Analyzing Theories of Second Language Learning

Chapter 6
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3 Approaches to Understanding Language Development:

- Piagetian View

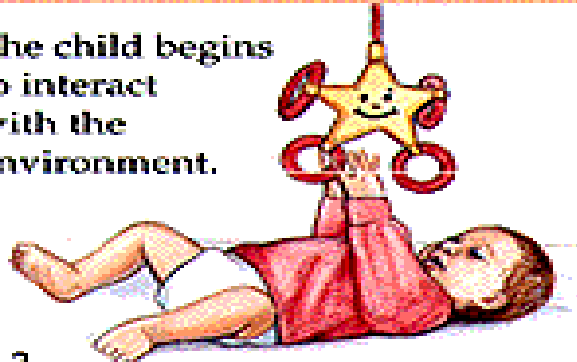- Input/Interaction View

- Sociocultural Theory (SCT)

Jean Piaget (1896-1980)

Source: http://www.biography.com/people/jean-piaget-9439915

Piaget's Stages of Development

Input and Interaction View

I. **Input View:** '*In-the-head' Phenomenon*

    Language is innate, thus acquired. - (N. Chomsky, S. Krashen)

   Alternative View:
    Knowledge emerges by one's interaction with the environment. - (J. Piaget -no specific theory of language)

II. **Interaction View:** *'Between-Heads' Approach*

    Language is acquired through interaction and the negotiation of meaning - (*an extension of Krashen's view*)**.** (M. Long)

   Alternate View*:*
    Language develops in a social context via the mediation of one's knowledge by others and/or objects in the environment.
    - (L. Vygotsky)

Summary of Input and Interaction Views of Language Learning:

Input View

Language is an 'in-the-head' phenomenon, and its system of forms is innate and rule-governed.

$(i + 1)$ ('the initial state + a little bit more') - messages must be comprehensible and slightly more complex than that of a speaker's current linguistic knowledge.

Interaction View

This view entails a 'between-heads' approach. Acquisition takes place during interaction. When learners interact they negotiate meaning and in the process, they learn new forms.

Krashen's SLA Theory

Visit the website: http://www.sk.com.br/sk-krash.html and review Krashen's 5 hypotheses.

Source: http://www.sk.com.br/sk-krash.html

Krashen's (i+1) represents what the teacher does FOR the learner.

Lev S. Vygotsky (1896-1934)

Culture is the primary determinant of cognitive development.

Sociocultural Theory (SCT): Major Concepts

- Zone of Proximal Development

- Mediation

- Internalization
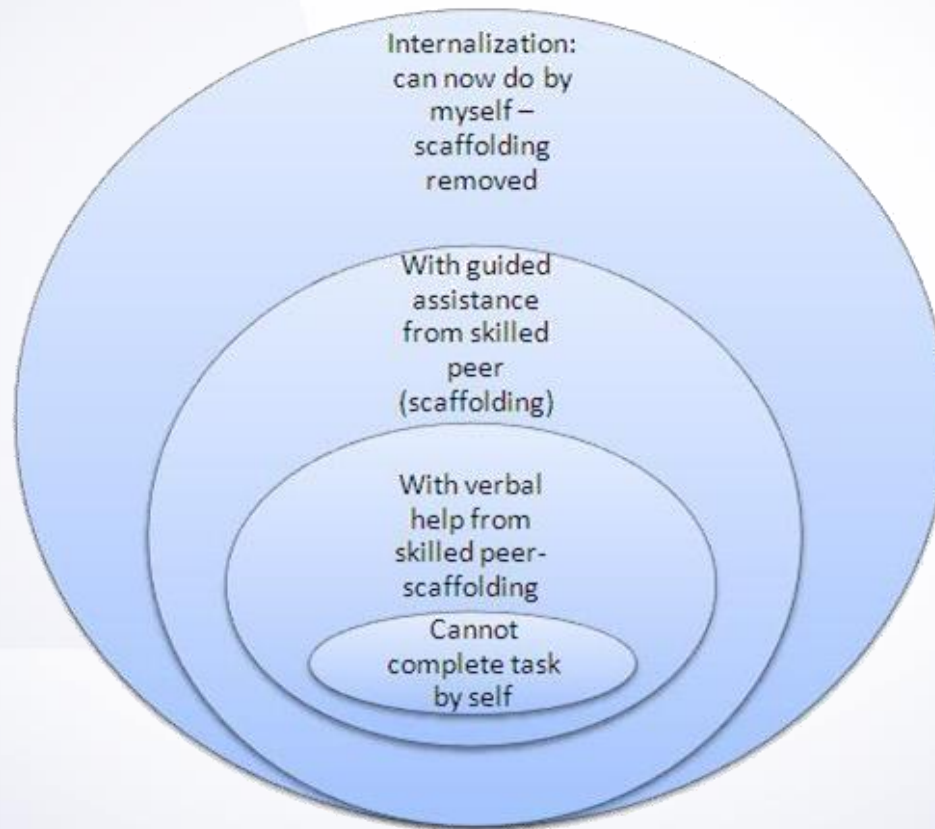
- Regulation

- Intersubjectivity

Source: ClipArt

Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)

"The distance between the 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, p86).

Zone of Proximal Development

Internalization: can now do by myself – scaffolding removed

With guided assistance from skilled peer (scaffolding)

With verbal help from skilled peer- scaffolding

Cannot complete task by self

Source: http://tadahgroup.files.wordpress.com/2009/11/untitled2.jpg

The ZPD represents what the teacher does WITH the learner.

Source: http://esl.fis.edu/teachers/fis/scaffold/page1.htm
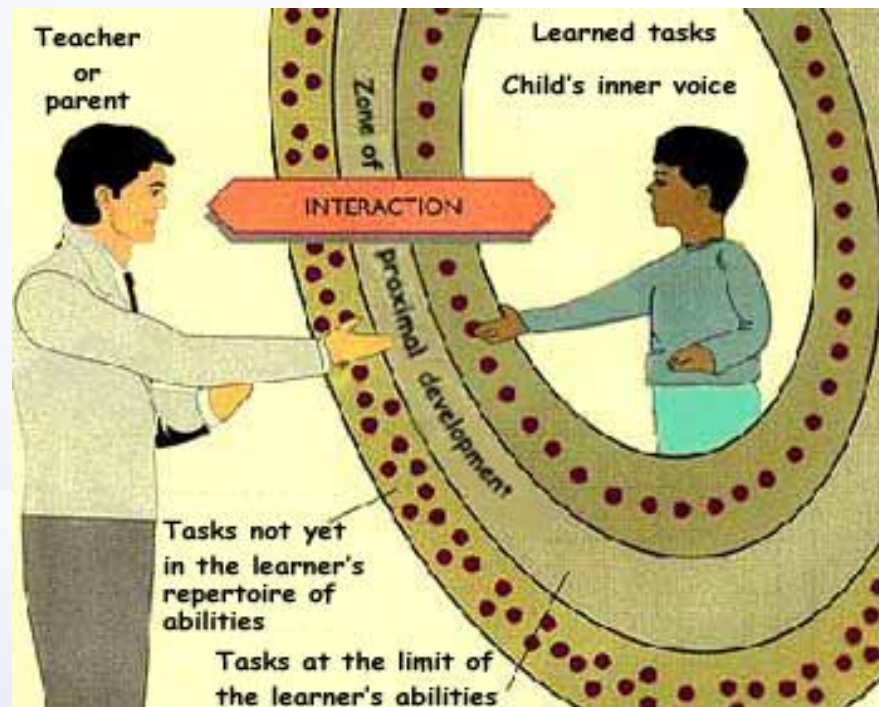
Sociocultural Theory: Major Concepts

Mediation: Learning and development depend on how objects and others in the environment mediate, or negotiate through, their experiences.

- Mediation involves *psychological tools* such as gestures, use of the L1, and decision-making systems.
- ELs create meaning mediated within a context where learners sense themselves as unique cultural beings, and where their linguistic and cognitive skills converge in performing challenging tasks.

Regulation: As learners undertake tasks in the ZPD they proceed through stages of regulation.

- Object-regulation refers to mediation by means of objects and/or various psychological tools; other-regulation pertains to assistance by other people.
- One is self-regulated when s/he can perform the task independently.

Concepts Continued

Internalization: As learners accomplish tasks by means of interaction with others and/or objects in the environment on the *external* plane, they achieve self-regulation, and task procedures become *internalized (go underground)* as a mental representation of task performance.

Intersubjectivity: Learners performing tasks in pairs or groups need to 'be on the same page' regarding the procedures they use to accomplish the task. This is called establishing intersubjectivity*.*

Teachers help establish intersubjectivity with ELs when they understand their cultural backgrounds, linguistic skills, and learning styles.

ESOL

Comparing Piagetian and Vygotskian Views

Piagetian:

- Did not take into account that across cultures children are exposed to a wide range of formative experiences.

- It was earlier assumed that developmental stages are universal, though Piaget later documented delays depending on external factors (i.e., education, socio-economic status).

- Schooling provides the platform for development of formal operations.

- By the end of adolescence the developmental process is assumed to be complete.

Vygotskian:

- Acknowledged different experiences across cultures.

- Emphasizes social interaction with less emphasis on stages of development.

- Cognitive development occurs within a social context (i.e., the family circle, classroom).

- Adults also call upon other- and object-regulated processes as they perform difficult tasks.

ESOL

	Vygotsky's sociocultural view	Piaget's cognitive developmental view
Learning is…	social	solitary (children as a "lone scientist")
Development is driven by…	input from others and MKO's	conflict between stages
Context	Development is different depending on social and cultural context	Development is universal and stages are same regardless of context
Knowledge	Children work with others to build knowledge	Children acquire knowledge through their own explorations
Stages?	No	Yes
Link (learning/development)	Learning precedes development	Development precedes learning
Role of language	Language drives thought	Thought drives language
Speech	Social speech becomes inner speech (social processes ➔ psychological processes)	Egocentric speech becomes social speech

Sociocultural Theory:
L. Vygotsky

With a classmate, briefly describe in your own words the SCT concepts

- Mediation
- ZPD
- Regulation
- Internalization
- Intersubjectivity

SLA Theory:
S. Krashen

With a classmate, briefly describe in your own words the 5 hypotheses

- Acquisition-Learning
- Monitor
- Natural Order
- Input
- Affective Filter

Now explain how these concepts relate to your teaching of ELs.

Questions for small group work

1. Which theory better describes your thinking about language acquisition/development in the classroom (for the learner or with the learner?)

2. What role, if any, do Piaget's stages of development play in your thinking about second language learners?

National and State ESOL Standards

Refer back to the ESOL standards presented in Part 3 of the text and explain how knowledge of language acquisition and development facilitates teaching and learning of ELs.

Explain the role of (a) sociocultural *(e.g., context, beliefs, language, family, technologies)*, (b) sociopolitical *(e.g., social and political issues),* and (c) psychological *(e.g., affective, emotional, cognitive)* factors in teaching ELs from diverse cultural backgrounds and at varying English proficiency levels.

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