

**THE THEORIES OF LEV VYGOTSKY AND MICHAIL BAKHTIN
AND THEIR ELABORATIONS IN CONTENT AND LANGUAGE INTEGRATED
LEARNING AND SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION STUDIES**

**ТЕОРИИ ЛЬВА ВЫГОТСКОГО И МИХАИЛА БАХТИНА, А ТАКЖЕ ИХ
РАЗРАБОТКИ В ИССЛЕДОВАНИЯХ, ПОСВЯЩЁННЫХ ИЗУЧЕНИЮ ВТОРОГО
ЯЗЫКА И КОНТЕНТНО - ИНТЕГРИРОВАННОМУ ОБУЧЕНИЮ ЯЗЫКАМ**

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The socio-cultural theory by Lev Vygotsky and the theories of Michail Bakhtin, as well as their subsequent elaborations and modifications, have great importance for CLIL and Second Language Acquisition studies, as many scholars and researchers have already observed. Indeed, the key concepts, introduced by Vygotsky, often provide efficient and essential medium for problem solving and hence, can enhance learning of both foreign languages and any academic subjects, which students are studying in the second language. Several methods and techniques, currently used in CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) and SLA (Second Language Acquisition), are directly or indirectly based on theories of Vygotsky and Bakhtin. The present paper is focusing on the key concepts of the socio-cultural theory of Lev Vygotsky and literary theory of Mikhail Bachtin. It explores the elaborations and modifications of these concepts and their employment in CLIL and SLA, as well as provides some different points of view on teaching and assessment in CLIL and SLA, based on the concepts elaborated by Bakhtin and Vygotsky.

Социокультурная теория Льва Выготского и теории Михаила Бахтина, а также их последующие разработки и модификации имеют большое значение для контентно-языкового интегрированного обучения языкам и для усвоения второго языка, как уже отмечали многие ученые и исследователи. Действительно, ключевые концепции, введенные Львом Выготским, часто обеспечивают эффективную и необходимую среду для решения проблем и, следовательно, могут улучшить изучение как иностранных языков, так и любых академических предметов, изучаемых на втором иностранном языке. Некоторые методы и методики, используемые в настоящее время в CLIL (контентно-языковое интегрированное обучение) и SLA (усвоение второго языка), прямо или косвенно основаны на теориях Льва Выготского и Михаила Бахтина. Настоящая работа посвящена ключевым понятиям социокультурной теории Льва Выготского и литературной теории Михаила Бахтина. В нем рассматриваются разработки и модификации этих концепций и их использование в CLIL и SLA, а также приводятся некоторые различные точки зрения на преподавание и оценку в CLIL и SLA, основанные на концепциях, разработанных Михаилом Бахтиным и Львом Выготским.

Key words: Lev Vygotsky, Mihail Bakhtin, socio-cultural theory, Zone of Proximal Development, heteroglossia, speech genres, Second Language Acquisition, Content and Language Integrated Learning, symbolic meditation, Stephen Krashen.

Ключевые слова: Лев Выготский, Михаил Бахтин, социокультурная теория, зона ближайшего развития, гетероглоссия, речевые жанры, изучение второго языка, контентно-языковое интегрированное обучение, символическая медиация, Стивен Крашен.

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The *Sociocultural* theory by Lev Vygotsky and the theories of Michail Bakhtin, as well as their subsequent elaborations and modifications, are of great importance for CLIL and Second Language Acquisition studies, as many scholars and researchers have already observed. Indeed, the key concepts, introduced by Vygotsky, often provide efficient and essential medium for problem solving and hence, can enhance learning of both foreign languages and any academic subjects, which students are studying in the second language. Several methods and techniques, currently used in CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) and SLA (Second Language Acquisition), are directly or indirectly based on theories of Vygotsky and Bakhtin. The present paper is focusing on the key concepts of the socio-cultural theory of Lev Vygotsky and literary theory of Mikhail Bachtin. It explores the elaborations and modifications of these concepts and their employment in CLIL and SLA, as well as provides some different points of view on teaching and assessment in CLIL and SLA, based on the concepts elaborated by Bakhtin and Vygotsky.

The present paper is focusing on the key concepts of the socio-cultural theory of Lev Vygotsky and literary theory of Mikhail Bakhtin. It explores the elaborations and modifications of these concepts and their employment in CLIL and SLA, as well as provides some different points of view on teaching and assessment in CLIL and SLA, based on the concepts elaborated by Bakhtin and Vygotsky. The fundamental principles of a dialogically based philosophy of second language acquisition (Johnson, 2003) that is based on Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory and Bakhtin's dialogized heteroglossia. Vygotsky's sociocultural theory combined with Bakhtin's dialogism offers the field of second language acquisition a unique opportunity to develop a new framework that unites rather than separates the learner's social environment from his/her mental functioning. The paper explores the developmental analysis of mental processes according to Vygotsky (for example, the genetic law of cultural development, inter psychological category, intra psychological category, etc.) and its relevance to CLIL and SLA studies. The paper also focuses on the concept of *Zone of Proximal Development*, developed by Vygotsky to address the problem of assessment in instruction/education and the problem of teaching practices. The mediated function of language, postulated by Vygotsky, is also analyzed in relation to CLIL and SLA studies. The scientific heritage of Lev Vygotsky is complemented by the works of his contemporary and fellow countryman Michail Bakhtin, Russian philosopher, literary critic, *semiotician*, etc., considered to be one of the greatest thinkers of the 20th century. Many aspects of his literary theory, such as *heteroglossia*, *dialogism*, *genres of speech*, etc., are of great importance for CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) and SLA (Second Language Acquisition) studies, as this paper is going to demonstrate. The present paper focuses on Vygotsky's and Bakhtin's theories because they examine learning processes from a holistic perspective where the two opposite parts of human existence, mental and social, merge together in a dialectical relationship.

Nowadays, there are still ongoing debates about the correlation between input and interaction in CLIL and SLA. Though many researchers admit that language input to the learner is necessary for either L1 or L2 learning to take place, the nature of its role is still under discussion. While behaviourist learning theories consider input to form the necessary stimuli and feedback which learners respond to and imitate, the adherents of Krashen's Monitor theory consider comprehensible input not only necessary but also sufficient to account for SLA; proponents of UG consider exposure to input a necessary trigger for activating internal mechanisms, but of minimal importance for many aspects of language development beyond the initial state. An alternative view on the role of interaction in SLA and CLIL is based on *Sociocultural theory*, which holds that interaction does not only facilitate language learning but is a causative force in acquisition as well,

At present, there are two approaches in SLA studies from this perspective: *microsocial* and *macrosocial*. The former is concerned with the language acquisition and use in immediate social contexts of production, interpretation, and interaction. Vygotsky's *Sociocultural theory* also contributes to this focus, viewing interaction as the essential genesis of language. The concerns of the *macrosocial* focus relate language acquisition and use to broader ecological contexts, including cultural, political, and educational settings. From a social perspective, interaction in SLA and CLIL is generally seen as essential in providing learners with the quantity and quality of external linguistic input, which is required for internal processing. Interaction focuses learners' attention on aspects of their L2 and provides collaborative means for learners to build discourse structures and express meanings that are beyond the current level of their linguistic competence.

Actually, the main concepts of Vygotsky's *Sociocultural theory* of mind can be summarized as follows: 1. the developmental analysis of mental processes; 2. the social origin of human mental functions; 3. the role of language in the development of human cognitive functioning. (Wertsch 1985)

The first key concept refers to the type of analysis that Vygotsky advocates for appropriate investigations, understandings, and interpretations of the higher forms of human mental functions. Vygotsky holds that 'we need to concentrate not on the product of development but on the very process by which higher forms are established ... To encompass in research the process of a given thing's development and all its phases and changes – from birth to death – fundamentally means to discover its nature, its essence'. (1978: 64–7). Thus, to discover how human mental functions work, we ought to focus on processes and changes, their origins and developmental transformations, not on the final product of development. According to *Sociocultural theory*, learning occurs when simple innate mental activities are transformed into "higher order," more complex mental functions.

Vygotsky describes the ontogenesis of development of children in terms of two forces: natural, or biological, which is responsible for the lower level mental functions, such as perception and involuntary attention, and cultural, which is responsible for higher mental functions such as voluntary attention, planning, monitoring, rational thought, and learning. These two forces differ in a degree and type of regulation. While the lower functions are regulated by the environment, the higher mental functions are self-regulated. The ontogenesis of development of the child may be described in terms of three stages delineated by the degree of control over the child's mental processes. While during the first stage (the object-regulated stage) the child is controlled by the environment, in the second stage, so called the other-regulated stage, the child's mental functions depend on the assistance of and collaboration with other people. Finally, in the third stage (the self-regulated stage) the child takes control over his/her higher mental development. To summarize, the object-regulated stage is the result of the operation of natural forces, and the self-regulated stage is the result of the operation of cultural forces.

The second postulate of Vygotsky's sociocultural theory claims that higher mental functions originate in a social activity. This claim is postulated by the genetic *law of cultural development*: Any function in the child's cultural development appears twice, that is, on two planes. 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. This postulate may be considered a law in the full sense of the word, taking into account that internalization transforms the process itself and changes its structure and functions. Social relations or relations among people genetically underline all higher functions and their relationships. (Vygotsky 1981: 163) According to the genetic law of cultural development, individuals internalize many patterns of social activities, which they observe and participate in on the social, interpersonal plane. However, the process of internalization is not a mere coping of the social activities observed on the social/interpersonal plane because 'internalization transforms the process itself and changes its structure, and functions' (Vygotsky 1981: 163). The internal and external processes are in a dialectic relationship, since Vygotsky was influenced by Engels's dialectic philosophy that emphasizes the importance of change as the main factor in human social development. For Engels, this change is brought about by a constant conflict between opposite forces. The transition from the interpersonal to intrapersonal plane takes place within the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD).

Vygotsky develops the notion of the ZPD to address the problem of assessment in education and the problem of teaching practices. According to Vygotsky, the existing forms of assessment and teaching practices focus solely on the individual's actual level of cognitive development, and they neglect to take into consideration his/her potential level of development. Vygotsky describes the ZPD as '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'. (1978: 86) Vygotsky is more interested in the individual's potential level of development than in the individual's actual level of development. Two individuals, for example, may be at the same actual level of development as determined by their final test scores, but their ZPDs may differ, reflected by their differing ability to solve problems during collaboration or interaction, with a more capable peer or an adult. Vygotsky considers mediation within the ZPD to be the key element for the individual's mental development. He calls the individual's potential level of development 'the buds' or 'flowers' of development rather than the 'fruits' of development' (Vygotsky 1978: 86). These 'buds' need to be cultivated and nourished in the zone of proximal development by providing appropriate assistance to the learner. Vygotsky holds that 'an essential feature of learning is that it creates the zone of proximal development; that is, learning awakens a variety of internal developmental processes that are able to operate only when the child is interacting with people in his environment and in cooperation with his peers. Once these processes are internalized, they become part of the child's independent developmental achievement' (Vygotsky 1978: 90).

The third fundamental aspect of Vygotsky's sociocultural theory deals with the role of language in the development of the higher mental functions. According to Vygotsky, the transition from the interpersonal (social) plane to the intrapersonal (mental) plane depends on the mediated function of language. Vygotsky views language as speech rather than a system of abstract morphosyntactic rules. Speech also plays a crucial role in the transition from the interpersonal to the intrapersonal plane. This transformation typically involves *symbolic mediation*, which serves as a link between a person's current mental state and higher order functions that is provided primarily by language. This is considered the usual route to learning, whether what is being learned is language itself or some other area of knowledge. The results of learning through mediation include learners' having heightened awareness of their own mental abilities and more control over their thought processes. Usually the term "interaction" means interpersonal interaction, that is, communicative events and situations, which occur between people. Symbolic mediation is interpersonal interaction between learners and experts. However, symbolic mediation can be interactional without involving face-to-face communication between people; reading actually involves an interaction between the individual and the author(s) of a text or book, resulting in an altered state of knowledge. Moreover, symbolic mediation need not even necessarily involve language but can also be achieved with such nonlinguistic symbols as gestures, diagrams and illustrations, and algebraic symbols. Vygotsky calls the space where much of this type of mediation occurs the *Zone of Proximal Development*, which is an area of potential development, where the learner can achieve that potential only with assistance. According to the *Sociocultural* theory, mental functions that are beyond an individual's current level must be performed in collaboration with other people before they can be achieved independently.

One way in which others help the learner in language development within the ZPD is through *scaffolding*, which includes the "vertical constructions" as a type of modified interaction between native and non-native speakers. In vertical construction, experts commonly provide learners with chunks of talk that the learners can then use to express concepts which are beyond their independent means. This type of mediation also occurs when peers collaborate in constructing language that is beyond the competence of any individual among them. *Scaffolding* refers to verbal guidance, which an expert provides to help a learner perform any specific task. It can also be the verbal collaboration of peers to perform a task, which would be too difficult for any one of them individually. Anyway, *scaffolding* is not something that happens to a learner as a passive recipient, but happens with a learner as an active participant.

In CLIL and SLA, both L1 and L2 can provide very helpful mediation for L2 learners. Talk between peers, who are collaborating in tasks is often in their common L1, which provides an efficient and essential medium for problem-solving and can enhance learning of both L2 and any academic subjects students are studying in the second language.

Sociocultural theory distinguishes between interpersonal and intrapersonal interaction, the latter is communication that occurs within an individual's own mind. Vygotsky also views this as a sociocultural phenomenon. When reading, for example, we engage in intrapersonal as well as interpersonal activity because we draw interactively on our ability to decode print. A second type of intrapersonal interaction, the use of L1 resources, occurs frequently in the initial stages of L2 learning but also in later stages when the content and structure of L2 input stretches or goes beyond existing language competence. This happens often during translation to oneself as part of interpretive problem-solving processes. Vygotsky was rather interested also in

another type of intrapersonal communication: private speech. This is the self-talk that many children engage in that leads to the inner speech that more mature individuals use to control thought and behaviour. While inner speech is not necessarily tied to the surface forms of any specific language, private speech is almost always verbalized in L1 and/or L2. One should note that study of private speech when it is audible provides a “window into the mind” of sorts for researchers in CLIL and SLA studies.

As many scholars and thinkers observe, the world around us defines the way we conceptualize the world (Boyarkina 2019); it also affects and transforms the individual’s mental functioning that, in turn, affects and transforms social, cultural, and institutional settings. *Cognitive linguistics* also contributes greatly to this concept. In this new model of second language acquisition, the origin of second language competence lies not in the Language Acquisition Device, Universal Grammar or any other mechanism, like Vroman’s (1989) general problem solving system, but in a social reality of the human species. Social contexts create language and language creates social contexts: one constitutes the other. Furthermore, these contexts are not universal but highly localized, thus defining local second language ability. Since these social settings are locally bound, language ability is also locally bound. Language ability reflects all the characteristics of a well defined sociocultural and institutional context. Second language ability reflects a multitude of sociocultural and institutional settings and a variety of discursive practices to which the learner has been exposed throughout his/her life. Actually, the local second language ability model is based on Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory and Bakhtin’s literary theory. Unfortunately, Vygotsky’s short life did not allow him to pursue the investigation of the effect of various social and institutional settings on mental development. However, the works of his contemporary, Mikhail Bakhtin, fill this gap. Bakhtin worked in the field of literary criticism and his literary theory includes such concepts as speech genre, voice, and dialogue. Like Vygotsky, Bakhtin (1981, 1986) doesn’t consider language an abstract system of signs that is devoid of social, historical, cultural, and institutional contexts. According to Bakhtin, language is a living thing, and as a living thing, it reflects and defines at the same time the various contexts in which it is used. Language always lies on the border between oneself and the other. The word in language is half someone’s. It becomes ‘one’s own’ only when the speaker populates it with his own intention, his own semantic and expressive intention. Prior to this moment of appropriation, the word does not exist in a neutral and impersonal language, but rather it exists in other people’s mouths, in other people’s contexts, serving other people’s intentions: it is from there that one must take the word, and make it one’s own. (Bakhtin, 1981: 293–4). Bakhtin demonstrated the need to analyze speech in terms of how it “appropriates” the voices of others in concrete sociocultural settings. These appropriated voices may be those of specific speakers, such as one’s parents, or they may take the form of “social languages” characteristic of a category of speakers, such as an ethnic or national community. When we speak, we speak not with one language; we speak with many ‘languages,’ we speak with many voices. These voices reflect the social, cultural, and institutional environments we have been exposed to in the course of our lives. Only through the exposure to these various contexts can we acquire different voices, which are essential for human communication. Although we speak with many voices, which Bakhtin calls heteroglossia, these voices can be studied because they are associated with a given type of speech genre. Bakhtin claims that we only speak in ‘definite speech genres, that is, all our utterances have definite and relatively stable typical forms of construction of speech genres’, and we may not be even aware of it. (1986: 78) Despite the fact that there exists a diverse number of speech genres, the scholar divides speech genres into two major groups: primary and secondary. The former includes daily conversations, narrations, diaries, letters; the latter includes novels, dramas, all kinds of scientific research. They represent ‘more complex and comparatively highly developed and organized cultural communication (primarily written) that is artistic, scientific, sociopolitical and so on’ (Bakhtin, 1986: 62).

To summarize, both Bakhtin and Vygotsky made a great contribution to SLA and CLIL studies. Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory accounts for the role of society and culture in the development of human higher mental functions; this theory differs from most other social approaches to SLA and CLIL in considering interaction as an essential force rather than as merely a helpful condition for learning. Sociocultural theory varies from most linguistic approaches in giving relatively limited attention to the structural patterns of L2 which are learned, as well as in emphasizing learner activity and involvement over innate and universal mechanisms. It also differs from most psychological approaches to SLA and CLIL in its degree of focus on factors outside the learner, rather than on factors which are completely in the learner’s head, and in its denial that the learner is a largely autonomous processor. According to Vygotsky, all of learning is essentially a social process, which is grounded in sociocultural settings and an individual’s mental functions reflect the social, cultural, and institutional settings to which the individual has been exposed during the course of his/her life. Bakhtin enriched the sociocultural theory with the concepts of *heteroglossia*, *dialogism*, *speech genres*, etc. Bakhtin claims that we only speak in ‘definite speech genres, which must be widely studied and analysed.

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