者における自己内省による相互行為を含む。それらの研究を通して学習者間の相互行為の潜在的可能性を考察し，学習の機会を最大限に生かすための提案をする。

　This article reviews studies on classroom interaction in the L2 classroom from a sociocultural theoretical perspective. These studies posit that a person's cognitive development is socially and culturally created. The paper first discusses four key concepts from Vygotsky's sociocultural theory (SCT): mediation, Zone of Proximal Development, scaffolding, and languaging. Studies reviewed on L2 classroom interaction include one led by a senior student, another on interaction between two learners with different L1 in a dual immersion classroom, and one where self-scaffolding takes place within one learner. After the potential of interaction between learners is considered, the paper concludes with suggestions on how to maximize language learners' learning opportunities through L2 classroom interactions.

1. Introduction

Ever since its appearance in second language acquisition (SLA) literature in the 1980s, Vygotskian concepts have attracted the attention of the English as a second/foreign language (ESL/EFL or henceforth, L2) community (e.g., Frawley & Lantolf, 1985; Lantolf & Thorne, 2006; Swain, Kinnear & Steinman, 2011) to the extent that Vygotsky has become the second most widely cited author for the past decade in conference abstracts of the Japan Association for Language Teaching (JALT), a professional association for language teachers (Stapleton, 2013).

Research trends, including those in SLA, that started "more or less independently of Vygotsky's theoretical legacy" (Kozulin, 2012, p. xii), are now converging with his ideas. This paper will introduce studies on interaction in the language classroom from Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theoretical perspective. Lev Vygotsky is a Russian psychologist from the 1920s. Vygotsky's theoretical perspective on society and social relations parallel language learning processes which learners experience in the classroom. His Sociocultural Theory (SCT), therefore, provides a logical, theoretical framework from which to study language teaching and learning.

In reviewing the studies on L2 classrooms, this paper focuses on two types of classroom interaction for which the SCT perspective can provide a framework for analysis. The first type of interaction is that between the teacher and language learners (T-L interaction). While T-L interaction in the traditional classroom refers to a teacher-centered teaching style where the teacher imparts knowledge to the learners, in the L2 classroom informed by SCT, T-L interaction is based on negotiation, which provides learning opportunities for learners. The second type is the interaction between language learners (L-L interaction), which has become more

widely-studied in SLA research, reflecting a growing interest in learner-centered classrooms employing SCT as the theoretical framework. For this paper, L-L interaction will also include that which takes place within one language learner, of which learning is manifest in internalization (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). However, it will not include interaction through non-verbal means such as gesture and gaze (e.g., McCafferty, 2002; van Compernolle & Williams, 2013) although both have been studied in Vygotskian L2 classrooms. The SCT concepts which will be addressed are mediation, the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), and scaffolding, a pedagogical practice and teaching strategy closely related to the ZPD. A more recent concept of languaging is addressed in L-L interaction.

Notwithstanding the challenges confronting SCT-related practices in the language classroom, this paper concludes with suggestions for maximizing learning opportunities from a SCT perspective.

2. Sociocultural Theory (SCT) and L2 learning

First, a brief overview of SCT and L2 learning will be provided, followed by a discussion of the aforementioned SCT concepts. In the mid-1920s, Vygostky sought ways to reconcile the popular notion of separation of the individual and the social environment. To Vygotsky, the individual and the social were "conceived of as mutually constitutive elements of a single interacting system" (Cole, 1985, p. 148). This led to the conception of SCT, which posits that one's cognitive development is socially and culturally created.

Vygotsky studied children and noted there were two stages in children's cultural development, which take place "*between* people (*interpsychological*) and then *inside* the child

(*intrapsychological*)" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 57; italics in original). His ideas of children's development parallel the process of learning a new language, from a social and cultural perspective, as it entails "acquiring new conceptual knowledge and/or modifying already existing knowledge as a way of re-mediating one's interaction with the world and with one's own psychological functioning" (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006, p. 5). This process provides the theoretical underpinnings for the SCT concepts of mediation and ZPD, as well as scaffolding.

2.1 Mediation

Of the SCT concepts which are related to SLA, mediation is highlighted with the use of cultural artifacts, such as books, technology and the like, (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006) as they mediate activities by way of higher mental processes. Such mental development is a result of the interaction of two mental processes: "one with biological roots and the other with sociocultural origins" (Lantolf, 1994, p. 418).

For Vygotsky, there were two types of mental function: elementary and higher mental functions. According to Wertsch (1985), Vygotsky considered memory, attention, perception and thinking to be elementary mental functions, which are converted to higher mental functions through social processes and cultural activities. In the SCT perspective, *psychological* tools (italics added), such as gestures, language and sign systems, play an important role in the mental processes as they mediate activities. Furthermore, signs are manifest in language, which Vygotsky regarded as a prerequisite for progress, for without language "no progress and no civilized world would be possible" (van der Veer, 1996, p. 251). Thus, the importance of language in mediation is highlighted, which is seen also in the ZPD.

2.2 Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)

As one of the popular concepts concerning education, Vygotsky defines a child's ZPD as "*[T]he distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers*" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86, italics in original). According to Frawley and Lantolf (1985) the above definition describes the "transition from inter- to intrapsychological functioning" (p. 20), which takes place in the ZPD. Vygotsky's view is that there are two levels of development: what learners can perform independently now, and what they are capable of doing under the guidance of others, and eventually, on their own (Vygotsky, 1978).

In implementing the ZPD, the teacher usually assumes the role of the adult or the more capable other. Children who are incapable of performing tasks independently learn to complete them by interacting with this adult or more capable other, who controls the child's cognitive development (Frawley & Lantolf, 1985), referred to as other-regulation. On the other hand, by beginning to perform the task independently, the child gradually achieves self-regulation.

Newman and Holzman (1993) argue that the ZPD has been misinterpreted because of Vygotsky's conflicting view with that of his contemporaries, who believed that development and learning are separate. Vygotsky, whose view synthesized development and learning, rejected the notion that development is a requirement for instruction and learning. His belief was that some development is maturational, while others are based on learning, which is also a developmental process (Vygotsky, 1978). One of the criticisms of the ZPD is that it has been used for developing assessment tools, curriculum, and teaching methods, in addition to evaluating classroom practices (Newman &

Holzman, 1993). For example, Hedegaard (2005) describes the ZPD as a tool for teaching and evaluating the learning of young children. Kinginger (2002) cautions that when the ZPD becomes a pedagogical tool, expected outcomes become the focus, which may limit potential learning. Lantolf (2011) expresses concerns over the quality of interaction taking place in the ZPD that "randomly provided mediation is less effective than mediation geared to a learner's ZPD" (p. 30). Notwithstanding the different interpretations, Kinginger suggests that they could be attributed to the ZPD being Vygotsky's "unfinished concept" (Kinginger, 2002, p. 245) which makes the original meaning obscure. Another misinterpretation of the ZPD is that it is used interchangeably with scaffolding, which is discussed in the next section.

2.3 Scaffolding

In the classroom, scaffolding (Wood, Bruner & Ross, 1976) has become a widely-practiced teaching strategy to guide learners in their learning. Originally introduced by psychologist Jerome Bruner, scaffolding is a problem-solving process, where an adult assists a child to perform their tasks or goals "within the child's range of competence" (Wood et al., 1976, p. 90). Gibbons (2002) explains that scaffolding refers to temporary help, which "assists learners to move toward new skills, concepts, or levels of understanding" (p. 10).

Hammond and Gibbons (2005) argue that while tasks in the classroom should be *beyond the ability* (italics added) of learners to complete independently, they should also be *within their ability* (italics added) to complete with scaffolded help. They also emphasize the importance of balancing the tasks with learners' potential learn a second language, where "cognitive and conceptual understanding may outstrip English language learning, or conversely, where abilities in English may constrain subject-specific learning" (p. 8).

Weaknesses of scaffolding include when the pedagogical support falls apart unexpectedly (i.e., the lesson ending abruptly), or when the teacher leaves the scaffolding process (Swain et al., 2011). Ohta (2000), on the other hand, argues that development cannot occur if too much assistance is provided. This is because learners can sometimes reach an intrapsychological level where they are able to notice and correct their own errors with minimal or no feedback. Ohta's claim that learners can develop even if teachers assistance is not fully available leads to languaging (Swain, 2006), discussed in the next section.

2.4 Languaging

Based on her Output Hypothesis, which posits that language learners need to be pushed to produce output, Swain (2006) developed the concept of languaging. When languaging, learners engage in joint language-related activities, such as explaining, describing, reflecting on, and the like, which are "cognitively demanding/complex activities" (Swain & Suzuki, 2008, p. 565). Languaging, which allows learners to reach a new understanding while talking-it-through (Swain & Lapkin, 2002), aligns with Vygotsky's idea that "thought is not merely expressed in words; it comes into existence through them" (Vygotsky, 2012, p. 231).

Languaging, in addition to L2 classrooms, can also take place in bilingual classrooms. According to Lewis, Jones, and Baker (2012), translanguaging in bilingual classrooms is likened to languaging, as "both languages are used in a dynamic and functionally integrated manner to organize and mediate mental processes in understanding, speaking, literacy, and, not least, learning" (p. 641). Both languaging and translanguaging are manifest in code-switching (Palmer, 2009) where speakers move between two languages within a conversation or utterance. Although code-switching has been discouraged in the bilingual classroom as it can be

perceived as a sign of bilingual weakness or inadequacy, studies in favor of code-switching show that the L1 is a linguistic resource that can help learners become multilingual (Cheng, 2014).

This section introduced four representative SCT concepts: mediation, ZPD, scaffolding, and languaging. Despite their popularity in the classroom, they have not been criticism-free. Nevertheless, research shows how they can contribute to language learning, which is the focus of the next section.

3. L2 classroom interaction: A SCT perspective

In order to understand what takes place in the L2 classroom, it is important to first know what discourse and interaction in the classroom entail. The two main agents in the classroom are teacher and students. Walsh (2002) discusses features of talk in traditional classroom discourse, such as teacher talk, which include controlling the discussion topic, content and procedure, and the decision on participation as well as its timing. When a participant in a classroom interaction is doing being a teacher, he/she "controls the floor, asks questions, issues instruction, prompts, and evaluates" (Richards, 2006, p. 61), while doing being students involves giving an answer to the teacher and responding to the teacher's turns.

3.1 Teacher-learner (T-L) interaction

Explicit instruction may be one of the most widely practiced forms of mediation by classroom teachers in general. However, in L2 classrooms informed by SCT, there are others ways through which teachers provide mediation, due to the interactive nature of Vygotskian practices. The first two studies (Antón, 1999; Gibbons, 2003) provide examples of how teachers scaffold learners' learning which takes place in their ZPD. The third

study (Guk & Kellogg, 2007) deals with the ZPD involving the whole class.

Antón (1999) provides an example of how the teacher and learners collaborate as they negotiate grammatical forms in a French class at a US university. For example, the teacher calls the learners' attention to identify differences in the verb forms from the textbook through question-asking in French instead of explicitly teaching the differences in English. Furthermore, by calling on learners for answers, the teacher is delegating the responsibility for problem solving. In addition to benefits, such as increased language practice and opportunities for negotiation, Antón (1999) suggests that studying T-L interaction from a SCT perspective serves as a vehicle to understand ways to provide "effective scaffolded help within the ZPD during the negotiation process" (p. 315).

In a content-based science classroom in Australia, Gibbons (2003) studies how the L2 discourse and academic register of fifth-year students were transformed by the mediated help of their teachers. By employing a mode continuum, which is conceived in differences between spoken and written language placed on a scale, the activities would offer a "developmental sequence of language learning" (p. 255). To illustrate a mode continuum in an experiment using magnets, a learner's utterance, "They stick together," was transformed to "They are attracted to each other" (p. 258, modified) in academic register. While the participants were initially unable to discuss their science experiment, as they had difficulty in shifting their language for an audience, teachers provided scaffolds and helped them move along the "continuum toward more writtenlike language" (Gibbons, 2003, p. 256). By starting with what learners can understand, teachers extended their language for later use, which Gibbons refers to as the ZPD.

The last study compares T-L and L-L interactions

in the same L2 classroom where, according to the researchers, each interaction occurs at different ends of the same ZPD. Guk and Kellogg (2007) argue that ZPD does not exist only between one teacher and one learner, but can take place between one teacher and the whole class. Outcomes of the same task (i.e., a demonstration on the use of comparatives) were compared between T-L and L-L interactions in a Korean primary ESL classroom. The results revealed that while the T-L interaction included "demonstrating whole utterances and initiating solutions" (p. 290), the L-L interaction appeared to have more "negotiation and confirmation of word meanings" (p. 290). One of the findings is that the teacher appeared to be concerned with grammatical forms, which requires help from the teacher. However, the learners appeared more interested in co-constructing discourse, which they developed on their own. Consequently, the researchers concluded that while T-L interaction takes place at the "end of the ZPD concerned with inter-mental mediation and assisted performance" (p. 297), L-L interaction occurs in the "lower, unassisted end, bordering on internalization" (p. 297). This study serves as a bridge to introduce L-L interactions from a SCT perspective, which is covered in the next section.

3.2 Learner-learner (L-L) interaction

L-L interaction results vary depending on the context. For example, Huong (2007) compares peer-peer group work to group work led by a senior student. Martin-Beltrán (2010) focuses instead on L-L interaction in a bilingual classroom where the learners with different L1s co-construct understanding. Knouzi, Swain, Lapkin and Brooks (2010), on the other hand, compare how two learners self-scaffold within themselves.

Huong (2007) studies the role of the "more capable peer" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86), who is a knowledgeable student from the advanced class.

This student influences the performance of a group of Vietnamese ESL learners in their group-work organization and participation. In this study, which consisted of two groups, the assisted group with four learners had the senior student, but the unassisted group with five learners did not have any outside help. The assisted group stayed on task as the senior student scaffolded the tasks by explaining, making suggestions and orchestrating the group discussion. On the other hand, the unassisted group had to discover what to do on their own, requiring more time to start the task, which consequently left group participation disorganized. While both groups eventually achieved their task of discussing the assigned topic in English, Huong (2007) acknowledges the role of the senior student as she helped maintain structure to create a conducive learning environment.

Martin-Beltrán (2010) studies learners in a dual immersion fifth-grade bilingual classroom (i.e., language of instruction is both English and Spanish) in the US where participants engage in languaging in two languages by code-switching. After forming dyads, consisting of an English speaker and a Spanish speaker, they collaborated and languaged in each others' language to mediate and expand learning opportunities. As the L1 is the *mediational tool* (italics added) of learning the L2, languaging, or translanguaging (Lewis et al., 2012) back and forth in English and Spanish took place between learners. The teacher allowed the learners to solve their own problem of word choice instead of intervening, thus, allowing the activity to move forward. Martin-Beltrán (2010) emphasizes that code-switching in dual immersion bilingual classrooms provides learners with access to meaningful language learning opportunities unavailable in monolingual classrooms.

In the last L-L interaction study, Knouzi et al. (2010) analyze languaging in a self-scaffolding activity. This study compared a high performer and

a low performer enrolled in a university French course in Canada. In this study, the quality of their languaging, as they "read and talked through (language about)" a text about the concept of voice in French, was examined. Results indicate that the high performer employed more types of languaging (e.g., paraphrasing, inferencing, analyzing, self-assessing, rereading) than the low performer, whose languaging was limited to paraphrasing, with long silences between her utterances. The researchers speculate that there could be a difference in the ZPD between the high performer and low performer, concluding that the low performer needs more help to self-scaffold.

4. Implications

The studies reviewed in this paper show how SCT concepts are interdependent and inseparable in teaching practices as they overlap with each other to different degrees. Naturally, this makes each interaction unique, which leads to different outcomes in learning. Nevertheless, they provide insight on the potential, especially of L-L interaction, in the L2 classroom.

T-L interaction, which is central to L2 classroom discourse, is structured as teachers mediate and provide scaffolds through instruction in the learners' ZPD (Antón, 1999; Gibbons, 2003). However, despite its unpredictable and sometimes unstructured nature, L-L interaction is attracting more attention, reflecting a growing interest in learner-centered SCT-based classrooms. Guk and Kellogg (2007) reveal how different ZPD in the same classroom are possible depending on two factors: (1) participants in the interaction; and (2) their L2 performance level. These factors are important in other L-L interaction studies as they can influence language learning. Although the unassisted group in Huong (2007) appears disorganized, it achieved the task as the assisted

group did with the advanced student's help. Martin-Beltrán (2010) suggests that the teacher's non-intervention could be interpreted as a form of mediation, as it was her decision to allow the learners to translanguage in their L1. On the other hand, Knouzi et al. (2011) indicate how a low performer's self-scaffolding can be perceived as an area in need of development, rather than a weakness.

To meet the needs of the wide variety in L-L interaction, assessment in relation to classroom interaction will be briefly mentioned here as assessment from a SCT perspective can be a self-contained topic which needs to be dealt with separately. Dynamic assessment (DA), which integrates teaching and assessment, is aligned with the ideas of Vygotsky's ZPD (Poehner, 2009). Not only can DA be implemented in T-L interactions, but also in L-L interactions, where learners create a ZPD (Swain, et al., 2011). DA is unique due to its versatility as it is not limited to the assessment of learners in one-to-one contexts, but can be employed for assessing language learning in group instruction.

While the potential of interaction in a SCT-based L2 classroom is acknowledged, issues related to practices due to teachers' unfamiliarity with SCT also need to be addressed. There are further suggestions for language teachers new to SCT concepts, with which this paper will be concluded.

5. Conclusion

While SCT-based L2 classrooms have been researched for over a decade, language teachers accustomed to a teacher-fronted style may still find it novel. Suggestions on how to approach L2 classroom interaction for maximizing learning opportunities can be gleaned from the studies introduced in this paper.

Due to its popularity, scaffolding has been one of

the widely-practiced SCT concepts, even by teachers who may not be knowledgeable of SCT concepts. As much as learners can be assisted by scaffolding, Walsh (2013) also acknowledges that it can be challenging for learners (e.g., Huong, 2007). Mascolo (2005) claims that teacher-initiated scaffolding does not always consider the contributions learners make to the scaffolding process (e.g., Huong, 2007). However, Swain et al. (2011) favor a more flexible interpretation and propose scaffolding to simply include co-construction and language development (e.g., Martin-Beltrán, 2010).

As language teachers mediate and scaffold when interacting with learners, keeping in mind the ZPD, it is important to allow trial and error as part of the process. This is because, as discussed in Knouzi et al. (2010), teachers need to give learners time to think and "make sense of the teaching material" (p.46). At the same time, teachers themselves may need to take time as part of their teaching process and their own learning process in judging when to "intervene or withdraw in the moment by moment construction of classroom interaction" (Walsh, 2013, p. 9) for both T-L interaction and L-L interaction (e.g., Martin-Beltrán, 2010).

In L2 classroom interaction informed by SCT concepts, it is important to remember that learning can take place beyond teachers' expectations. Knouzi et al. (2010) remind us that when working with low achievers, it may not be appropriate to compare them with high achievers as each learner is an individual with different backgrounds. Van Compernolle (2014), who states that SCT is "a theory of what it means to be a person" (p. 64), reassures us that L2 development in the SCT perspective means "seeing L2 learners as *people* with diverse histories, emotions and desires, dispositions to and beliefs about language and learning, and complex, dynamic motives for language learning that together shape the qualities of their experiences and outcomes" (p. 64, italics in original). This applies for learners, as well as for teachers, as teachers' language teaching starts with their own learning (Swain et al., 2011).

Acknowledgement

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