

## THE COMPARISON OF SOCIOHISTORICAL AND SOCIOCULTURAL THEORIES IN EDUCATION

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### ABSTRACT

*We do not just live in a social world; the social world is already within us determining how we think. At a general level, Vygotsky's sociohistorical theory has its roots in this perspective that emphasized the importance of cultural-historical context in which learning takes place and how that context has impact on what is learned. Later on, Vygotsky's followers suggested that "sociocultural" is a better term when it comes to deal with how this theory has been applied in current debates in the human sciences, at least in the West, because Western European psychologists were claiming that Vygotsky's studies were the subject of a dispute in USSR. However, these two terms get mixed up most of the time. Therefore, this paper is primarily focused on examination, comparison and discussion of sociohistorical theory and sociocultural theory and instructional approaches of socio/historical-cultural theory.*

**Key Words:** Sociohistorical Theory, Sociocultural Theory, Education.

### ÖZET

*Sadece sosyal bir çevrede yaşamıyoruz, içinde bulunduğumuz sosyal çevre aynı zamanda düşünce yapımızı da şekillendirmektedir. Genel çerçevede, Vygotsky'nin sosyo-tarihsel gelişim teorisinin kaynağı bu görüş olup, öğrenmenin gerçekleştiği kültürel-tarihsel (cultural-historical) bağlamın önemine ve bu bağlamın öğrenme üzerindeki etkilerine yer vermektedir. Daha sonra, Vygotsky'nin yandaşları teorisinin "sosyo-kültürel" olarak adlandırılmasının beşeri bilimlerdeki tartışmalarda, en azından batıda, daha uygun bir kavram olacağını önerirler, çünkü batı Avrupa'daki araştırmacılar Vygotsky'nin çalışmalarının sadece Rusya Cumhuriyeti'ni temel aldığı savunmuşlardır. Dolayısı ile bu iki kavram çoğu zaman karıştırılmaktadır. Bu nedenle, bu yazının amacı sosyo-tarihsel gelişim*

*teorisi ile sosyo-kültürel gelişim teorisini ve sosyo/ tarihsel-kültürel gelişim teorilerinin eğitime yaklaşımlarını incelemek, karşılaştırmak ve tartışmaktır.*

**Anahtar Sözcükler:** *Sosyo-Tarihsel Gelişim Teorisi, Sosyo-Kültürel Gelişim Teorisi, Eğitim.*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Today's students learn in a variety of situations. They acquire knowledge by using computers, reading books, listening to lectures, doing laboratory activities, and participating in discussions. Use of the information processing model to restructure instruction, although necessary, is insufficient to stimulate student learning. This led to the development of a new theory called social-constructivism and has gained growing attention in education over past the years.

Constructivist teaching emphasizes that children have to build their own scientific- knowledge. Within this process teachers help children to construct scientifically valid interpretations of the world, guide them in altering their scientific misconceptions and teach them to think. In the constructivist approach, at each step teachers need to interpret new knowledge into children's minds. However, students learn differently from each other. This means that teachers are to use different methods according to different learning styles. However, do we seek a teaching method due to how students prefer to learn or how they actually learn best? Three methods have been developed by teachers for these purposes: provide strategies for identifying and focusing student interest, find appropriate outlets for student's products and provide an appropriate "environment" for learning. One can understand from that learning is not only developmental but also social unless knowledge is relevant and meaningful for children to acquire it and put to use.

We do not just live in a social world, that social world is already within us, determining how we think. The ways in which we talk and interact with other people become internalized and change the ways we think (Vygotsky, 1978). This may be the reason why many newer constructivist theories and approaches have their roots in Vygotsky's sociohistorical theory. When we are in learning environments that allow us to take full advantage of what others have to offer, to really interact and learn from those around us, we create new potentials for ways of thinking. Learning then involves being able to attend to the demonstrations being offered by other learners and to confer with others about our understandings of our world. We need learning environments where

we can see others actively learning and can engage in many collaborative dialogues about our ideas and experiences.

Sociohistorical theory is based upon the work of Lev Vygotsky, a Russian psychologist who was concerned mostly with general ideas about learning. Vygotsky argues that a child's development cannot be understood by a study of the individual. We must also examine the external social world in which that individual life has developed. Vygotsky (1986) described learning as being embedded within social events and occurring as a child interacts with people, objects, and events in the environment. He emphasized more than other thinkers, the links between social factors of cultural and historical nature and those of a more interpersonal nature. He believed that language was not only a cognitive tool of communication, but that the use of the tool has shaped our cultural evolution. Institutions, tools, and symbol systems are, therefore, products of human beings, developed in various ways by different and diverse cultures over historical time.

Based on the Vygotskian perspective, interpersonal interactions can only be understood in the context of, or with reference to, these same cultural and historical forms. As an illustration, to understand completely the nature and processes of interaction between adults and children in an instructional setting, such as school, reference must be made to the meaning imparted by that particular historically and culturally organized context, to the tools of learning, and to the meaning that the interaction itself plays out on the children themselves. Social and cultural institutions, technologies, and tools, therefore drive the nature and focus of interpersonal interactions. These same interactions, in turn, mediate the development of children's higher mental functions, such as thinking, reasoning, problem solving, memory, and language.

Clearly, sociohistorical theory is much more complex than this brief description might lead one to believe. Thus, this paper will primarily focus on the examination of four main themes: (1) the major goals of sociohistorical theory, (2) the major goals of sociocultural theory, (3) the discussion of sociocultural theory versus sociohistorical theory, and (4) instructional implications and applications of socio/historical-cultural theories.

## **2. VYGOTSKY'S SOCIOHISTORICAL THEORY**

Sociohistorical theory aimed to create an account of human mental processes that recognizes the essential relationship between these processes and their cultural, historical, and instructional settings (Cole & Scribner, 1978; Wertsch, del Rio & Alvarez, 1995). At a general level, this perspective asserts that action is mediated and that it cannot be separated from the social

environment in which it is carried out (Wertsch, Del Rio & Alvarez, 1995). The theory has its root in Vygotsky's work in 1920s. Vygotsky had read the early writings of Gesell, Werner, and Piaget, and he recognized the importance of the kinds of intrinsic development they were addressing. At the same time, Vygotsky was a Marxist who believed that one can only understand human beings in the context of the sociohistorical environment (Blanck, 1990).

Since Vygotsky tried to create a psychology along Marxist lines, it will be helpful to briefly review some of the ideas of Karl Marx (1818-1883) on human nature before discussing sociohistorical theory. The first fact, which influenced Vygotsky, is Engels' conception of tool-use and human evolution, which were new ways of cooperating and communicating, and developed capacities for planning. Vygotsky attempted to extend this insight by proposing "psychological tools" that include the use of signs such as letters and speech. He claimed one cannot understand human thinking without examining the signs that culture provides (Vygotsky, 1978).

Second, Vygotsky was influenced by Marx's idea of consciousness and belief that what people think depends on their material life, the way in which they work, produce, and exchange goods. Within this perspective, Vygotsky highlighted the importance of situating individuals within specific social systems of interactions (Vygotsky, 1978). The last Marx's view that influenced Vygotsky is the dialectical process, a series of conflicts and resolutions. This meant a new force of production came into conflict with the existing social system, and the new social system was installed. In Vygotsky's studies this view appeared as a transformation of elementary mental functions into higher ones (Vygotsky, 1978).

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Vygotsky's sociocultural theory can be categorized into three basic themes: (a) genetic analysis is the way to understand the origin and the transitions of mental functioning, (b) higher mental functioning has its origin in social life, and (c) human action is mediated by tools and signs (Wertsch, 1991). Next, these themes will be summarized separately even though they are interrelated closely to each other.

### **2.1. Genetic Analysis**

Genetic analysis, from Vygotsky's perspective is motivated by the assumption that mental functioning can be understood if one knows his origin and the transition he has undergone. According to Vygotsky, psychological experiments that are mostly based on stimulus-response interpretations can only determine quantitative variation in the complexity of stimuli and in the

responses of different animals and humans at different stages of development (Rieber, 1987). Vygotsky (1978: 58) reflected these weaknesses as following:

*Despite great diversity in procedural details, virtually all psychological experiments rely on what we shall term a stimulus-response framework. By this we mean that no matter what psychological process is under discussion, the psychologist seeks to confront the subject with some kind of stimulus situation designated to influence him in a particular way, and then the psychologist examines and analyzes the response(s) elicited by that stimulating situation.*

The keystones of Vygotsky's method had its root in Engels' naturalistic and dialectical approaches to the understanding human ecology. Naturalism in historical analysis has the assumption that only nature affects human beings and only natural conditions determine historical development. The dialectical approach also admitted this influence and asserted that one affects nature and creates through his changes in nature. Vygotsky and his collaborator developed this idea and called their new approach as "transforming reaction on nature" (1978: 61). According to this approach there are three main principles of analyzing higher mental functions:

1. Analyzing processes, not objects. It means developing an experimental method that creates a process of psychological development.
2. Explanation versus description that provides a "phenotypic" account of phenomena that can be properly understood only through "genotypic" analysis. For instance, a bat, from the point of view of its outer appearance, stands closer to the bird family than to the mammal, but in its biological nature it is closer to a cow or a rat than to an eagle or hawk. This distinction can be applied between phenotypic (descriptive) and genotypic (explanatory) viewpoints to psychology. Sociohistorical theory named these real links between the external stimuli and internal responses that underline higher forms of behavior by "introspective descriptions" (Vygotsky, 1978: 63).
3. The problem of "fossilized behavior" claimed that researchers need to concentrate not on the product of development but on the very process by which higher forms are established (Wertsch, 1991).

In the early statements of these principles and in later applications, sociohistorical theory of human development takes account four historical levels (Cole, 1990): (a) phylogenetic level that characterizes the development of people in specific form of activity, (b) the historical level that means to study something in the process of change, (c) ontogenetic level that answers the history of individual, (d) microgenesis level that focuses the development of particular psychological processes in the course of experimental interactions in a single experimental session.

This level helps to objectify inner psychological processes more adequately than stimulus-response methods because they are not limiting the research to just external responses. Vygotsky summarized (1978: 75) "...only objectification of inner process quarantines access to specific forms of higher behavior as opposed to subordinate forms". Next, the second theme of sociohistorical theory, "the social origin of higher mental functions" will be examined.

## 2.2. Social Origins of Mental Functioning

This approach is basically concerned that higher mental functioning in the individual is rotated in social life (Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1991, 1998). Vygotsky who have tried to apply this Marxian statement into concrete psychological terms specified the social and individual processes involved (Wertsch, 1985).

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*Any function in the child's cultural development appears twice, or on two pianos. First, it appears on the social plane, and then on the psychological plane. First it appears between people as an interpsychological category, and then within the child as an intrapsychological category. This is equally true with regard to voluntary attention, logical memory, the formation of concepts, and the development of volition. We may consider this position as a law in the full sense of the word, but it goes without saying that internalization transforms the process itself and changes its structure and functions. Social relations or relations among people genetically underlie all higher functions and their relationships (Vygotsky, 1981, 163).*

Mental functioning in the individual derives from participation in social life. Vygotsky (1978) explained that as a composition of genetic structure and means of action. However, one should not assume that higher mental functioning in the individual is a direct and simple copy of socially organized processes. This is about the transformation involved the internalization which means internal reconstruction of an external operation (Wertsch, 1985).

Vygotsky (1978: 56) explained it by an example of development of pointing in children.

*The child attempts to grasp an object placed beyond his reach: his hands, stretched toward that object, remain poised in the air. His fingers make grasping movements. At this stage pointing is representing by the child's movement, which seems to be pointing to an object-that and noting more. When the mother comes to the child's aid and realizes his movement indicates something, the situation changes fundamentally. Pointing becomes a gesture for others.*

This example describes how unsuccessful attempt to grasp something is understood by others. Later, the child's object-oriented movement becomes a movement aimed at another person. In short, "the grasping movement changes to the act of pointing" (Vygotsky, 1978: 57). A series of transformations involved internalization. First, an operation that initially represents an external activity is reconstructed and begins to occur internally. The higher mental process is developed by the transformation of sign-using activity, the history and characteristics of practical intelligence, voluntary attention and memory. Second one is the transformation of an interpersonal process into an intrapersonal one. Every function in the child's cultural development first occur between people (interpsychological), and then inside the child (intrapsychological). Voluntary attention, logical memory, and the formation of concepts are equally applied. The third transformation is about a long series of developmental events that happens between the transformation of an external and internal activity (Vygotsky, 1978).

Vygotsky's zone of proximal development (ZPD) has a clear connection with his social origins of higher mental functioning in the individual. He examined the implications of ZPD for the assessment of intelligence and for the organization of instruction. According to Vygotsky, the potential development level should be the goal of instruction instead of actual developmental level. All these claims about the relationship between the actual and the potential developmental level, in fact, show us his detailed thoughts about the intramental and intermental planes of mental functioning (Wertsch, 1985).

Basically, Vygotsky's explanations about the social origins of higher mental functions did not operate within the boundaries of a single social science or humanities. In the following part his significant theme of mediation is explained.

### 2.3. Mediation

The mediation theme of sociohistorical theory supports the idea that higher mental functioning and human action in general are mediated by tools and signs (Vygotsky, 1981b). Tools refer to technical tools such as language, mathematics, writing, technology, or art. Their function is to serve as the conductor of human influence on the object of activity that makes it externally oriented. The signs, on the other hand, refer artifacts that are intended to change the internal psychological state of human beings (Vygotsky, 1978).

Of the psychological tools that mediate our thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, Vygotsky mostly emphasized language. One of his goals was to understand how different ways of speaking are related to different forms of thinking. His analysis of mediation was basically based on genetic method. Therefore, he analyzed language and other sign systems in terms of how they are a part of and mediate human action. That is why he used the term “mediated action” instead of “mediation” (Wertsch, 1991).

Vygotsky (1981c) makes a distinction between what he terms “lower, natural behavior” and “higher, cultural behavior”. Elementary perception and memory are lower biological forms of behavior that people share. On the other hand, logical memory, selective attention, decision-making, and comprehension of language are the higher forms of human mental functions that are gained by mediated activity. As mentioned before, according to Vygotsky (1978) culture, language, and social context are important psychological tools or signs for human’s cognitive development. Through the mediating actions of these tools, natural forms of behavior are transformed into higher, cultural forms that Vygotsky called “semiotic mediation” (Vygotsky, 1981c: 164).

According to sociohistorical theory there are three stages in the development of speech: social or external speech, egocentric speech, and inner speech (Vygotsky, 1986). The function of speech is at first social, used for contact and interaction with others. If one want to know how words function in an individual’s behavior, former function of the word in social context is important. Social speech carries out the task of communication and social relations with surrounding people. It is speech that children use to control the behavior of others. Children use speech to express simple thoughts and emotions such as crying, shouting, or laughing.

Egocentric speech is the link between external speech and internal thought (Vygotsky, 1981c). It is a stage distinguished by external signs and eternal operations that are used to solve internal problems. That’s the stage when the child counts on his fingers, resorts to mnemonic aids, and etc.



Inner speech is similar to internal thought. In this stage the external operations turn inward and undergoes a profound change in the process. Children begin to use their logical memory. It is the type of language that adults are using that inherent relations and inner signs are operated. Vygotsky expressed that "... (I)t branches off from the child's external speech simultaneously with the differential of the social and the egocentric functions of speech, and finally that the speech structures mastered by the child become the basic structures of his thinking" ( Vygotsky, 1986: 94).

In sum, sociohistorical theory stated children acquire the knowledge, skill, dispositions, competencies and values of their cultural community through joint activity. Assistance is most powerful when situated within the ZPD and finally, thought processes first appear on the social plane or interpsychological plane and then on the individual or intrapsychological plane. In a sense, society becomes internalized. Given the brief overview of sociohistorical theory, we can now describe the sociocultural theory.

### **3. SOCIOCULTURAL THEORY**

Sociocultural means how mental action is situated in cultural, historical, and institutional settings (Wertsch, 1991). This term also used as cultural or sociohistorical but Wertsch chose sociocultural rather than the others in order to recognize the important contribution of several disciplines and schools of thought to the study of mediation action.

One of the most significant arguments of sociocultural theory is the incapability of traditional psychological studies on to understand of mental functioning by isolated mental processes and skills. The theory claimed that it is not enable us to understand the complete picture of mental processes. Even though it is often possible to find regularities under controlled laboratory conditions, as soon as changing the conditions, more natural settings of these findings seem to disappear in the sea of real life (e.g., Rogoff & Lave, 1984; Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1985; Wertsch, 1991). Rommetveit (1979, as cited in Wertsch, 1991: 3) called it "in vacuo" which refers to one devastating effect of tendency to study the isolated individual has been to cut psychology off from dialogue with other academic disciplines and the general public. In sum, psychology has become increasingly less capable of providing insights into the major social issues of the day. It often has something to offer if one is concerned with a specific clinical syndrome or brain dysfunction, but it has had very little impact on broader social and cultural issues such as educational failure and educational reform. The following argument supports this idea:

*An emphasis on the individual has characterized decades of research carried out by American investigators studying children's intellectual milestones, IQ, memory strategies, and grammatical skills. It has also been characteristic of the incorporation of Piaget's theory into American research in the modern era (Rogoff, 199: 4).*

Even psychological research focuses narrowly on the individual or specific mental processes in vacuo, this approach has, of necessity, an interdisciplinary importance that should be recognized. One can begin to understand this mix of disciplines, and of theory and practice, by considering of the outstanding figures of this theory, L. S. Vygotsky. He dealt with many popular topics in his time, but his attempts to identify a set of issues that could provide the focus for an integrated, interdisciplinary effort were quite productive. His ZPD, scaffolding, monitoring and encouraging children's use of private speech and their transformation to the classrooms and the importance of the social context which affects thinking activities are some of his studies that influenced the education (Vygotsky, 1978, 1986). Later, these ideas were developed by several researchers. Such as Rogoff (1984) described social context as a place in which cognitive activity occurs like interaction with other people and use of socially provided tools and schemas for solving problems. Cognitive activity is socially defined, interpreted, and supported. People, usually in conjunction with each other and always guided by social norms, set goals, negotiate appropriate means to reach the goals, and assist each other in implementing the means and resetting the goals as activities evolve. As a result one can say that the development of child's thinking is guided by social interaction to adapt to the intellectual tools and skills of the culture.

### **3.1. Assumption of Sociocultural Approach**

In recent years, a variety of factors have inspired to renew interest in the issues of sociocultural approach, but this renewed interest is grounded in the assumptions that involve action, the notion of voice and other forms of semiotic mediation, an approach to mental action that emphasizes diversity rather than uniformity in the processes involved, and a concern with the cultural, institutional, and historical situatedness of mediated action.

*Action.* A fundamental assumption of a sociocultural approach to mind is about the describing and explaining the human action. On the one hand, the approach treats the individual as a passive recipient of information from environment, and on the other hand, it focuses the individual and evaluates the environment as secondary. Understanding human mental functioning can only be possible with taking action and interaction as basic analytic categories and

view accounts of the environment and human mental functioning together (Wertsch, 1991).

*Voice.* The term “voice” is derived from the Bakhtin works. According to Bakhtin, voice means speaking consciousness, or speaking personality (Wertsch, 1998). Wertsch brought together Vygotsky’s and Bakhtin’s ideas and reflected them on three basic terms. First, voice is a tool that mediated human mental action. Second, voice is a communicative process that human mental functioning is fundamentally tied. Third, voice serves as a constant reminder that mental functioning in the individual originates in social, communicative processes (Wertsch, 1991).

*Mind.* From sociocultural perspective, the term mind reflects a desire to integrate a wide range of psychological phenomena. Mental action is one of the inseparable parts of mind. Further, mental functioning is viewed as being shaped or even defined by the mediational means it employs to carry out the task. Even though when mental action is expressed by individuals in laboratory environment it is still a social activity that different forms of mediation such as computers, language or number systems used as a tool (Wertsch, 1998).

#### **4. THE DISCUSSION OF SOCIOCULTURAL VERSUS SOCIOHISTORICAL THEORIES**

Sociocultural approach explained the relationship between human actions, on the one hand, and included the cultural, intuitional, and historical situations in which that action occurs, on the other hand. The theory that derives to a large extent from the studies of Vygotsky has two themes: human action and mediation (Wertsch, J. V., Del Rio, P., & Alvarez, A., 1995).

*Action.* It may be external or internal, and it may be carried out by small or large groups or individuals. But definitely it is not an isolated psychological moment or dimension as traditional researchers said. Leont’ev’s (1981) and Vygotsky’s (1978, 1986) ideas on action played a particularly important role in formulating human action within sociocultural theory. This formulation has several complex interconnections between Leont’ev’s “theory of activity” and Vygotsky’s “cultural-historical” psychology.

Zinchenko (1995) argued that there are two points of compatibility between these ideas. First, even though Vygotsky did not explicitly formulate his ideas in terms of the theory of activity, his analyses of mental functioning, semiotic mediation, and other issues consistently focus on processes that have most these attributes later to be called action by Leont’ev and others. Second, Vygotsky formulated function and action separately and later, that lead other

scholars` to take action as a basic unit of their analysis. For instance, Rogoff (1995) and Wertsch (1995) focused on some goal-directed action such as planning and constructing an object. These studies called socialization that examining the forms of goal-directed action deemed appropriate in a sociocultural setting for a task and taught in one way or another by its experienced members. In this formulation, the student or apprentice is asked to participate actively. In such a context, socialization comes a dynamic of intermental functioning that increasing intersubjectivity between teachers, tutors, or masters and students or apprentice.

Rogoff (1990) outlined that sociocultural approach involving three planes of analysis which are personal, interpersonal, and community processes. She referred them to developmental processes corresponding with three planes of analysis as apprenticeship, guided participation, and participatory appropriation, respectively. These are inseparable planes that enable her to analyze the activities. She argued that:

*...children take part in the activities of their community, engaging with other children and with adults in routine and tacit as well as explicit collaboration (both in each others` presence and in otherwise socially structured activities) and in the process of participation become prepared for later participation in related events (Rogoff, 1995: 139).*

The above description enables us to understand that participating with other people in a social context leads to sociocultural activity. This idea has its root in Vygotsky's (1978) belief that children's cognitive development has to be understood as taking place through their interaction with other members of the society who are more conversant with the society's intellectual practices and tools for mediating intellectual activity.

The metaphor of apprenticeship provides a model in the plane of community activity that participants advance their skills and understanding in culturally organized activity such as work, school, and family relations. The concept of guided participation, on the other hand, refers to the processes and systems of involvement between people which includes not only face-to-face interaction but also side-by-side joint participation. Guided participation is thus an interpersonal process in which people manage their own and others` roles (Rogoff, 1990; Rogoff & Gardner, 1984).

The concept of participatory appropriation is the view of how development and learning transform to understanding through individual's own participation. Even though the description is similar to the concept of internalization, Rogoff

(1995) contrast with the term concerning the usage that internalization often receives in information processing and learning accounts, where it implies a separation between the person and the social context. According to her, the dynamic approach of participatory appropriation does not define cognition as a collection of thoughts, representations, memories, and plans but rather refer the active processes like thinking, re-presenting, remembering, and planning.

*Mediation.* The concept of mediation is the notion that all human activity is mediated by tools and signs (Wertsch, 1985). Putting the concept of social learning and mediation together created social mediation which emphasizes how learners participate together to socially construct knowledge (Wertsch, 1995). Vygotsky (1978) argued psychological tools providing the means through which individuals internalizes the higher mental processes. From this perspective, the mind is unlimited in the sense that its development is inseparable from the tools of mediation that extend out into the material world. In our daily lives we may not notice tools, such as pencils, computers, paint brushes, or books as an effect that shapes our thought and communication.

The theme of mediation as understood by Vygotsky (1986) is how human mental functioning is tied to cultural, institutional, and historical settings since these settings shape and provide the cultural tools that are mastered by individuals to form this functioning. He claimed that mediation and cultural tools must play an essential role in the basic formulation of sociocultural research. In his studies, semiotic mediation was the fundamental concept that explained qualitatively the internalization and transformation of interpersonal processes into intrapersonal one. In contrast, sociocultural theory focused on mediation to frame activity and action. An underlying assumption is that human accesses to the world only indirectly, or mediately, rather than directly, or immediately. This applies both with regard to how human obtain information about the world and how they act on it. Thus, mediation becomes active process that one cannot focus only on the cultural tools. Instead, mediation is best thought of a process involving the potential of cultural tools to shape action and the unique use of these tools (Wertsch, J. V., Del Rio, P., & Alvarez, A., 1995).

So far, Vygotsky's sociohistorical theory has been revised and a discussion of how this theory works as light of recent researchers is made. In sum, Vygotskian theory emphasized the importance of the cultural-historical context in which learning takes place and how that context has impact on what is learned. On the other hand, his followers (e.g., Cole & Scribner, 1978; Wertsch, del Rio & Alvarez, 1995) suggested that "sociocultural" is a better term, because sociocultural has a broader meaning that deal to understand the relationship between human mental functioning and cultural, historical, and institutional setting. In the following section, the implications of socio/historical-

cultural theories for constructing a teaching and learning environments will be examined.

## 5. INSTRUCTIONAL IMPLICATIONS AND APPLICATIONS OF SOCIO/HISTORICAL-CULTURAL THEORIES

Socio/Historical-Cultural theories lead researchers to many educational applications such as reciprocal teaching, joint activity, peer collaboration and apprenticeship. Since these concepts are very interrelated each other, they will be examined within three main terms: intersubjectivity, ZPD, and scaffolding.

*Intersubjectivity.* Wertsch and Toma (1995) described that students make an utterance because they wanted to convey information about one's beliefs and they wanted to respond in some way such as to reject, to incorporate and to take further to other's utterance. Finally, they construct an idea in collaboration with others. In accordance with Vygotsky's genetic law, with this collaboration intermental functioning and intramental functioning emerged through the process of internalization. Therefore, in classroom environment intermental functioning will be reflected in subsequent intramental functioning. Students will express their ideas and listen others thinking. Thus, during the activities, the information will be received, encoded, and stored by questioning and incorporating.

Sharing external ideas transferred to an internal plane as a natural product of participation in joint activity. Thus, intersubjectivity is achieved by communication in classroom environments and supports students' understanding and participation to the activities (Rogoff, 1990, 1995). Moreover, the mutual engagement of children provides support for development that is channeled by the sociocultural activities of individuals and their social partners.

*Zone of Proximal Development.* ZPD and the relation of teaching to cognitive development is the most well known aspect of Vygotsky's contribution to psychology. Vygotsky's (1978) concept of "Zone of Proximal Development" (p.84) systematically leads children with the help of an adult through a number of steps in the process of learning. In his book "Mind in Society" he reflected:

*... the zone of proximal development. It is the distance between actual developmental 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: 86).*

It is obvious that ZPD had mental testing implications. For instance, if one knows a student's ZPD for a particular skill, it can be predicted how that learner will independently utilize that skill in the near future. Vygotsky's discussion of the relationship between learning, development and culture also have important instructional implications. Tudge (1990) argued collaboration in the ZPD leads student to develop in culturally appropriate ways. It is now increasingly recognized that development is constructed by culture and it varies from one culture to another and, in each culture, this is continuous processes of change that one can characterize it by the cultural history everywhere.

*Scaffolding.* Due to the Vygotsky's (1986) sociohistorical theory, novices learn under the guidance of others who support their progress through adjustment of task difficulty and who provide expertise in the joint solution problem. Teaching in the ZPD provides a "scaffold" to support the child in learning. As learners become more component, the teacher gradually withdraws the scaffolding so learners can perform independently. The key is to ensure that the scaffolding keeps learners in the ZPD.

Language is one of the significant affect constitute scaffolding and so a tool while learning. Children use language as a problem-solving tool when they develop their own speech according to social attitude. Therefore, the process of internalization of social speech is occurred. This is a dynamic relation between speech and action (Vygotsky, 1986). Important thing in education should be enabled this dynamism stay active. Thus, the language we are using in classroom should be appropriate students' level of thinking.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

This paper examined sociohistorical theory from a number of different perspectives and described the implications of this perspective for constructing a teaching and learning environments. Sociohistorical theory provides us a distinctive understanding of the mind. According to the theory, social relations and culture are the sources of the mind. Vygotsky differentiated between our higher and lower mental functions conceiving our lower or elementary mental functions to be those functions that genetically inherited our natural mental abilities. In contrast, he saw our higher mental functions as developing through social interaction, being socially or culturally mediated. It is psychological tools that enable us to bridge the gap between lower and higher mental functions.

On the other hand, sociocultural perspective apply Vygotsky's ideas in a broad way by doing research in different cultures. Principles of sociocultural theory offer practical ways of improving teaching practices. All these principles are based on the key assertion that learners actively construct their own

understanding. Given the validity of this assertion, both student and instructor roles are redefined in those students become more aware of how their own practices affect their learning and teachers become more aware of their role as facilitators in the learning process. For teachers to become facilitators, they must organize both course and content in a way consistent with the way in which learning takes place, and they must help students learn how to learn.

In sum, socio/historical-cultural theory has changed the direction of teaching and learning. For educators and scholars teaching become creating opportunities. Further, teaching described as knowing what you know and find a common way to teach different cultures.

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