

Zone of proximal development

[Literature](#), [Play](#)



Evaluate the role of ZPD in a child's development a.) How it has helped or aid the learner achieve his / her maximum development b.) Its implications for professional practice

INTRODUCTION In this essay I am going to be arguing that ZPD's role is to point to an important place or moment in the process of child development. My argument will also support the value of ZPD and its procedures as it aids the learner and progress across it. In order for the ZPD to be such a success, it must contain two features. The first is called subjectivity. This term describes the process of two individuals begin a task with different understanding and eventually arrive at a shared understanding. The second feature is scaffolding, which refers to a change in the social support over the course of a teaching session. If scaffolding is successful, a child's mastery level of performance can change, which means that it can increase a child's performance on a particular task. As a Chinese - Montessori teacher, I have two questions in mind, " What kind of instruction is good enough or effective enough for a child so he could reach his maximum development? " " How much right amount of support can be given to the learner? "

II. History of Lev Yygotsky and the ZPD theory Lev Vygotsky was born in Orsha, a city in the western region of the Russian Empire. He attended Moscow State University, where he graduated with a degree in law in 1917. He studied a range of topics while attending university, including sociology, linguistics, psychology and philosophy. However, his formal work in psychology did not begin until 1924 when he attended the Institute of Psychology in Moscow and began collaborating with Alexei Leontiev and Alexander Luria. When the Cold War ended, Vygotsky's works were revealed. Vygotsky has written several articles and books on the subject of his theories

and psychology, including *Thought and Language* (1934). His research in how children solve their problems that surpassed their level of development led Vygotsky to create the Zone of Proximal Development theory. That is one reason why Vygotsky's developmental psychology has influenced education profoundly in Russia. Lev Semyonovich Vygotsky is considered a seminal thinker in psychology, and much of his work is still being discovered and explored today. While he was a contemporary of Piaget, Pavlov and the others, his work never attained their level of eminence during his lifetime. Part of this was because his work was often criticized by the Communist Party in Russia, and so his writings were largely inaccessible to the Western world. His premature death at age 38 also contributed to his obscurity. (Smith et al, 1997). Originally developed by social cognitive theorist and psychologist Lev Vygotsky, the concept of the zone of proximal development opposes the use of standardized tests as a means to measure student intelligence. Vygotsky suggests that instead of assessing what a student knows to determine intelligence, it is more helpful to compare their ability to independently solve problems with their ability to solve problems with the assistance of someone who has mastered the concepts being learned. Vygotsky began this research because he wanted to understand how children's functions (like attention, memory, and perception) develop and are individual to the learner. Vygotsky contends that children develop deliberate control over everyday concepts through contact with scientific concepts. Within the Vygotskian concept of zone of proximal development, social interaction is the basis for cognitive growth. Accordingly, the communication that transpires in a social setting with more knowledgeable

or proficient people (parents, teachers, peers, others) assists children in building an understanding of the concept. American psychologist Jerome Bruner (1986) describes the zone of proximal development as " the child's ability to recognize the value of hinges and props even before he is conscious of their full significance. " If we naively ask what the actual developmental level is, or, to put it more simply, what more independent problem solving reveals, the most common answer would be that a child's actual developmental level defines functions that have already matured, that is, the end products of development. If a child can do such-and-such independently, it means that the functions for such-and-such have matured in her. What, then, is defined by the zone of proximal development, as determined through problems that children cannot solve independently but only with assistance? The zone of proximal development defines those functions that have not yet matured but are in the process of maturation, functions that will mature tomorrow but are currently in an embryonic state. These functions could be termed the " buds" or " flowers" of development rather than the " fruits" of development. The actual developmental level characterizes mental development retrospectively, while the zone of proximal development characterizes mental development prospectively(Vygotsky, 1978). The zone of proximal development furnishes psychologists and educators with a tool through which the internal course of development can be understood. By using this method we can take account of not only the cycles and maturation processes that have already been completed but also those processes that are currently in a state of formation, that are just beginning to mature and develop. Thus, the zone of

proximal development permits us to delineate the child's immediate future and his dynamic developmental state, allowing not only for what already has been achieved developmentally but also for what is in the course of maturing. The state of a child's mental development can be determined only by clarifying its two levels: the actual developmental level and the zone of proximal development. III. Range of ideas about ZPD learning and the tensions between them: The zone of proximal development was introduced as a part of a general analysis about child development. It is not a main or central concept in Vygotsky's theory of child development. Rather its role is to point to an important place and moment in the process of child development. To understand this role, one must appreciate the theoretical perspective in which it appeared. That is, we need to understand what Vygotsky meant by 'development' in general, if we are going to understand what he meant by 'zone of proximal development' in particular. In this way, the reader can develop a generative understanding of the theoretical approach, which will be more valuable than a dictionary definition of the concept. The zone of proximal development is the gap between what a learner has already mastered as determined by independent problem solving (the actual level of development) and what he or she can achieve when provided with educational support (potential development) (Vygotsky, 1968). According to Vygotsky, the zone of proximal development is "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." Parents and teachers can foster learning by providing

educational opportunities that lie within a child's zone of proximal development. The zone refers to the difference between the level of performance a child can achieve when working independently and the higher level of performance that is possible when working under the guidance of more skilled adults or peers. (Kail, 2001). There is one contradiction that I find confusing in ZPD and I agree with Bruner (1986). If consciousness and control can come only after the child has already got a function well mastered. So how could this "good learning" be achieved in advance of spontaneous development since, a child's unmasterly reaction to a task would be bound initially to be "unconscious and unreflective." IV. Zone of proximal development in the classroom Lev Vygotsky theorized that there is a zone of proximal development. For optimal learning to occur, instruction must occur in the delicate balance between the frustration level and the mastery level. The area in which that balances occurs is called the instructional level. Instruction aimed at this area must be informed by information about what students are capable of doing independently and what is beyond their current abilities. The central core of the Zone of Proximal Development is the understanding of learning as a process of internalizing social experience. One of Vygotsky's main emphases was the impact of social forces working on the individual. In other words. Learning occurs when other people interact with the learner . people who support the learner's current level of ability and challenge the learner to move to the next level . When considering instruction for the classroom, teachers must consider the zone of proximal development. Language learning and content—area instruction need to both be aimed at the zone of proximal

development. Students will experience maximum growth in both areas when instruction is carefully constructed to remain in the zone of proximal development. For my current teaching assignment. The zone of proximal development has been a driving force all years as I have planned instruction . The district reading assessments that we give three times a years have been an asset in determining the abilities of my students and then planning instruction that will challenge then but not frustrate them. Guided reading groups have been an invaluable method of individualizing instruction in this way . Another form of assessment that assisted me as I planned both content-area instruction and language learning opportunities was the scores I received in the cumulative records of my students. Knowing their approximate level of English proficiency enabled me to attempt to structure instruction that would be challenging but not frustrating. I also use small —group instruction across the curriculum in order to remain in students' s individual zone of proximal development. My small class size has enabled me to plan instruction at various levels and then meet with many small groups. This allows students to grow and keeps them from becoming too bored or too frustrated with instruction that does not meet their level of understanding. Another invaluable pedagogical too in constructing instruction in the zone of proximal development is peer tutoring and support. My classroom is constructed With the “ ask three, then as me “ rule that encourages students to help and support each other as they seek to complete learning tasks . This develops language learning and content- area learning as we make use of the varying abilities of all students language learning and content —area learning as we make use of the varying abilities

of all students to support the learning of all. Vygotsky's theory of the zone of proximal development has had a large impact on the educational community. Structuring instruction to best meet the needs of students whose abilities vary across the board has been a good teaching practice for years. Vygotsky has provided the research-based background to both support and verbalize what good teachers have always known. I have a four-year old student from the British School Manila who often works on puzzles. Sometimes she gets assistance from me to complete the puzzle but she does most of the work. Sometimes I would find a piece that she needs, after getting stuck with the activity for quite some time. When she tries to do the same puzzles herself, she rarely can complete them. The difference between what my four year old student can do with assistance and what she can do alone defines the zone of proximal development. In a classroom setting, the teacher is responsible for structuring interactions and developing instruction in small steps based on tasks the learner is already capable of performing independently - an instructional strategy known as scaffolding. The instructor is also charged with providing support until the learner can move through all tasks independently. In order for teachers to guide learners through the tasks associated with learning a concept, they must understand how cognitive tasks fit into the child's cultural activities. These tasks are called "scaffolds," which are tasks or levels on which the teacher builds to develop learners' zones of proximal development. According to John Zeuli, "Instruction should emphasize connections to what the learner already knows in other familiar, everyday contexts." Vygotsky (1962) suggests that these connections do not have to take place immediately, but that in the course of

further schoolwork and reading, learners can make the association between concepts and experience. 7 Vygotsky describes the teacher's role as assisting students in the recognition of decontextualized, systematic concepts. Vygotsky contends, instruction cannot be identified as development, but properly organized instruction will result in the child's intellectual development, will bring into being an entire series of such developmental processes, which were not at all possible without instruction. Accordingly, the teaching methodology that aligns with the zone of proximal development integrates several approaches to form a comprehensive agenda for research of the genesis, development, function, and structure of the human psyche. Within the classroom, the person who is more knowledgeable is not always the teacher; students can also be placed in collaborative groups with others who have demonstrated mastery of tasks and concepts. It is more informative to know what a child can do with some little assistance or slight assistance than to know what he succeeds at without any assistance (Donaldson, 1987). The zone of proximal development has implications for assessment, especially concerning children with learning and behavior problems. Two children can differ substantially in the ZPD's. One child may do his/her best on their own, while the other needs some assistance. Therefore, the ZPD is crucial for identifying each child's readiness to benefit from instruction. V. Implications Teachers, parents, and mentors attuned to a learner can recognize where he or she is within the zone of proximal development by asking questions and recognizing the learner's individual learning style. Thus, the zone of proximal development enables educators and parents to define the learner's immediate needs and

the shifting developmental status, which allows for what has already been achieved developmentally, and for what the learner will be able to master in the future. The zone of proximal development is not simply a way to refer to development through assistance by a more competent other. This assistance is meaningful only in relation to maturing functions needed for transition to the next age period. The zone is never located solely in the child, not even the subjective zone. The subjective zone is always an evaluation of a child's capabilities in relation to the theoretical model of the period. VI.

CONCLUSION Comparison of Vygotsky and Piaget: Vygotsky's ideas and theories are often compared to Jean Piaget, especially his cognitive-developmental theory. They had a conflict explaining that development concepts should not be taught until children are in the appropriate developmental stage. Opposing Vygotsky's zone of proximal development, Piaget believed that the most important source of cognition is the children themselves. But Vygotsky argued that the social environment could help the child's cognitive development. The social environment is an important factor which helps the child culturally adapt to new situations when needed. Both Vygotsky and Piaget had the common goal of finding out how children master ideas and then translate them into speech. (Smith, et. al. 1997) Piaget found that children act independently on the physical world to discover what it has to offer (Piaget, 1964). Vygotsky, on the other hand, wrote in *Thought and Language* that human mental activity is the result of social learning. As children master tasks they will engage in cooperative dialogues with others, which led Vygotsky to believe that acquisition of language is the most influential moment in a child's life. In conclusion, Piaget

emphasized universal cognitive change and Vygotsky's theory leads us to expect highly variable development, depending on the child's cultural experiences to the environment. Piaget's theory emphasized the natural line (Piaget, 1951), while Vygotsky favored the cultural line of development.

Comparing and Contrasting "Strategies of Cognitive Development" and "Socio Cultural Theory of Development." The Swiss Psychologist, Jean Piaget, and the Russian Psychologist, Lev Vygotsky were both interested in the learning and development, specifically among the children. Their theories show that they are both constructivist in their approach. Both of them believe that cognition is a mental construction; that children learn by fitting new info together with that which they already know. And both believe that there are things that are out of a child's range of understanding. However, the two differ in their specific and key ideas. In a nutshell, Piaget believes that development precedes learning, while Vygotsky believes that learning precedes development. For Piaget, children progress through the universal and consecutive stages of cognitive development and that there is no skipping of any of these stages. He emphasizes that no matter how bright the child is, if a thing is outside his schema (or understanding), he could never understand that very thing. He also believes that children learn through acting upon their surroundings and their surroundings have nothing to do with their learning process. For him, it is just the child who is discovering. The process of knowledge acquisition in Piaget's theory is more of dialectics (thesis-antithesis-synthesis). Children learn through forming and re-forming ideas — that is Piaget's "Adaptation" (assimilation and accommodation). On the other hand, Vygotsky claims that cognitive

development emphasizes social interaction; that learning is the internalization of the language and the actions of others. When a child receives help in solving a certain problem, he may be able to utilize better strategies in the future if the same problem arises. For Vygotsky, children learn because of history and symbolisms — of culture. Children, he says, value the inputs of other people around them. - . Vygotsky began this research because he wanted to understand how children's functions (like attention, memory, and perception) develop and are individual to the learner. Vygotsky contends that children develop deliberate control over everyday concepts through contact with scientific concepts. Within the Vygotskian concept of zone of proximal development, social interaction is the basis for cognitive growth. - The zone of proximal development defines those functions that have not yet matured but are in the process of maturation, functions that will mature tomorrow but are currently in an embryonic state. - The common conception of the zone of proximal development presupposes an interaction between a more competent person and a less competent person on a task, such that the less competent person becomes independently proficient at what was initially a jointly-accomplished task. - In reading books on Vygotsky's theories, I have realized that he does not seem to have systematic principles, methods, or techniques that should guide how collaboration should be conducted by a person who is assessing ZPD. This I think will pose a problem for the classroom teacher. - The zone of proximal development permits us to delineate the child's immediate future and his dynamic developmental state, allowing not only for what already has been achieved developmentally but also for what is in the course of

maturing. The state of a child's mental development can be determined only by clarifying its two levels: the actual developmental level and the zone of proximal development. - In most general terms, the idea of zone of proximal development is meant to direct attention to the idea that instruction/teaching (obuchenie) should be focused on maturing psychological functions, rather than already existing functions, that are relevant for the general intellectual development to the next age period.

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