

Reading Recovery, Vygotsky and Me

Glen Franklin

IRRI 2016 Vancouver



Plan for the session

- Who was Vygotsky?
- The ZPD - in Vygotsky's own words (or are they?)
- Clay, Reading Recovery and Vygotsky
- Refreshing and rethinking – the theory from a different perspective

Who was Vytgotsky?

- Born in 1896 in Belarussia
- Jewish during a time of great persecution
- 21 at the time of the Russian revolution
- Teacher, lecturer, psychologist
- Died in 1934 at the age of 37 (38?)



A comprehensive psychology of human concept development

Three central facets:

- Developmental (genetic)
- Social frameworks for thinking (cultural)
- Mediated by tools and signs (artifacts)

The ‘Mozart of Psychology’

- Died young – many works unfinished, in note form or completed by students
- Theories new and unformed – where would he have gone with them?
- Marxist yet seen as subversive to ideals of the state
- Opposed to view of ‘defectology’
- Danger of imprisonment (or worse)

A knotty problem ...



How was that for you both?

- Were you successful? Or not?
- What helped or hindered?
- What did you do when you struggled?
- Did your roles change? When? Why? How?
- How did you feel about the task at the beginning?
Do you feel differently now?

The Zone of Proximal Development:

‘is the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem-solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem-solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers’ (Vygotsky, 1978: 86)

The ZPD

What a child can do with assistance today she will be able to do by herself tomorrow' (Vygotsky, 1978: 87)

A metaphor for the ZPD ...



The ZPD

- Setting
- Motive
- Discourse

Clay (1998): a caution...

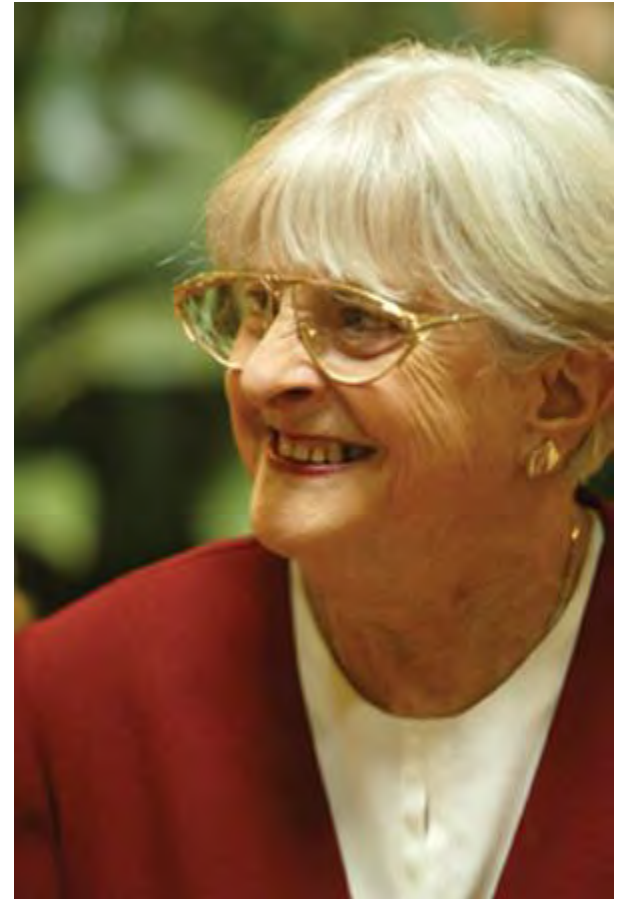
- ‘Educators should be wary of old theories constructed on the basis of old research, such as the early writing of Gesell, Piaget and Vygotsky’ (Clay, 1998: 92)

Socrates – on words ...

‘And every word, when once it is written, is bandied about, alike among those who understand and those who have no interest in it, and it knows not to whom to speak or not to speak; when ill-treated or unjustly reviled it always needs its father to help it; for it has no power to protect or help itself.’

‘I live in a perpetual state of enquiry, finding new questions to ask and then moving on. I do not have a ‘position’ or a safe haven where what is ‘right’ exists’

(Clay, 2001:3)



Clay and Cazden (1990)

Some urban myths dispelled ...?

‘No thought was given to Vygotskian theory during this program development’ (p.206)

‘The metaphorical term ‘scaffold’ [was] never used by Vygotsky’ (p.219)

Clay and Cazden (1990)

- The teacher's role as a scaffold
- Changes in the form of mediation
- The special case of conscious realization
- Development, instruction and diagnosis: '*The only good kind of instruction is that which marches ahead of development and leads it*' (citing Vygotsky on p.220).

Transcript: The Pizza Princess Teacher: Rachel Child: Oke
Week 14 Lesson 57

Rachel: So, the Pizza Princess: what did you think about her then?

Oke: I think she was very rude the first time.

Rachel: She was very rude the first time, wasn't she?

Oke: And she didn't say please or thank you.

Rachel: No, she didn't say please or thank you. And she shouted, didn't she?

Oke: She went 'I want a pizza'.

Rachel: She did. So I agree with you. I think she was very rude the first time, too.

So you were telling me how rude you thought she was. Off you go. You tell me what you thought about that princess. I agree with you there.

Oke: 'She was very rude ...'

Rachel: Off you go.

So where are we now?

Smagorinsky (2011:5): *Vygotsky and Literacy Research*

‘Vygotsky, from what I can gather, was not a fun guy, but rather an extraordinarily intense and formidably brilliant man’.

Some considerations

- a comprehensive psychology or berry-picking theory?
- What is the evidence?
- Interpretation of theory from different perspectives
- ZPD – all things to all people?

Lost in translation?



Re-envisioning the ZPD ...



... to ...



Rethinking the ZPD for RR in 2016

- a tool-mediated construction zone in which activity is directed towards social goals
- A collective zone rather than individual
- The child as active agent of own learning
- the learner as teacher
- The teacher as learner

The ZPD as a construction zone?





Plenary and questions ...

THANK YOU!