Drama as a Powerful Tool for Literacy Instruction: A Sociocultural Approach

Barohny Eun[*]

Korean Instructor, Duke University, United States

*Corresponding author: Barohny Eun, Duke University, Durham, Chapel Hill, NC 27514, United States. Tel: +19199044379; E-Mail: barohny.eun@duke.edu

Abstract

Based on the sociocultural theory, literacy is defined as a socioculturally situated dynamic process involving meaningful interactions with the written language. This definition serves as the starting point for delineating principles for effective literacy instruction. Drama is presented as a powerful tool to enhance literacy development in its initial stages because it is: a social, cultural, and symbolic activity; a bridge from oral to written mode of communication; a natural context for exploring children's interests; a medium to focus on meanings and intentions; and a medium to realize multi-modal texts. The role of language in both interpsychological (i.e., between people) and intrapsychological (i.e., individual mental processes) planes is examined in describing the communicative and cognitive effects of literacy.

Introduction

A definition of an area of study largely determines its teaching and learning processes. For example, if literacy were defined to be a set of decontextualized and discrete perceptual skills, instruction would be targeted at mastering these skills via reinforcement systems of rote and drill practices without regard to the context where these skills are used. On the other hand, if literacy were to be viewed as a socially situated dynamic process involving meaningful interactions with the written language [1], approaches that emphasize meaningful constructions within social interactions would be adopted for instruction.

As sociocultural approaches increase their influence in education [2], the latter definition of literacy is becoming the predominantly accepted one among researchers and educators [3,4]. Accordingly, diverse attempts have been made to develop theoretically grounded guidelines in teaching and learning literacy as a socioculturally situated dynamic process that forms an integral part of human interactions. A fundamental characteristic of viewing literacy as a sociocultural phenomenon lies in the recognition that cognitive aspects of literacy is always deeply intertwined with cultural ones.

The purpose of the present paper is to extend the discussion on the possibilities of sociocultural approaches to beginning literacy instruction in schools. With this general aim, the discussion will center on one specific instructional method, namely, drama-based approach to literacy instruction. The reasons underlying the emphasis on drama will be made clear when sociocultural theory is explored in depth and linked to literacy in later sections.

Following this introduction will be a brief outline of the sociocultural theory, emphasizing the parts of the theory that have most relevance for literacy instruction. The next section will focus on the drama-based instructional methods. The penultimate section will delve into the interrelationship between drama-based literacy instruction and overall cognitive development. This provides one more theoretically based evidence supporting the use of drama-based methods in literacy instruction. As research is a continuous process, suggestions for further research into the sociocultural aspects of literacy will be offered in the concluding section.

Overview of the Sociocultural Theory

What is referred to as the sociocultural theory mainly originates in the research and writings of the Soviet and Russian psychologist and pedagogical theorist Lev Vygotsky and his followers [5]. Vygotsky's general theory of human development has found

varying expressions by researchers continuing his line of work. Some researchers have opted for the terms "Sociohistorical" [6] and cultural-historical [7] arguing that these designations more closely reflect the ideas contained in Vygotsky's writings. In this context, [8] maintains that researchers [9] who view ontogenetic development to be partially determined by culture prefer to use the term "Sociocultural". Representing a more radical side is the view that humans have unlimited freedom and are undetermined by the symbolic tools their culture offers. This view is represented by researchers [10] who prefer to use the term "Sociohistorical".

Although Vygotsky did not specifically use the term "Sociocultural", Werstsch and his colleagues [5] view this term to be appropriate when referring to the appropriation of the Vygotskian approach in the Western human sciences. This line of research emphasizes the interrelationship between individual mental processes and the sociocultural context in which these mental processes develop and operate. The present paper proceeds based on this proposition because what is important for the purposes of the remaining discussion is the idea that there is a dynamic and complex relationship between human mental functioning and cultural, social, and historical context in which this functioning occurs.

In defining the interrelationship between individual mental functioning and sociocultural context, Vygotsky conferred primacy to the latter. In other words, he outlined a view of human development in which all individual functioning originated and derived from the social aspects. This social primacy is well represented in his general genetic law of cultural development. This law states that "Every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later on the individual level; first between people (interpsychological), and then inside the child (intrapsychological)" [11]. According to Vygotsky, all processes of human cognitive development originated as actual human relationships.

The importance and primacy of actual human relationships can be seen throughout Vygotsky's writings on various aspects of learning and development. In speech development, Vygotsky notes that speech initially serves communicative functions between two or more people and only later become internalized to serve individual cognitive functions such as planning and self-regulation [12]. What is more noteworthy is the fact that even when internalized to serve individual mental functions, the communicative function of speech is retained and therefore the innermost spheres of human consciousness remain dialogic in nature [13-16]. People think in ways they communicate with others via dialogue.

The social interactional nature of human development is well captured in the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), one of the most researched and cited aspects of Vygotsky's work [17]. The ZPD is the distance between what an individual can achieve on his or her own and the level of functioning that may be evidenced when collaborating with a more competent person. What the less

capable person can achieve with the support of the more capable becomes a part of the repertoire of skills that the once less capable person can independently use at a later time. This is possible because the knowledge and strategies that are shared within the zone become internalized. It is important to note that both participants, the less competent and the more competent, transform in the collaborative process. The resulting new system of knowledge and skills is one that is co-constructed by both participants operating within the zone. In the process, mutual understanding is constantly negotiated.

It is also critical to point out in this context that the zone constantly shifts with the previous end point becoming the beginning point for the next phase of development and so forth as development proceeds throughout the lifespan [18]. Therefore, the zone is a dynamic concept that varies for each individual and within the same individual depending on his or her developmental stage.

The ZPD brings to fore another critical feature of human development that is emphasized by the sociocultural theory, namely, mediation. Mediation is the mechanism that underlies the transformation of those external forms of social interaction to internalized forms of mental functions. More specifically, mediation is the mechanism that explains development, which is the internalization by an individual those forms and functions that were initially used in social interactions. In this context, [11] and [19,20] identified three major categories of mediation: mediation through material tools; mediation through symbolic systems; and mediation through another human being.

Humans interacting with one another in a specific sociocultural context use and appropriate various tools to enhance the interactional process. As Wertsch notes (1981) [21], this is the distinctive nature of human development espoused by a Vygotskian framework. Some examples of material tools used in a formal learning context, such as schools, could include textbooks, pencils, notebooks, and other technological resources. Symbolic mediators or psychological tools used in schools include literacy, numeracy, and other representational systems developed by the specific social, cultural, and historical context, in which schooling is embedded. The most important human mediator in schools is the teacher. Although students can facilitate each other's learning and development (see for example [22]), the formal instructional process emphasizes the role of the teacher as mediator.

Thus far, current discussion has identified four central themes in Vygotsky's version of sociocultural theory that are interrelated. The first is the social origin of human mental functions. Every higher psychological process (i.e., developed forms of cognitive functioning) originates in actual human relationships. Second, these social interactions are based on communicative processes. This is why even the innermost sphere of human consciousness retains a dialogical nature. Third, the social interaction on the interpsychological plane becomes internalized to serve independent

individual mental functioning on the intrapsychological plane. Finally, the presence of mediators is critical in the move from the interpsychological to intrapsycholgical. In a formal instructional setting, the most important mediator is the human mediator (i.e., the teacher).

Drama as a Tool for Literacy Instruction

As noted at the beginning, the definition of literacy as a socially situated dynamic process involving meaningful interactions with the written language [1] is based on the sociocultural theory outlined above. Within this perspective, literacy is a cognitive tool that has meaningful communication between people as its main purpose. People use literacy to fulfill their communicative purposes on the interpsychological plane, and later the forms and functions of literacy become internalized to fulfill individual cognitive processes (e.g., self-regulation, planning, and monitoring). The relationship between literacy and cognitive processes will be examined later when the discussion focuses on the intrapsychological plane. For now, the focus is on how to enhance the beginnings of literacy development at the interpsychological level in formal instructional settings.

Literacy as a Social and Cultural Activity

As many literacy researchers working within the Vygotskian paradigm have noted [23,24], literacy is purposeful. That is, literacy serves to fulfill specific functions in real life. One of the most central functions that literacy serves is communication between people [25]. Emphasizing the communicative function of literacy, [26] define literacy as a social and cultural activity and note that drama offers an engaging context within which children use language with the purpose of affecting others.

As with any learning and development process, the development of literacy proceeds from the actual social interactions among people. People first use literacy to communicate their ideas, thoughts, and feelings to others. Drama offers a natural context where this social interactional and communicative function of speech may be captured. The language contained within drama aims to influence the thoughts and actions of the other actors/actresses as well as the audience. In the words of [27], the words in drama are adjusted to the social other.

An additional benefit of the social nature of drama is that it usually leads to enjoyable and challenging experiences for the children. Whereas traditional classroom literacy activities focus on isolated and decontextualized individual encounter with printed material, drama-based literacy instruction focuses on children engaging with meaningful printed script and each other for the purpose of fulfilling a narrative account. As mentioned previously, in this process, children not only interact with the printed material and each other, but also with potential and real audiences.

Literacy as Symbolic Activity

The importance of psychological tools (i.e., symbolic mediators) was already noted in the context of explicating the concept of mediation. Among the various psychological tools, Vygotsky viewed language to be the most important in mediating human cognitive processes. Viewed from a Vygotskian perspective, the development of literacy as a psychological tool does not simply consist of learning how to read and write. Acquiring the ability to interact with written language requires children to become familiar with a new system of representation [28].

Because literacy development involves the acquisition of a new symbolic or representational system, children need ample opportunities that allow them to experiment with various forms of representation. Vygotsky viewed symbolic use of objects, actions, and words prepared the way for children to learn literacy skills based on the use of symbols contained in reading and writing. Drama offers these opportunities for children to engage and interact with diverse symbolic representations based on objects, actions, and words. In enacting dramatic performances, children are directly experiencing the representational nature of objects (e.g., props), actions (e.g., gestural components of acting), and words (e.g., scripts for role-play). These experiences, in turn, pave the way for children's acquisition of less direct symbolic systems such as the written language printed on paper.

An important point in using drama-based methods to enhance literacy development is to focus on operating with objects and actions as detached from their usual meanings [29]. As an example, [30] note that children should be encouraged to improvise and create their own props when they cannot find the exact object needed in classroom settings. Vygotsky (1987) [12] also emphasized the importance of the ability to detach usual meanings associated with objects when acquiring a new symbolic system. Therefore, he viewed the ability of children to substitute a stick for a horse to be a noteworthy achievement in cognitive development.

Development from Oral to Written

In explaining the cause of difficulties so many school-aged children experience in learning written speech, [12] points to the main source as the dual abstracted character of written speech. That is, written speech requires an abstraction from the auditory aspects of speech (i.e., sound) as well as an abstraction from the interlocutor. Most children that begin their initial literacy instruction in schools are not well equipped to deal with this type of complex abstractedness.

Vygotsky's recommendation for dealing with this daunting challenge of learning written speech was to build on the existing skills of oral speech [11,12]. Vygotsky consistently claimed in his writings that the development of new skills and knowledge should

be built upon the already developed systems. For example, the process of learning a foreign language is enhanced by building on one one's already acquired native language. Similarly, the acquisition of scientific concepts, which is accomplished via formal instruction, is supported by the already existing system of everyday concepts, which are acquired by children's informal interactions with the world. In the process of acquiring new knowledge based on the already known, there is a bidirectional influence. More specifically, as the existing knowledge system supports the learning of the new, the newly developing system also enriches the already developed system. Already developed system of oral language supports the development of literacy skills. In turn, the acquisition of literacy skills allows children to become conscious of the nature of their oral speech. These processes lead to the development of metalinguistic awareness.

Continuing Vygotsky's line of reasoning, socioculturally oriented literacy researchers [30] offer drama as a useful context to continue the language development process from the oral to the written. This is because drama allows for the transformation of written speech to oral speech and requires that children act out the written message rather than relying on verbal descriptions alone. Furthermore, by providing sound, actual interlocutors, and visible audience, the context of language use becomes less abstract, fuller and more saturated with meaning. In relation to the purposefulness of literacy, written speech in drama serves the function of influencing other actors and to communicate meaningful events to the audiences.

The Dialogical Nature of Human Consciousness

It was previously pointed out in elaborating the sociocultural view of human development that even the innermost thought processes retain their dialogical character as individual cognitive processes originated in real human communicative interactions. This is why Vygotsky (1987) [12] consistently uses the term written speech when referring to printed material. More specifically, Vygotsky described written speech as "A conversation with a white sheet of paper, with an imaginary or conceptualized interlocutor" (p. 202). Furthermore, the absence of an immediate interlocutor in these speeches with a piece of paper was pointed out as one of the main factors causing difficulty for children beginning to acquire literacy.

Drama captures the inherent dialogical nature of all human psychological development, including speech, whether in written or oral forms. The genre of drama and its enactment brings to life the abstract nature of dialogues hidden in the written speech. Conversations with a piece of paper predicated on a distant interlocutor are transformed into conversations on stage with real people. In this transformation process, the motivation for speech becomes clearer for children. Children understand a question demands an answer and that a need produces a request [12]. This speech motive, in turn, is a critical factor in literacy development.

Building on Children's Interests and Needs

Vygotsky consistently emphasized the importance of grounding instruction in children's interests and needs. Specifically, with regard to literacy instruction, he noted that teaching must be set up so that reading and writing satisfy the child's needs [31]. The desire to fulfill adult roles is a characteristic of children beginning to acquire literacy in Western societies, including the US [18]. Because children in these societies are usually segregated from the work and other aspects of adult life, they strive toward emulating adult roles in play and other child-oriented activities. Dramatization of written genres of children's choice provides them with opportunities to work out the "Scripts" of everyday life, to encounter adult skills, roles, beliefs, and values in a meaningful context [32].

Engaging in dramatic plays supports children to see that language, whether written or spoken, serves important real-life functions that are relevant and meaningful to their daily lives. It is important in this context to allow children freedom to choose their own written materials to dramatize. The content of the written work must be meaningful and relevant to the children themselves. The genre of choice could already be in the form of a drama, or children could work collaboratively with the teacher to transform other genres (e.g., short stories or fairy tales) into scripts for dramatic performance.

Focusing on Meaning and Intentions

One distinguishing feature of oral face-to-face linguistic interaction is the fact that people rely on non-verbal as well as verbal elements to communicate their intentions. Intonation, facial expressions, and gestures are but a few of the paralinguistic features that people rely on to communicate and extract meaning in actual conversations. It is extremely difficult, if not impossible, for these paralinguistic features to find expressions in the written medium. As Olson notes (1995) [33], an utterance spoken with an ironic tone is represented in writing the same way as the same utterance spoken with a serious tone. Writers devise various literary techniques to achieve the same effects of paralinguistic elements and readers often engage in reading between the lines. However, there is a limitation to what literary methods and reading between the lines can achieve in communicating and interpreting the intentions of communicators without recourse to dramatic intonation and subtle gestures or expressions.

As Olson (1995) [33] notes, a critical aspect of successful reading lies in understanding what the written script fails to represent, as well as in comprehending what the written material represents. Vygotsky (1987) [12] considered people's intentions, hidden meanings, and motivation to be the essential elements in understanding people's thoughts and actions. Often what is not said communicates a more important meaning than what is directly communicated in words. This was the reason behind Vygotsky's intense interest in the theater. A skilled actor interprets the same

text in various ways [33] and represents those diverse interpretations on stage via various paralinguistic means.

Grounding literacy instruction in drama and its performance allows children to vividly experience and enact the paralinguistic features, namely, those indirectly communicated messages that appear between the lines in the written medium. Children also learn there are multiple ways to interpret a text depending on how one understands the other's intentions and hidden meanings. What is not communicated directly becomes a specific focus of children's actions within dramatic performances as they experiment with interpreting diverse human intentions and meanings.

Utilizing Multimodal Texts

It was previously noted that acquiring literacy is developing a new system of symbolic representation. In this context, the written speech acquired in a given culture is just one form, among many others, of representing meanings via human-created symbols. There is nothing inherent in the printed material that gives it meaning. The written material achieves meaning because people agree on the rules of the representational system and on how to use it to communicate meanings. Therefore, the important issue is in understanding the rules that regulate the use of the symbolic system.

Following this line of reasoning, literacy researchers [34] have identified the use of multimodal texts as the optimal medium in supporting children's understanding that same meanings may be realized through different media. This is also related to the notion of utilizing paralinguistic means to communicate intentions and meanings. Drama offers a context in which children can explore the various modes (i.e., written, oral, paralinguistic) that are employed to communicate same or similar meanings.

The Importance of Adult Mediation

The basic premise of Vygotskian sociocultural theory is that human development and learning proceeds via social interaction. Furthermore, the social interaction is based on the more capable person guiding and supporting the learning of the less competent. The support and guidance continues until the novice can accomplish on his or her own what was only possible with the help of the expert. As Rogoff notes (2003) [18], adults provide support for children in various forms (e.g., formal and informal) in many domains of skills and knowledge (e.g., numeracy and literacy) across various settings (e.g., home and school).

The domain of literacy instruction is not an exception to the general sociocultural principles underlying human learning. Children develop their literacy skills via the support of adults, who are more skillful and knowledgeable about using the cultural tool of literacy to communicate meanings in human interactions. Karpov (2005) [35] notes that the motive to engage in role-play and dramatic plays develops only with adult mediation. In other words, children do not spontaneously engage in creating drama from other written materials, nor do they attempt at theatrical performances based on already existing dramas. Adult mediation is critical [36] in getting children involved in drama-based literacy development.

Drama offers many points at which teachers can enter into interactions with children to enhance their literacy development. Teachers can help children find appropriate materials to recreate as a drama, or find already existing dramas based on children's needs and interests. At the stage of performing the drama, teachers can encourage children to create props [30] to enhance their ability to use object substitutes [35] detached from their usual meaning (e.g., creating a house made of cardboard boxes). Teachers can also encourage children to engage in an extended performance of the drama, stretching over several days. Bodrova and Leong (2007) [30] note that this stretch in time frame greatly improves the quality of children's role-playing.

Drama, Literacy, and Beyond

The effects of grounding literacy instruction in drama and dramatic enactments go beyond providing support for children in their initial explorations into the written language of their culture. Because the language of drama serves as a natural link between oral and written speech (i.e., written script for oral enactment), children can build metalinguistic awareness by critically reflecting on the use of language for communicative purposes. As noted previously, drama provides a context in which the developing literacy skills can build on the already developed oral skills. From crossing the bridge that connects oral and written modes, children come to reflect on the functional use of language, whether in the written or the spoken forms.

In addition to experiencing language at a more conscious level, dramatic enactments offer children with opportunities to develop various aspects of cognitive abilities. This is in line with the Vygotskian view of literacy, which defines it as a cultural tool that mediates individual's cognitive development [37]. In the process of enacting written script in dramatic performances, children develop self-regulation, planning skills, cognitive decentering, imagination, motivation, attention and memory skills, as well as moral values and beliefs [30,36].

Self-regulation and voluntary management of behavior are developed as children act according to their roles in the drama. They learn that they need to control their impulsive behavior if the role-playing is to be successful. Planning skills develop when children distribute various roles among themselves and arrange for stage settings and props. Cognitive decentering is achieved as children realize they need to consider others' perspectives when role-playing in a drama. Often, children need to consider the subtext underlying others' actions and words and this requires a complex cognitive skill in taking the perspective of others. These experiences further promote the development of the ability to feel empathy and share experiences with others as well as reflective thinking [36].

Imagination is promoted as the transformation from one mode of representation (e.g., from written to oral and from oral to gestural communication) to another will entail creativity on the part of the transformer. For example, children could play around with the settings or put a new twist on the plot to achieve greater dramatic effects. At the enactment stage, children can also use their imagination to redimensionalize [38] the space, time, events, and characters. More specifically, what the children experienced as a two-dimensional world captured in printed writing becomes a multiple- dimensional world as children use their whole body and other objects to recreate the contents of the written material. These creative outlets also give children a sense of ownership [10], which in turn increases children's motivation to explore in and engage with the world of imagination.

The development of attention is fostered as children need to be constantly monitoring the unfolding of events within dramatic performances. Children not only need to be constantly aware of their lines, but they must be consistently paying attention to the entire flow of drama as their roles and lines are embedded within others' words and actions. In terms of memory skills, there are opportunities for their development when children decide to perform without relying on the script. In this context, children not only have to memorize the words contained in their lines, but also when the lines are to be spoken as well as the actions and facial expressions that accompany their lines. Finally, the moral values and beliefs promoted in the wider cultural world may be communicated via the characters and events of the drama. By having an opportunity to indirectly experience the values and beliefs that might differ from the ones they are accustomed to, children can begin to appreciate the diversity within a seemingly homogeneous sociocultural setting.

The benefits that can be derived from grounding literacy instruction in drama are tremendous for many aspects of children's intellectual development. However, the cognitive deficiencies that may result from not considering the interrelationships among literacy, drama, and intellectual abilities may merit even greater attention. As Karpov (2005) [35] notes, children's motivation to engage in role-playing does not develop spontaneously. Adults, especially teachers in formal instructional settings need to constantly provide children with opportunities to integrate language and action in a meaningful social context [39]. Furthermore, the quality of drama and its enactment will depend on teachers' mediation [30]. Teachers need to intervene to encourage diverse symbolic representations and actions. Teachers also must encourage children to explore complex themes contained in dramas and to take on multifaceted roles. Teacher's role as mediator in pushing children's cognitive development through drama-based literacy instruction is in perfect alignment with Vygotkskian sociocultural notion of human learning and development. That is, people who are more competent (e.g., teachers) with using cultural tools (e.g., literacy) support the learning of less competent people (e.g., children) until they can independently use the cultural tools on their own.

Conclusions

The present paper began by identifying literacy as a socioculturally situated practice that involves meaningful interactions with the written language. This view of literacy is largely based on the sociocultural theory originating from the works of Vygotsky and his followers. Within this theoretical framework, human development and learning is embedded in a dynamic interrelationship between social, cultural, and historical context on the one hand, and human mental processes on the other. All specifically human mental functioning originates in actual human relationships. In this process, people who are more knowledgeable about and skillful in using cultural tools support the novice in acquiring these tools. This support continues until the initially less competent person can use the cultural tools independently to mediate his or her individual cognitive processes.

Literacy is one of the most important cultural tools people need to become capable of using in order to more effectively interact with each other as well as with their environment. Functions of speech at the interpsychological plane are mainly communicative in nature. Communications between two or people serve to indicate their meanings and intentions. When people internalize these communicative functions, speech serves to mediate the development of intellectual capacities at the intrapsychological level. The development of motivation, self-regulation, memory, and attention are based on this mechanism.

Vygotskian sociocultural theory also offers guidelines for how more competent users of cultural tools may support the learning of less competent people. With specific regard to literacy in formal instructional settings, the theory would suggest that literacy should be first and foremost be viewed as a social, cultural, and symbolic activity. The meaning of activity in a Vygotskian perspective assumes that it is purposeful and directed at a specific goal [40]. Literacy as an activity is purposeful in the sense that it is used to fulfill meaning-making and communicative functions in human interactions [41]. The dialogical nature of human communication is retained in all modes of speech (i.e., written and oral) as well as in the sphere of human consciousness.

The communication of meaning can be realized in various modes. The oral mode of communication usually precedes the development of the written mode. As building from the already developed to developing systems is an important principle of learning in a sociocultural framework, effective literacy instruction should build on the oral skills children have already developed before coming to school. This not only follows the natural developmental sequence, but also allows children to see literacy as a means to communicate meanings based on their interests and needs.

The presence of more competent individuals is an essential element in Vygotsky's theory of development. This applies to the area of literacy instruction as the more competent people can mediate the literate behaviors of children [42] that are in the process

of developing. In this context, the role of teachers cannot be over-emphasized in engaging children to explore the written medium of communication and understanding. Not only will children not initiate linguistic interactions spontaneously, but the quality of these interactions will be determined by teachers' participation. From organizing the environment and structuring literacy events to creating and finding rich multi-modal texts, teachers' support becomes critical in pushing children's development of literacy and cognitive skills.

The scope and presentation of the topic of drama-based literacy instruction has necessarily been limited, as a comprehensive treatment of the issue would have required a book-length format. Considering that research into socioculturally based literacy instruction is only in its beginning stages and drama-based instruction is gaining increased attention from various literacy researchers [26,30], the potential for further development in this area still await to be discovered.

With this potential in mind, this paper will conclude with a few guidelines for further research. First, not all written language lends itself to drama [43]. Finding already existing children's drama and locating genres that are conducive to drama would make a great contribution to current literature. Second, the inclusion of technology has increased the scope of the meaning of "Multi-Modal" texts. Both drama and its enactment could benefit from the new technological resources. Finally, considering the changing nature of the educational context both within the US and globally, the nature of multiple literacies should be explored. This would enrich the understandings of both teachers and children that literacy is a dynamic socioculturally situated practice that people around the world use as cultural tools to carry out meaningful social interactions.

References

1. Hall N, Larson J, Marsh J (2003) Preface In: N Hall, J Larson, & J Marsh (Eds.) Handbook of early childhood literacy. Thousand Oaks, Sage, CA.

2. Daniels H (2001) Vygotsky and pedagogy. Routledge Falmer, New York.

3. Dixon-Krauss L (1996) (Ed.) Vygotsky in the classroom: Mediated literacy instruction and assessment. White Plains Longman, NY.

4. Lee CD and Smagorinsky P (2000) (Eds.) Vygotskian perspectives on literacy research. Cambridge University Press, New York.

5. Wertsch JV, del Río P, Alvarez A (1995) Sociocultural studies: History, action, and mediation. In: JV Wertsch, P del Río, & A Alvarez (Eds.) Sociocultural studies of mind (pp. 1-34). Cambridge University Press, New York.

6. Moll LC (1990) (Ed.) Vygotsky and education: Instructional implications and applications of sociohistorical psychology. Cambridge University Press, New York.

7. Zinchenko VP (1995) Cultural-historical psychology and the psychological theory of activity: Retrospect and prospect. In: JV Wertsch, P del Río, & A Alvarez (Eds.) Sociocultural studies of mind. Cambridge University Press, New York: 37-55.

8. Lantolf JP (1999) Second culture acquisition: Cognitive considerations. In: E. Hinkel (Ed.) Culture in second language teaching and learning. Cambridge University Press, New York: 28-46.

9. Wertsch JV (1985) Vygotsky and the social formation of mind. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA.

10. Newman F, Holzman L (1993) Lev Vygotsky: Revolutionary scientist. Routledge, New York.

11. Vygotsky LS (1978) Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes. Harvard University Press Cambridge, MA:1-159.

12. Vygotsky LS (1987) The collected works of L S Vygotsky. Vol. 1. Problems of general psychology. In: N Minick, Trans. RW Rieber & AS Carton, Eds. Plenum Press, New York.

13. Author (2008).

14. Authors (2008).

15. Bakhtin MM (1981) The dialogical imagination. In: M Holquist, (Ed.) C Emerson & M Holquist (Trans). University of Texas Press, Austin.

16. Wertsch JV (1980) The significance of dialogue in Vygotsky's account of social, egocentric, and inner speech. Contemporary Educational Psychology 5: 150-174.

17. Ageyev VS (2003) Vygotsky in the mirror of cultural interpretations. In: A Kozulin, B Gindis, VS Ageyev, & SM Miller Eds, Vygotsky's educational theory in cultural context. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge: 432-449.

18. Rogoff B (2003) The cultural nature of human development. Oxford University Press, New York.

19. Kozulin A (1990) Vygotsky's psychology: A biography of ideas. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA.

20. Kozulin A (2003) Psychological tools and mediated learning. In: A Kozulin, B Gindis, VS Ageyev, & SM Miller (Eds.), Vygotsky's educational theory in cultural context. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge: 15-38.

21. Wertsch JV (1981) The concept of activity in Soviet psychology: An introduction. In: JV Wertsch (Ed.), The concept of activity in Soviet psychology. Armonk, ME Sharpe Inc, NY: 3-36.

22. Donato R (1994) Collective scaffolding in second language learning. In: JP Lantolf & G Appel (Eds.), Vygotskian approaches to second language research. Ablex Publishing Corporation, Norwood, NJ: 33-56.

23. Ashton P (1996) The concept of activity. In: L Dixon-Krauss (Ed.), Vygotsky in the classroom: Mediated literacy instruction and assessment. Longman Publishers, White Plains, NY: 111-124.

24. Mercado CI (2005) Reflections on the study of households in New York City and Long Island: A different route, a common destination. In: N González, LC Moll, & C Amanti (Eds.), Funds of knowledge: Theorizing practices in households, communities, and classrooms. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Mahwah, NJ.

25. Barton D, & Hamilton M (1998) Local literacies: Reading and writing in one community. Routledge, London.

26. Baldwin P, & Flemming K (2003) Teaching literacy through drama: Creative approaches. New York: Routledge Falmer.

27. Valsiner J, & van der Veer R (2000) The social mind: Construction of the idea. Cambridge University Press, New York.

28. Wertsch JV (1991) Sociocultural setting and the zone of proximal development" The problem of text-based realities. In: LT Landsmann (Ed), Culture, schooling, and psychological development. Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing Corporation: 71-86.

29. Hedegaard M (2007) The development of children's conceptual relation to the world, with focus on concept formation in preschool children's activity. In: H Daniels, M Cole, & JV Wertsch (Eds.), The Cambridge companion to Vygotsky. Cambridge University Press, New York: 246-275.

30. Bodrova E, & Leong DJ (2007) Play and literacy: A Vygotskian approach. In: KA Roskos & JF Christie (Eds.), Play and literacy in early childhood: Research from multiple perspectives. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, New York: 185-200.

31. Vygotsky LS (1997) The history of the development of higher mental functions. In: RW Reiber (Ed.), The collected works of LS Vygotsky: Vol 4. (M. J. Hall, Trans.). (Original work published in 1983.)

32. Rogoff B (1990) Apprenticeship in thinking: Cognitive development in social context. Oxford University Press, New York.

33. Olson DR (1995) Writing and the mind. In: JV Wertsch, P. Del Río, & Al. Alvarez (Eds.), Sociocultural studies of mind. Cambridge University Press, New York: 95-123.

34. Kress G (1997) Before writing: Rethinking the paths to literacy. Routledge, London.

35. Karpov YV (2005) The neo-Vygotskian approach to child development. Cambridge University Press, New York.

36. Burmenskaia GV (1997) The psychology of development. In: EL Grigorenko, P Ruzgis, & RJ Sternberg (Eds.), Psychology of Russia: Past, present, future. Commack, Nova Science Publishers, NY: 215-249.

37. Cole M (1996) Cultural psychology: A once and future discipline. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA.

38. Rowe DW (2007) Brining books to life: The role of book-related dramatic play in young children's literacy learning. In: KA Roskos, & JF Christie (Eds.), Play and literacy in early childhood: Research from multiple perspectives. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, New York: 37-63.

39. Combs M (1996) Emerging readers and writers. In: L Dixon-Krauss (Ed.), Vygotsky in the classroom: Mediated literacy instruction and assessment. White Plains, Longman Publishers, NY: 25-41.

40. Leont'ev AN (1981) The problem of activity in psychology. In: JV Wertsch (Ed.), The concept of activity in Soviet psychology. Armonk, Sharpe, NY.

41. Moll LC, & Whitmore KF (1993) Vygotsky in classroom practice: Moving from individual transmission to social transaction. In: EA Forman, N Minick, & CA Stone (Eds.), Contexts for learning: Sociocultural dynamics in children's development. Oxford University Press, New York: 19-42.

42. Gallimore R, & Goldenberg C (1993) Activity settings of early literacy: Home and school factors in children's emergent literacy. In: EA Forman, N Minick, & CA Stone (Eds.), Contexts for learning: Sociocultural dynamics in children's development. Oxford University Press: New York: 315-335.

43. Authors (2009).