



Vygotskian Sociocultural Theory for Second Language Learners: Addressing In/commensurabilities with Popular School-Based Curricula

Alessandro A. Rosborough^{1,*}, and Jennifer J. Wimmer²

¹*Corresponding Author: Associate Professor, Department of Teacher Education,
McKay School of Education, Brigham Young University, United States of America,
ORCID: 0000-0001-8687-3619
Email: alex_rosborough@byu.edu*

²*Associate Professor, Department of Teacher Education, McKay School of
Education, Brigham Young University, United States of America
Email: jennifer_wimmer@byu.edu*

Abstract

This paper addresses the in/commensurability of Vygotskian sociocultural theory (SCT) with popular K-12 educational curricula positioned and claiming to use his theory in practice (McLeod, 2019). We discuss well-known educational curricula, models, and social theories in relation to second language learning. Representational examples for in/commensurable comparisons are taken from well-published Pre-K, Elementary, Secondary curricula, and educational psychology texts, all primarily used as instructional preparation for pre-service teachers. In operationalizing these comparisons for in/commensurability, we argue that Vygotsky's explanations concerning the unity of thought and language, the zone of proximal development, mediational means for learning and development, and his overarching framework concerning perezhivanie and consciousness are not well considered by these popular texts and curricula, particularly for marginalized second language learners in the field of education. Conclusions and implications include arguments to more fully implement Vygotsky's SCT theory in place of simplistic social turn strategies, and a call for supporting language minority students.

Keywords: Sociocultural Theory, K-12 educational curricula, second language learning, unity of thought and language

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Introduction

Teacher education in the United States has abundant and widely used popular elementary and secondary teacher educational methods, texts, and programs (NAEYC, 2021; Reutzel & Cooter, 2023; Slavin, 2018; Tompkins, 2017; Vacca et al. 2019, Woolfolk, 2018). Touted as research-based and exemplifying “best practices,” these popular curricula¹ abound with principles concerning the importance of learning through socialization, including how communicative exchanges can help establish an appropriate learning environment. Concerning socialization, these popular texts, with a variety of degrees, acknowledge the importance of Lev Vygotsky’s work and lay claim that their methods and instruction are aligned to his sociocultural theory (SCT). In these K-12 teacher education curricula, many types of activities and strategies, fostered by social engagement, are viewed as part of best practice “to do” lists and accepted as an important way to move children towards achieving correct answers. Also included are generalized accommodation and modification suggestions for English Learners (ELs) / second language (L2) learners. These curricula present a variety of educational perspectives and teaching tasks through social grouping strategies, all claiming to be in line with Vygotskian theory.

Problematically, these popular curricula diverge from Vygotsky’s work, wholly omitting many central concepts such as the importance of the awakening² role of *mediation*³ and the *thinking and speaking* (i.e., thought and language) dialectic (1997, p. 46; 1978, p. 73). Also neglected from Vygotsky’s theory are the concepts of *learning leading development* (Newman & Holzman, 1993, p. 86), his focus on *agency*, and its role in supporting higher psychological functions such as thinking, planning, voluntary memory, creativity, and control of semiotic systems (Dunn & Lantolf, 1998, p. 420). Perhaps the most misplaced and unused portion of SCT is Vygotsky’s (1994) overarching concept of *perezhivanie* a unit he positioned as housing these central tenets (e.g., mediation, learning leading to development, thinking-speaking, agency). *Perezhivanie* may be defined as the intersection where sense, cognition, lived experience, identities, and emotion are viewed as inseparable in understanding development, personhood, and consciousness⁴ (Fleer, Gonzalez Rey, & Versov, 2017). However, while mediation, development, and consciousness in *perezhivanie* are focal points for Vygotskian SCT, these well-known tenets are not used in deeply meaningful ways in education (Gredler, 2011).

When dealing with Vygotsky’s work, these popular curricula inadvisably select a few of Vygotsky’s concepts (see Appendix A) without understanding the positioning of these concepts within his entire theory. Gredler (2011) addresses this, explaining the mispositioned, poorly translated, and ill-advised interpretations of *Mind in Society* (1978) as well as *Thought and Language* (1965) being the primary references for initiating Vygotsky’s work into the field of education for western culture. Gredler specifically points out misunderstandings dealing with Vygotsky’s focus on mediation being mistakenly used under labels such as peer-collaboration or the use of a more knowledgeable other (MKO). Using such a “social” and MKO-based perspective of learning as quintessentially defining the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), makes the ZPD conveniently synonymous with scaffolding

(Wood et al., 1976), as well as an undemanding metaphoric “target board” to find the right teaching zone or stage (Reutzel & Cooter, 2023; Slavin, 2018). Additional evidence of such simplistic appropriation includes the positioning of Vygotsky’s work in conjunction with or referenced under labels such as social interactionist, social constructivism, sociolinguistic, constructivist, scaffolding, and assisted learning (See Appendix A). Also, Valsiner (1988) points out the erroneous predicament that occurs when only a few concepts or principles are selected as representational of Vygotskian psychology. He describes such uses as having “no relevance” when the larger developmental theoretical framework is disregarded (pp. 13-15) and questions the depth of appropriate application in western culture (p. 156).

In addressing in/commensurabilities, we argue that the underdeveloped definitions of social interaction in these popular curricula exclude Vygotsky’s larger orienting framework, especially when concerned with the interconnected role of language (both L1 & L2) and the position of mediation leading to development, which includes the concept of ZPD and its relation to consciousness. Important to L2 learning, consciousness as understood as an ontogenesis-sociogenesis unity, has to do with how a person experiences, interprets, mediates, and changes during internalization processes as they inhabit the ecosocial world around them (McCafferty, 2020). With regards to L2 learning, these popular texts and curricula offer best-practices and strategies generalized as “Social Turn” theories⁵ and used in support for English Learners (ELs). We argue that such associations and premises are superficial and not substantial when considering Vygotsky’s focus on mediation of the mind as related to consciousness and personhood in relation to the role of formal L2 education (1987, 1997).

To demonstrate the importance of Vygotsky’s (1987, 1997) psychology in educational curriculum, this article focuses on two widespread educational-based practices and their in/commensurable frameworks and discourses in relation to Sociocultural Theory and second language learning. Specifically, the concepts selected for comparison and review are: 1. Vygotsky’s Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and the concept of scaffolding as exemplified in Gradual Release of Responsibility (GRR) theory (Pearson & Gallegher, 1983), and 2. The overarching role of development in a sociocultural environment as compared to Lave & Wenger’s (1991) Community of Practice (CoP). We first consider the multiple definitions and background positions taken by key researchers concerning SCT, ZPD, scaffolding, GRR, and Community of Practice. A comparison of these constructs and practices along with their background theories are then provided as evidence to support the in/commensurability arguments.

Background

Sociocultural Theory

SCT has to do with the concept that “human activities take place in cultural contexts, are mediated by language and other symbol systems, and can be best understood when investigated in their historical development” (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996, p. 191). Concerning human activities and the development of semantic consciousness, a Vygotskian SCT perspective⁶ positions these topics as dialectically

intertwined and as central to mental development (Mahn, 2012; Vygotsky, 1987, 1997; Wertsch, 1985). This includes how we learn and inhabit a new second language (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006; McCafferty, 2018). Indeed, Lantolf (2000) provides a socio-collaborative definition of SCT focusing on the key concept being *mediation of the mind* in his discourse on L2 learning. Such a sociogenesis-experiential definition is grounded in Vygotsky's (1967, 1994, 1997) perspective that humans (i.e., children to adults), come to understand the world they inhabit through the development of conceptual thinking, or in other words, where concept-based experience is situated and developed, mediationaly, through interaction with social-historically (e.g., human-centered and shared) means.⁷ Also embedded in this perspective is the understanding that mediation plays a primary role in meaning-making and the seed of thinking and development of self and social consciousness (McCafferty, 2020).

Sociocultural Theory and L2

Concerning L2 learning and teaching, the omission of the concept of mediation in social interaction disconnects L2 learners from the goal to fully access, inhabit, and participate in their new languacultural and ecosocial space (McCafferty, 2020; van Lier, 1996; 2004). For L2 learners, sense-making and meaning-making of new vocabulary and content is not merely an input / output interpersonal procedure in the classroom. Instead, sense and meaning are also an internalization and intrapersonal issue, where the relation with the new external semiotic signs on the outer plane (e.g., learning new vocabulary interpersonally with a teacher's help) is an activity and interpretance process that becomes intrapersonal.

In traditional U.S. studies, English is studied as any other subject (i.e., science, math, history) and typically follows a competence focused pedagogical form demonstrating a generative linguistic perspective (Chomsky, 1975, p. 183). This follows a traditional western Cartesian viewpoint, with language positioned as a natural process, outside of human thinking and not necessarily as mediated through the use of signs (Miller, 2011), all of which is not commensurable with Vygotskian theory (Robbins, 2001; van der Veer, 2002). Evidence of this stance includes the exclusion in popular curricula concerning the following: individual sense-making, inner-speech, inner-sense, introspection, refraction, and subjectivity. By default, K-12 education turns into a domain that focuses on form and physical tools (i.e., manipulatives), with language awareness being mainly about "objectively" valid norms (Chafe, 2002; Goodman & Goodman, 1990) and not the social subjectivity of pedagogical actions as described by Vygotsky (Bezerra et al., 2023). At this point, a language dichotomy occurs, where social norms, as publicly observable, take precedence as a systemic method for obtaining *knowledge*, contrasting and minimizing the importance of how a student makes *understanding* - including their internalization processes (Mahn, 2012, pp. 116-118).

Conflated Socialization Perspectives

In K-12 popular curricula, "social turn" theories include functionalist, sociolinguist, and socioculturalist perspectives, which are often grouped together (Mitchell et al., 2018). This grouping often creates conflation of diverse social

interactional-based terms and labels such as: ZPD, scaffolding, MKO, collaboration, and pairing-sharing in the field of education. Viewed somewhat as synonyms, the shared denominator is that the learner needs “social” (e.g., adult) assistance (McLeod, 2019). Another well-known social turn conflation ideology is found in Gallimore and Tharpe (1990), where authors attempted to create a unified theory of education. They describe taking a stance where the social, cognitive, and behavioral sciences “must be brought into conjunction with the neo-Vygotskian understanding now being created” (p. 175). They predicted that from this infused stance, teaching and schooling would radically increase and improve. However, whether educational research, program curricula, and teacher instructional manuals use constructivist or sociolinguistic based practices, or even Tharpe and Gallimore’s neo-Vygotskian infused behavioral / cognitivist practices, the imperative concerning the role of mediation as a meaning-making process and a means of bringing more focus concerning consciousness into the learning and development paths have not been well addressed or come to fruition in popular curricula (e.g., Slavin, 2018; Vacca et al., 2019). Instead, these popular curricula remove Vygotsky’s focus on mediation and consciousness, including his position that *learning leads development*. Also missing is the notion that development of consciousness and understanding of content, “can be accomplished only indirectly, through a mediated path” (Vygotsky, 1997, p. 282).

Another important conflation to address in current popular curricula is the notion of the multiple sections which define Vygotsky’s Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) based on Michael Cole et. al.’s *Mind in Society* (1978) and scaffolding (Wood et al., 1976). ZPD is often simplistically reduced and defined as “the level between their [students] actual development and their potential development” (e.g., Tompkins, 2017, p. 12).⁸ Fundamentally, these teacher education instructional guides have interpreted ZPD as synonymous with the construct of scaffolding, disregarding that there are diverse scaffolding types. In popular curricula, scaffolding gives teachers the responsibility to not only identify the struggling student, but to decide what scaffolding intervention is needed. Essentially, scaffolding in these curricula, emphasize recall and model practices that are based on short term declarative-memory and simplistic working-memory learning, to obtain the right answer⁹ (van de Pol et al., 2009).

Concerning scaffolding for L2 learning, all the popular curricula promote scaffolding and mention L2 learners as needing some type of accommodation or assistance. However, not found in the “how to” scaffolding information are topics addressing how L2 students mediate, inhabit, and develop concept-based scientific understandings within their new languacultural environment (McCafferty, 2020) and the psycholinguistic issue of whether L2 learners’ internalization paths needs are fundamentally different than scaffolding given in the L1 dominant (i.e., native) language for L1 learners in the classroom (Kachru, 2002).

In summary, popular curricula intermix and cite a variety of diverse theoretical sources (Atkinson, 2002; Gallimor & Tharpe, 1990; Long, 1996; Tarone, 2007) to reinforce the perspective that socialization processes are essentially the same, belong to Vygotskian theory, and are “best practices” for supporting L2

learners. Problematically, this conflation not only blends or removes theory, but also includes the indiscriminate muddling of L2 methodologies. This negates any adherence to the scientific nature and field of applied linguistics (Seidlhofer, 2003) by disregarding such vastly diverse areas as to whether a L2 is acquired or learned (Krashen, 1983; Long, 1995), best taught from the bottom-up or top-down perspectives (Takimoto, 2008), what neural mechanisms in the brain advance explicit and implicit learning (Yang & Li, 2012), or in SCT, whether L2s are not well learned through the abstract system of language but through mediated concrete activity within social interaction (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006; Volosinov, 1973). To understand the conflation and misappropriations of Vygotsky's work, we provide the following in/commensurable sections based on two major topics in L2 education: 1. Scaffolding represented through the GRR, and 2. Communities of Practice.

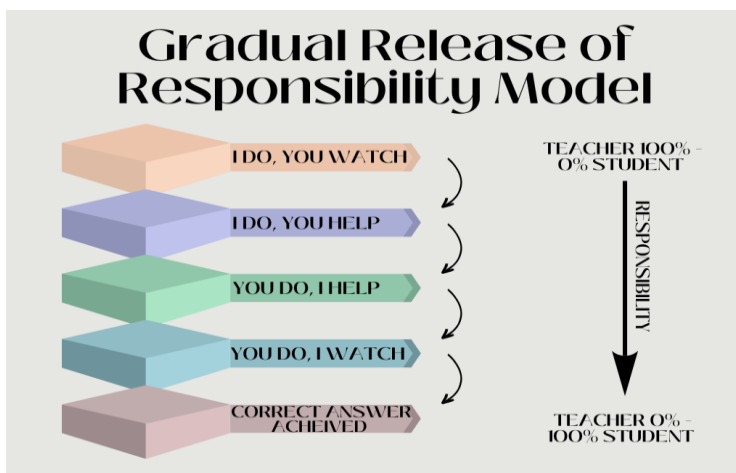
Understanding Scaffolding in Gradual Release of Responsibility in Comparison to the Zone of Proximal Development

Commensurability

Many K-12 teacher educators, popular curricula, and educational research have interpreted ZPD as synonymous with the strategy of scaffolding (Dunn & Lantolf, 1998; Wood, et al., 1976). This includes a related popular model known as the Gradual Release of Responsibility (GRR) theory based more on a constructivist-cognitivist framework (Piaget, 1957) but positioned in K-12 pedagogy as being based or congruent with Vygotsky's ZPD (Fisher & Frey, 2008; Pearson & Gallegher, 1983). In this framework, Pearson and Gallegher claim to follow Vygotsky's ZPD ideology, by implementing a four-step process: 1. I do it (teacher instruction and modeling), 2. We do it (with teacher guided instruction), 3. You do it (with teacher guided collaboration), and 4. You do it alone (student independent work) (see Figure 1).

Figure 1.

Gradual Release of Responsibility (GRR) Model



GRR model based on Pearson & Gallagher (1983). Rosborough©

Such steps position teachers as being responsive and adaptive to student needs. These steps might also be viewed as mediated scaffolding, where supports are provided earlier and then gradually removed so that students gain independence in obtaining the desired answers – an attempted process that might be interpreted as similar to gaining self-regulation in SCT terminology.

At a cursory level, scaffolding and ZPD may be viewed as similar with both based on social interaction and having something akin to working with an MKO. Many popular curriculum researchers promote a scaffolding strategy within the GRR model and simply conflate this framework as synonymous with ZPD (e.g., Tompkins, 2017; Vacca et al. 2019, Woolfolk, 2018). In essence, the operational concept in most scaffolding models (e.g., GRRs), is the focus on graduated, adjusted, and accommodating assistance that leads to a correct answer. Building from this perspective, the GRR claims that the key to learning is the removal of the scaffolds so that eventually the learner can perform the task alone, which misguidedly might seem analogous to Vygotsky's self-regulation concept in sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1967).

Incommensurability

While not necessarily a GRR, an example of the scaffolding and ZPD conflation is found in the evaluation of Gallimore and Tharpe (1990) describing the ZPD through the progression of four stages. Their research addresses the topics of development and context, including the importance of socialization. However, it would seem that their attempts were to schematize dynamic and unique processes to fit into behavior-based institutionalized trainings found in contemporary education systems. Their neo-Vygotskian infusion never attempted to address the relationship of language and consciousness, or that meaning-making paths are fundamentally different for cross-linguistic or L2 learners (Agar, 1994; Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). There is very little in the scaffolding & GRR processes that promotes Vygotsky's (1967, 1987, 1997) concept of mediational use of cultural-psychological tools as planning and enacting behaviors of the mind. In SCT, the ability to reflect and refract (e.g., play, imagine, and create) the conscious journey of learning is of a fundamental importance to transformation, development, and internalization. Accordingly, second language researchers such as Lantolf and Thorne, Kinginger (2002), McCafferty (2002), and van Lier (2004) are all in agreement that the concept of scaffolding (including GRRs) facilitating a learner towards a correct answer, does not necessarily empower learners to use agency or implement historic / social experiences and identities, and cannot be attributed as a developmental method (see also Stetsenko, 2017). Such instructional scaffolding by a teacher towards an answer does not account for the purposeful use of mediational means by students according to their purposeful agency and historic backgrounds (Valsiner, 1988). In accordance with L2 learning, how the student appropriates the mediational means in relation to their L1 languacultural background should include active-voiced dialogical interactions with others; a demonstration of potential development; and application

in forward-oriented fashion. Such applications and acts belong solely to the ZPD conceptual realm.

Contingencies and Play belong to SCT and ZPD

Concerning SCT and L2 learning, simple scaffolding-type mirroring, the GRR's four step process, and the Gallimore-Tharpe neo-Vygotskian definitions do little to involve the L2 learner in how they make contingent adjustments in their understanding of their new language, and how they inhabit their new environment. The GRR process creates limitations to the SCT concept of variability and contingent learning (van Lier, 1996; McCafferty & Rosborough, 2023) as it limits the students' abilities to trouble-shoot and make decisive changes of their understanding in the new second language. Essentially, this disregards Vygotsky's concept of mediation leading to development (Lantolf, Kurtz, & Kisselev, 2017) or other SCT principles and characteristics such as play, imitation, creativity, and abstract thinking (Negueruela-Azarola, 2020).

Contrasting a GRR scaffolding approach, an SCT-ZPD process promotes L2 learning to include the ability to think in abstract ways (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006), allowing students to make plans, extend new ideas, apply background information, and bring new understandings to their foreground thinking. In a true ZPD process, the teacher is able to consider their students' L1 / L2 relationship, some of which are planned in relation to both formal linguistic and cultural components and some of which arise spontaneously among teachers and students and their classroom environment. This is not to say, however, that teachers using a SCT-ZPD framework should ignore all predesigned literacy guidelines,¹ but to suggest that there is a need to focus on the process of meaning-making and embrace contingent interactions as fully connected with L1 / L2 learning paths (Swain & Deters, 2007). This includes that second language learners must participate in a form of play that provides *advanced*, *extended*, and *dynamic* language discourse in order to develop language proficiency and emphasizing conceptual relationships as mapped onto student experience. Such dynamic meaning-making experience is a fundamentally different objective than following scaffolding steps towards a correct answer (van de Pol, 2009).

GRR and Scaffolding are not Development

For Vygotskian ZPD, understanding the students' learning and development journey, ascension, and use of mediation, is a process of how materialized / mental and social / personal understandings come together (Chaiklin, 2003). While Chaiklin considers that Vygotsky provided a few different definitions of ZPD (see also McCafferty, 2012), Vygotsky's writings and central message all have strong relationship and focus concerning development of higher psychological functions, internalization, and self-regulation. Importantly, D stands for development in the ZPD (Chaiklin, *ibid*), and this concept belongs to the realm of development growth, where teachers may participate with the forward-oriented and dynamic interaction of how the student is learning and actively applying the affordances or mediational means at hand in real-time activity.

Concerning scaffolding and GRR frameworks, the “correct answer” journey is controlled by the teacher, who explicitly fixes and adjusts the learning pathway in a preplanned and step-like implementation (van Lier, 1996). Arguably, scaffolding and GRR may be simply positioned as a repair of a student’s incorrect “output” – where the final output answer is already known by the teacher, and the input assistance provided merely serves to model and influence the student to rearrange or recast the teacher’s input as an acceptable standardized output answer.

So, while scaffolding and GRRs may be viewed as social turns, social-based, and collaborative by popular curricula, the removal of scaffolds for students to gain independence does not equate well to Vygotsky’s focus on development and growth through forward-oriented mediational use. Instead, popular curricula type scaffolding supports simplistic nomenclature-focused tiering systems, where student assistance is oriented towards getting the “right answer” in a more dictionary correct way. Disregarding this psycholinguistic L1 / L2 relational situation and Vygotsky’s overarching framework, scaffolding has been turned into a tiering system with levels of intervention and produces a situation that positions students as those that “get it” and those that “do not” (i.e., struggling learners). Of concern to L2 issues are the overabundant placement of ELs in this latter (lower) tiering, and then repeating the sequence with *more* scaffolding and interventions until they get the “correct answer”¹.

In summary, sociocultural theory (SCT) and second language learning, including the relationship between language and consciousness, has to do with mediational processes, creating learning that leads to development (Lantolf, 2000; Lantolf, et al., 2015). Contrastingly, many k-12 school practices simply *reorganize* potential mediational tools into instructional scaffolding, where the teacher is the active agent and the student becomes the less-agentive and passive learner (van Lier, 1996, 2004). Such a schematized or prescribed way to mediate students towards a correct answer is not compatible with Vygotsky’s ZPD as it does not address Vygotsky’s (1986) focus on the growth of awareness and the role of mediated consciousness leading to development, which includes the L1 / L2 relationship (Dunn & Lantolf, 1998; McCafferty, 2020).

Understanding Community of Practice Theory in Relation to Vygotskian Theory

Commensurabilities

Sociolinguistic-Based Community of Practice (CoP) theory (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998, 2010) may, at a beginning level, be viewed as a learning theory commensurable with Vygotsky’s (1978, 1997) educational perspectives in SCT. CoP has to do with human engagement in social contexts, the roles they play and relationships they share with characteristics such as emergent structure, self-organisation, dynamic boundaries and ongoing negotiation of identity and meaning-making (Wenger, 2010). It is currently found useful in a variety of disciplines beyond education including social work and psychology, public and health care administration, and business management (Koliba & Gajda, 2009, p. 99).

At an initial level, the role and importance of culture and environment are shared between these two theories, which include the general premise that lived experience is a source of knowledge and should include having task-based practices and activities embedded in social engagement, including negotiable acts between teachers and students. At this preliminary level, commensurable aspects may include generalizations concerning methods and strategies, such as collaboration, modeling, and apprenticeship relations – all concepts that can play important roles in consciousness formation and the learning-development relationship in SCT. Using CoP terminology (Wenger, 2010), initial construal to SCT tenets can include such topics as:

1. Socialization orientation, which includes movements and activity shared in membership groups
2. Space for emergence of identity
3. Task oriented
4. Learning as negotiation
5. Teaching using educational designs that are open and flexible to students' needs

Such foundational pedagogical positions are congruent with SCT which acknowledges that the social setting, situated language, contingencies and variabilities, and the interactional importance of proper affect, collaboration, turn-taking, and shared-intentions in the learning process are important aspects of second language learning (Kramsch, 2002; McCafferty & Rosborough, 2023; Swain et al., 2015; van Lier, 1996).

Concerning commensurability between CoP and Vygotskian perspectives, research positioning socially situated contexts as key to L2 learning and teaching can be found coming from both SCT scholars (Donato, 2000; Swain & Deters, 2007) and sociolinguistic scholars (Creese, 2005; Norton, 2000, 2017). Sociolinguistic and other language socialization research (Duff & Talmy, 2011) which emphasize the importance of situated practice, *can be* viewed as commensurate or very complementary to Vygotsky's educational perspectives and on the role of the environment – evidenced through a variety of sociocognitive and ecological / ecosocial minded scholars (see Atkinson, 2011; Duff, 2007; Kramsch, 2002; Rosa, 2007; van Lier, 2004). Additional researchers, such as Polin (2010) and Swain et al. (2015), have placed CoP and Vygotskian theory together describing the unity as complementary social learning theories. Swain et al. does make the point that the two (SCT and CoP) are not synonymous but that, “‘Learning implies becoming a different person’ (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 53) which certainly is congruent with Vygotsky's notion of transformation in learning” (p. 27). However, as will be addressed in the next section, Swain et al. point out that CoP is not a theory of the mind, and while both theories recognize the importance of situated learning, Vygotsky's concepts, such as the ZPD, accounts for more specific and intentional learning, particularly in the case of learning scientific concepts.

Incommensurabilities

While the above principles, characteristics, and concepts share commensurable aspects, Vygotsky's later work on language and consciousness, and as taken up under the term of SCT and second language learning researchers¹ (See Lantolf, 2000; Lantolf & Poehner, 2008; Lantolf & Thorne, 2006) views the learning path beyond CoP targets if not altogether positioned psychologically differently. In SCT, the topics of cognition and consciousness in and through second languaging interactions, extends further than spontaneous mentoring, cooperation, collaboration, or sharing in a common endeavor or alignment as found in CoP theory (Wenger, 1998).

For Vygotsky (1987), learning (i.e., higher mental functions) in relationship to instruction and development was foundationally an issue of consciousness and concept formation (Davydov, 1967). In this way, second language learning, and accompanying concepts in formal school curriculums, has to do with the ability to isolate and develop an abstraction of the domain, activity, or concept which leads to a scientific system of relationships and the ability to handle such domains in logic-based orders and understandings (see also Blunden, 2012). Key to Vygotsky's (1997, p. 63) explanation of consciousness, he quotes Marx concerning the rise of imagination, envisioning, and planning before erecting or playing out the reality of the event or in other words, the use of the mediational tool to support abstract thinking in a praxis manner. The role of socialness can then be understood as a mediational endeavor, where intervention, awareness raising, reflection, and voluntary control influence participation. In a similar manner, CoP speaks to creating *optimal space* for such functions as planning, abstract thinking, and creative implementation. However, while CoP addresses social practices as being integrated in flexible forms and as having negotiable collaborative participation, it does *not* consider consciousness and accelerated language awareness as primary objectives.

CoP is Socialization: SCT Socialization is Scientific Concept Formation

CoP's concepts concerning engagement, crossing boundaries, and joint membership are viewed through spontaneous culminations which may turn into successful associated interactions (Wenger, 2010). These outcomes correlate with Vygotsky's discussion of pre-concepts, heaps of information, spontaneous / complex thinking, or basically pseudo-concepts (e.g., everyday concepts). Vygotsky's pre-conceptual and pseudo-conceptual foundation may be initially commensurate to CoP's concepts and viewed as similar "starting points" or necessary preconditions. However, it is the coming together of these everyday concepts with scientific-abstract concepts that is primary to understanding second language mediation and the learning and development relationship (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). Socially situated practices may be viewed similarly between CoP and SCT, but this commensurability demonstrates only one side of a shared coin (Robbins, 2003). This points to a significant contrast between SCT and sociolinguistics-based CoP, where Vygotsky (1997) addresses consciousness and development as dialectically positioned, occurring both in connection between language acts (e.g., pragmatics and community practices) and pseudo-concepts, coming together with abstract

thoughts to understand and create new scientific-concept thinking. In his last years, Vygotsky (1994, 1998) began to address this dialectical thinking through his new psychological unit of *perezhivanie*, where sense, cognition, lived experience, identities, and emotion are inseparable (Fleer, Gonzalez Rey, & Versov, 2017). With regards to using Vygotsky's *Perezhivanie* in formal L2 classroom settings, the importance of the concept of imitation, where a student is able to demonstrate their identities and individual choice in the learning task, comes to the forefront (de Guerrero, 2018; McCafferty, 2018).

Additionally, incommensurability may be found between CoP as a "living curriculum" (Wenger, 1998) and Vygotsky's *perezhivanie*. Fundamentally different, CoP speaks mainly to the process of accumulation of knowledge between novice and master (i.e., apprenticeship model), as an interplay that provides wanted competence between people and their communities / systems. In new second language contexts, *perezhivanie*, as a unit of analysis, allows for the study of the student's development in the environment, viewing the learning path and the students' unique choices as *refraction*, a metaphor moving the child's experience as more than reflection but as demonstrating how they change the experiential and situated learning experience (Mok, 2017; Veresov & Mok, 2018, p. 90). In this case, CoP's apprenticeship model provides initial understanding of what it means to engage in present educational practices, but is not sufficient in understanding what it means to, "engage future-oriented dimensions of human practices" (Stetsenko, 2015, p. 104). CoP then speaks to the difference between one's current reflection and their purposeful interactions in an endeavor to create and negotiate in a new community, with little said about a unit of analysis that more overtly addresses one's development (Koliba & Gajda, 2009).

Second Language Trajectory

From an SCT perspective, L2 learning moves beyond adherence and joining to some form of associated cultural-based norm (via CoP). While CoP's design is commendable creating welcoming spaces, it does not account well for the linguistic nature of crossing boundaries ranging from beginning to advanced L2 learners. Such boundaries not only include diverse levels of proficiency but are also associated with ways of thinking and acting which include the L1 and L2 inter and intra-language situation (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). Concerning second language learning, an example of difference and incommensurability between SCT and CoP can be identified in McCafferty (2020) discussing monolingual, bi/multilingual, and lingua franca situations. He explains that all these groups carry goals and have a need to establish shared social meaning but concludes that CoP's focus on membership building and identity-role importance during joint-associated tasks in education does not necessarily account for the essential necessity that meaning-making (and development) becomes much more emergent when dealing with second language learning (p. 49). This can be seen in Peltier & McCafferty (2010), which includes that gesture is an important part of L2 learning and a full part of Vygotskian psychology (McCafferty & Stam, 2008; McNeill, 2012; Rosborough, 2014, 2016). Results in Peltier & McCafferty demonstrate that the embodied and gestural portion of linguacultural learning in Italian foreign classrooms is extremely

challenging for many L2 learners to implement and may be completely neglected by them even when instructors invite, model, prolept, and welcome students towards embodied learning. McCafferty (2020) uses this Italian foreign language classroom research, English as a linguafranca topic, and the common diversity of multi-fluency levels often found in L2 classrooms to explain that *CoP models may be misplaced or limited* in meeting the variety and variable needs associated in such diverse and cross-cultural second language spaces.

Implications

We have argued that popular curricula focus on a scaffolding-to-the-answer pattern, mimicry, and tiering system, all of which do not address development. In addition, we add that CoP was not necessarily designed for L1 / L2 learning paths. As former public-school teachers in the United States, we wish to advocate for the proper treatment and education of minority language speakers (e.g., English Learners). We recommend that educators and curricula writers take a more critical stance in supporting minority language students and more fully apply Vygotsky's SCT framework rather than applying simplistic interpretations of a few of his concepts. We add that these current teacher education curricula can create unwanted classroom hierarchy, enriching those students who "get it" (e.g., often the dominant-English students), with more fluent and forward progress in content-learning, over those (e.g., English Learners / minorities) who must wait to get the linguistic-side (i.e., lexico-syntax) of literacy correct, often before learning content. In this case, the bilingual learning experience often become remedial learning experiences, assigning L2 learners to lower and "slower" tiers, which positions them below and behind the "faster" dominant-major group.

Conclusion

Popular Curricula as Present and SCT as Past-Present-Future

The operationalization of language, learning and development for children and particularly SLLs as being a mediational and consciousness filled endeavor has been neglected or poorly defined in school curriculum and instruction (Rosborough, 2014). Social-turn frameworks do share some commensurable concepts similar to Vygotskian SCT when addressing environmental frameworks concerning social contexts, relationships, and emotions as necessary in the learning path. Duff and Talmy (2011) make an interesting argument in finding commonality among language socialization theories and neo-Vygotskian SCT, which include sociocognitive and ecological accounts of learning. However, we have argued that these are still fundamental different when considering Vygotsky's focus on the mediational roles of language and *perezhivanie* in understanding semantic consciousness. Extrapolated from our discussion of scaffolding, GRR theory, and other Social Turn theories is the focus they place welcoming affect, enculturation, and scaffolding as providing "correct answer" success. This is essentially different than Vygotsky's more process-oriented approach concerned with learning leading to development as entrenched within his overarching *perezhivanie* framework concerned with consciousness as imperative to understanding personhood and cognition in humans. Vygotsky viewed the importance of consciousness as

inseparable to sense-making and as fully integrated to emotions, expressions, and cognitive functions all within the socio-materialized environment.

Also, by viewing Vygotsky's larger framework, we begin to see contrasts extending beyond the usual commensurable promotion of identity, agency, and reflection found in both CoP and SCT. When embedded in the perezhivanie context and with consideration to multilingual speakers, SCT speaks to agency, contingency, and play in the learning and development process as demonstrating a unity between psychological reflection and the transformative and refractive position of experiencing one's new environment (e.g., new L2 languaculture).

Addressing child's psychology and consciousness, Vygotsky (1986) analyzed the inter-functions of expression, identities, and emotions as a full part of *conscious realizations* and *deliberateness*. As such, while L2 socially situated theories promote that social-based educational practices influence cognition, Vygotskian SCT takes the approach towards uncovering the students' learning and developmental path and as having an indirect mediated and forward-oriented journey as found during direct socialization (i.e., language as consciousness for other people and oneself). It is in this dialectic where language and meaning-making are not just creating cognitive development but become the very essence of consciousness and understanding with and through others (Johnson, 2021; Lantolf & Thorne, 2006; McCafferty, 2020; Vygotsky, 1997, p.285). It is here where future commensurable discussion can be identified, all of which should include clearly defined understandings that the *social situation of development* as explained by Vygotsky, fundamentally differs and should not be confused with *learning in social contexts* ideologies as currently demonstrated in popular curricula today.

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Appendix A

Popular Curricula Information and References

Below are references to texts, headings, subheadings, definitions, and terms that authors have associated as Vygotskian theory or stemming from it. These are well-known texts, terms, and scholars in the United States. The grouping are samples of popular curricula covering age groups from Early Childhood, Educational Psychology, Elementary Education (K-6), and Secondary Education (6-12). Popular curricula are defined as having over eight editions or being used and in circulation for over 20 years.

Teacher Education Texts & Curricula

Literacy & Methods Educational Texts: Pre-K-12 Authors	Topics and Terms associated as Vygotskian Theory and Supporting English Learners
Tompkins, G. (2010, p. 12; 2012, pp. 49-54; 2017)	Sociolinguistics; Situated Learning Theory; Social (more knowledgeable other terminology); ZPD as “scaffolding” and “Levels of Support”
Woolfolk, A. (2021, pp. 92-93, p. 412)	Social Constructivism; Scaffolding; Social Turn Theory; ZPD as “Magic Middle”; Social Constructivism;
Vacca et al. (2019)	Collaboration with others (MKO definition); Social Turn Theory;
Ruetzel & Cooter (2008, pp. 36-37; 2023, Chapter 2)	“Three-stage” internalization process; Mimcry; Social Interactionist; Collaboration with others (MKO definition)
NAEYC (2021, pp. 42-43, 96)	Social Interaction; Scaffolding as ZPD; ZPD as MKO
Slavin (2018, p. 34)	Private Speech; ZPD as Scaffolding; Mediation ¹ as MKO

Community of Practice

Authors	Topics & Terms
Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998; Wenger, 2010	Community of Practice; Living Curriculum; Identity; Situated Learning; Negotiation; Flexible

Notes

- 1 For this paper, popular curricula refer to widely used K-12 methods texts (and accompanying curricula) defined as those with over 8 editions and / or spanning over 20 years of use in the educational field.
- 2 Vygotsky (1978, p. 73) uses the term *awake / awakening*. We acknowledge there is debate over the translated accuracy of this term but propose that it meets with his overall ideology of learning preceding the maturation of a task.
- 3 Slavin (2018) is one of the few sources mentioning mediation but the concept is only defined as a peer or adult providing an example or model of how to develop complex skills (p. 34).
- 4 Consciousness for this paper is defined as a unity of cognition, emotion, meditations, passions, spirituality, learning and development, and the movement or activity to-and-from empirical sensorial-physical experience to psychological ones (Zavershneva, 2014).
- 5 Block (2003) and Mitchell et al. (2018) use this “Social Turn” term to describe and collate more recent research and theories containing a focus on “meaning-making” as central in second language theories. This paper does not attempt to provide an all-encompassing view of L2 cognitivist, behaviorist, or sociolinguistic perspectives in comparison to SCT. Instead, it focuses on practices as belonging to the “social turn” in teacher education.
- 6 Cultural Historical and Sociocultural Theory are rooted in Vygotskian theory as proposed by such authors as Michael Cole and James Wertsch. The controversy of some of Vygotsky’s work dealing with tool use as a central tenet and separate from consciousness in his theory is not addressed in this paper. See Miller, 2011 for this discussion.
- 7 Such mediational means or tools can be physical, symbolic, or psychological. With few exceptions (e.g., feral children), humans are born into socialness and language.
- 8 Tompkins (2016) is used as one example of many (see Appendix A). This is a reduction from the already reduced and more popularly referenced ZPD definition (Cole et. al., 1978, p. 89).
- 9 Van de Pol, Volman, & Beishuizen’s (2009) findings of 66 scaffolding articles defining contingency as some type of “initial step” that is phased out during the teaching and scaffolding process, thus creating a more common and shared one-size fits all answer.
- 10 Reading steps and best reading practices have been well documented (see Rasinski, 2001; Flippo 1998, 2001; Guthrie & Anderson, 1999; Mazzoni & Gambrell, 2003; Vail, 1993).

- 11 Response to Intervention (RTI) is a systemic intervention program to support struggling students but does not address L1 / L2 learning paths as different than supporting the L1 learning path.
- 12 *The Journal of Language and Sociocultural Theory* while using the SCT moniker via Wertsch (1985) explicitly addresses Vygotsky's later and returning work towards understanding learning and development through the study of consciousness. In this case, SCT is applied as an educational associated term and not necessarily completely in line with Wertsch's interpretation or adjustments of Vygotskian theory.
- 13 Slavin (2018) is one of the few sources mentioning mediation but the concept is only defined as a peer or adult providing an example or model of how to develop complex skills (p. 34).

Authors' Biographies



Alessandro Rosborough is an Associate Professor in the Department of Teacher Education in the McKay School of Education at Brigham Young University. His research focuses on Vygotskian Sociocultural Theory in Second Language Learning and Teaching including English as a Second Language, Bilingualism, and Dual Language Immersion in K-12 settings. His publications include a focus on gesture, embodied learning and multimodality in education.



Jennifer J. Wimmer is an Associate Professor in the Teacher Education Department at Brigham Young University. Her research centers on the Intersection of Disciplinary Literacy, Multiliteracies, and Teacher Professional Education in elementary classrooms. She is interested in the implications this has for teacher education and inservice professional development.
