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ИЗУЧЕНИЕ ИНОСТРАННОГО ЯЗЫКА КАК ОПОСРЕДОВАННЫЙ ПРОЦЕСС

В статье рассматривается изучение иностранного языка как процесс, опосредованный родным языком обучающихся. Данная методика находится в русле нового подхода к изучению иностранного языка, который предполагает активизацию самонаправленной речи на иностранном языке, выступающей посредником в формировании новой индивидуальности изучающего как вторичной языковой личности.

Ключевые слова: изучение иностранного языка, опосредованный процесс, зона ближайшего развития, самонаправленная речь.

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FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING AS A MEDIATED PROCESS

This article reviews the research on foreign language learning as a process, mediated by the students' native tongue. The research deals with new areas not previously studied as it is concerned with the role of private speech in foreign language acquisition. The new area of interest deals with the processes through which foreign language mediates the formation of new identities among learners of the target language.

Key words: foreign language learning, mediated process, Zone of Proximal Development, private speech.

This article is the research on second language learning as a mediated process and it deals with new areas not previously studied. For example, current work continues to seek to better understand how L2 (second language) learning is mediated in the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), a topic of earlier work, but it is now looking more closely at peer rather than expert-novice scaffolding in the ZPD. Research is also studying how experts scaffold novices in concrete classroom situations where concern is not with the ZPD itself, as was the case with the original work, but with how individuals, unaware of such a construct, go about providing and appropriating help in order to learn.

While some of the earlier research focused on the role of private speech in carrying out tasks in a second language, more recent research is concerned with the role of private speech in second language acquisition. A new area of interest that has opened up within the past two or three years deals with the processes through which language mediates the formation of new identities among L2 learners.

Although much of the research on second language learning is about mediated processes, to our knowledge, only sociocultural theory incorporates mediation as a core construct in its theorising about language learning. While research on mediated language learning has been underway for most of this century in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Bloc countries, because of its general inaccessibility it isn't profitable to include a discussion of this work here. Many of the problems addressed by so-called sociocultural SLA, at least in its current instantiation, derive from the general field, as it has been defined by scholars working within the Western tradition. To be sure, we on occasion refer to some of the research carried out by Russian psycholinguists and others who work within this tradition [1, 7].

Before launching into our research, it will be useful to briefly consider what is meant by mediation and mediated learning from the perspective of sociocultural theory. Sociocultural theory holds that specifically human forms of mental activity arise in the interactions we enter into with other members of our culture and with the specific experiences we have with the artifacts produced by our ancestors and by our contemporaries. Rather than dichotomizing the mental and the social, the theory insists on a seamless and dialectic relationship between these two domains. In other words, not only does our mental activity determine the nature of our social world, but this world of human relationships and artifacts also determines to a large extent how we regulate our mental processes.

The theory recognizes that mental processes are constructed on the material substrate of the brain, which carries genetically determined capacities. However, it argues that these capacities are reorganized into specifically human forms of consciousness which allow us to intentionally and voluntarily control our memory, attention, planning, rational thought, problem solving, and learning [8, p. 173]. This reorganization occurs as a result of the culture-specific interactions we have with other individuals and with the artifacts constructed and deployed by the culture. These artifacts may be relatively simple physical objects such as paper and pencil used to help us remember what to purchase at the store or to carry out multiple digit arithmetic operations. They may also be as complex as computers that imbue us with ever increasing power to think. Not only do computers exponentially, but increase our abilities to run massively complex calculations in a very short span of time, but as a spin-off, the concept of the computer provided philosophers and cognitive scientists with a new and attractive metaphorical tool for thinking about the human mind [11, p. 188].

The central, and distinguishing, concept of sociocultural theory is that higher forms of human mental activity are mediated. Vygotskiy argued that just as humans do not act directly on the physical world but rely, instead, on tools and labour activity, we also use symbolic tools, or signs, to mediate and regulate our relationships with others and with ourselves. Physical and symbolic tools are artifacts created by human culture(s) over time and are made available to succeeding generations, which often modify these artifacts before passing them onto future generations. Included among symbolic tools are numbers and arithmetic systems, music, art, and above all language. As with physical tools, humans use symbolic artifacts to establish an indirect, or mediated, relationship between ourselves and the world. The task for psychology, in Vygotsky's view, is to understand how human social and mental activity is organized through culturally constructed artifacts and social relationships. He believed it was useless for psychology to study cognition once it had matured into its full adult form and argued instead for the need to study mental abilities as they are in the process of being formed; that is, in the process of coming under the mediated control of individuals. This approach to the study of higher mental (mediated) processes is known as the «genetic method».

For any type of mediation to be useful (that is, for it to result in development) it must be sensitive to the individual's or even group's zone of proximal development. The ZPD is an extremely fruitful concept for understanding and more accurately assessing the full extent of development of an individual or group. It claims that if all we know about individual or group performance is what can be done without assistance, we only know part of the picture. In Vygotsky's thinking to observe unassisted performance is to focus exclusively on the history of development. Of equal, if not greater importance, is to focus on the future of development. This means that we need to know what individuals can achieve with assistance, or additional mediation, because it is here that the future of development is determined. Again, this additional mediation may come from someone else, from integration of an artifact, such as a computer, into the particular activity, or in fact, from the self in the form of externalised private speech.

Some second language researchers have tried to make the case that the concept of the ZPD is compatible with the well-known $i + 1$ concept proposed by Krashen [8, p. 267]. Guerra, for example, contends that Krashen's is equivalent to what the child can do alone, or actual developmental level, and $i + 1$ maps on to what Vygotsky had in mind by the ZPD. As Dunn and Lantalf argue, this is a very problematic interpretation of the ZPD and mediation. For one thing, Krashen's input hypothesis focuses heavily on language, while the ZPD and mediation have as their central concern the individuals involved in the negotiation of learning and development. In other words, the input hypothesis is primarily concerned with the features of language, while the ZPD is concerned with features of language learners and the concrete activities they participate in. This is not to say that language is irrelevant to sociocultural theory, but to excise language from sites where concrete individuals engage in concrete goal directed activities makes little sense from this perspective. The classroom as an acquisition rich environment may not be the most productive way of conceiving of this site for learning, because it overlooks the central role played by the mediating functions of talk in learning. The following survey will highlight these functions.

The significance of this is that what individuals can achieve with external mediation at one point, they are frequently able to do without this assistance at a later point. This is because, according to Vygotsky, the mediation is appropriated by the individuals and this then enhances their ability to regulate their own behavior. According to Vygotsky, this is what development is about the appropriation by individuals (and groups) of the mediational means made available by others (past or present) in their environment in order to improve control over their own mental activity [10, p. 68].

Moving to consideration of the research on second language learning as a mediated process I segment the research literature into three general categories: mediation by others in social interaction; mediation by the self through private speech; mediation by artifacts. The division is somewhat, though not completely, arbitrary. In all three categories language is implicated as the primary mediating artifact.

Of the three domains of mediation to be considered, the lion's share of the research carried out on mediated learning and teaching focuses on social mediation. We can identify three strands within the social mediation research: experts (e.g., teachers) and novices (students); comparative study of different mediating behaviours across classroom settings; and peer mediation. Although there is some overlap among the strands, I will treat each as a distinct category.

The article by Lantolf and Pavlenko [6, p. 122] was to my knowledge the first empirical study of mediated learning of a second language in the ZPD. Among the important findings of this study are that for negotiated mediation to be effective it must be sensitive to the developmental stage within the ZPD at which a particular feature of the second language is situated. According to Lantolf and Pavlenko, second language development appears to move through a sequence of stages in which mediation needs to be quite explicit to a point at which only very implicit assistance is required for a learner to perform appropriately in the second language. In some cases, the mere presence of the expert in the same room with the learner was found to impact on a learner's ability to detect errors in his or her own performance. Mediation must also be contingent; that is, while assistance is necessary for learning, it is equally necessary for it to be withheld or withdrawn when a learner shows signs that it is either not required or not welcome.

In a related article, Lantolf and Pavlenko, using data from the same study, present evidence in support of Vygotsky's claim that development is not smooth and linear, but is dynamic, uneven and «revolutionary». The authors report that it was not uncommon for learners to exhibit an increase in their ability to control a particular second language feature either from one episode to the next in a given tutorial session or across tutorial sessions only to regress to an earlier stage where explicit assistance was needed in the next episode or session. In a later episode, the same learner would once again produce the correct forms with only implicit mediation offered by the expert.

Nassaji and Cumming (in press), expanding on the work of Pavlenko and Lantolf, undertook a small scale study to assess whether or not mediation as negotiated assistance sensitive to a learner's ZPD is indeed more effective than randomly offered help that fails to take account of the ZPD. In their study, Nassaji and Cumming worked with two Korean ESL students learning to write in their second language. They discovered that on a series of tests the learner who had received mediation within her ZPD outperformed the learner who had been offered randomly determined explicit or implicit forms of help. Moreover, the ZPD student manifested consistent development over time in her use of English articles, the object of learning, while the non-ZPD student failed to show signs of such growth. This is a smallscale study and its findings, though suggestive, must be considered with due caution.

In order to develop a clearer understanding of the ZPD as it relates to second language learning, Nassaji and Cumming undertook a longitudinal study, based on dialogue journals between an ESL teacher and a Farsi-speaking six-year old learner. The specific intent of the study was to uncover the process through which the expert and novice discovered, through negotiation, the learner's ZPD. The study is unique in that it took place over a tenmonth period and unlike in the studies by Pavlenko and Lantolf and Nassaji and Cumming, its focus included pragmatic properties (e. g., language functions, such as requests and reporting)

of English as well. Moreover, unlike in the previous research, work scaffolding within the ZPD transpired through inter action whose primary goal was communication rather than dealing with specific problems with the child's language. This is of considerable significance, since Nassaji and Cumming suggest that the learner appropriated features of the language as a consequence of the ways in which the teacher scaffolded their journal-based communicative interactions.

The study by Nassaji and Cumming evidences the fact that sociocultural theory compels us to view language, its learning and use as more than about syntax, phonology, morphology, and even pragmatics. To be sure, these aspects of language are important and sociocultural researchers have paid much attention to them. Nevertheless, from the sociocultural perspective, «the nature of language is inextricably linked to the culturally framed and discursively patterned communicative activities of importance to our groups howsoever these groups are defined. Thus the essential components of the knowledge base of language learning become the mediated means, that is, the symbolic tools and resources around which our practices are organized» [9, p. 303]. A.A. Leontiev carries this perspective into the realm of language pedagogy and in so doing insists that the goal of teaching is not the formal properties of a language but the «teaching of communication in a foreign language and the use of language in distinct types of intellectual and practical activity» [7, p. 99].

Continuing with this line of research, Hall investigated the relative impact of the mediating practices of a Spanish high school teacher on his students. In this study, Hall reports that, because the teacher often had a specific agenda for each activity, he frequently missed opportunities to acknowledge the communicative interests of his students and with this the chance to work with them in their ZPD. Whenever classroom talk strayed from the teacher's set agenda, he would bring it 'back under his leadership' [5, p. 305]. This often resulted in confusion and frustration on the part of the students.

Virtually all of the studies on peer mediation observe the regular appearance during collaborative activity of speech that is not directed at an interlocutor but is intended for the speaker himself or herself. Self-directed speech is known as private speech and is well-attested in the psycholinguistic literature. It most often consists of utterances that are not fully syntactic and tends to look like one half of a dialogue between individuals with a close personal relationship. Thus, utterances such as the following are frequently attested in self-directed speech: «What?», «Next, an orange one», «Wait», «No», «I can't», «Done», etc. According to Vygotsky, it is in the process of privatizing speech that we gain control over our ability to remember, think, attend, plan, evaluate, inhibit, and learn.

In second language research, two early studies by Frawley and Lantolf investigated private speech in intermediate and advanced ESL speakers as well as beginning and intermediate learners of Spanish as a foreign language [4, p. 30]. Their work showed how in the face of difficult tasks speakers often lose control over the mediating means provided by their second language and become controlled by the task itself. This research revealed a marked difference in the use of private speech between ESL learners and foreign language students. The foreign language students failed to produce virtually any private speech when the task became difficult and made no attempt to regain control over the task. The ESL speakers, on the other hand, relied heavily on private speech in their struggle to maintain control of the task.

The interesting aspect of this work, in light of the discussion on the use of the L1 during peer mediation, is that in the case of the ESL learners, the private speech emerged not in their L1 but in their L2. A possible explanation for this asymmetry is that in the case of peer mediation, the interlocutors worked collaboratively and shared a native language, while Frawley and Lantolf's ESL speakers were in an enviticular context influence the language of private speech. If this is true, it weakens my earlier claim that it is difficult for people to surrender their L1 as the language they use to control their mental processes. Again, this is an area in which a good deal of worth while research can be undertaken.

Since the time of Frawley and Lantolf's publications, a number of studies on private speech and L2 have appeared. This research has been concerned with three different functions of private speech. Although mental rehearsal and appropriation have been treated as separate phenomena in the literature, they are not

necessarily unrelated. De Guerrero, who has carried the lion's share of the research on private speech as mental rehearsal in L2, defines mental rehearsal as 'voluntary or involuntary activity by means of which students practise in their minds the language they have learned, heard, or read, or the language they will have to use in a future oral or written activity' [3, p. 49]. According to this definition, it seems that mental rehearsal is about preparing oneself for activities which entail the L2. It isn't clear, however, if the preparation is aimed at specific concrete activities that loom on the horizon, or if it is a more general preparation for possible future use of the L2. Moreover, what is rehearsed may or may not be features of the L2 that have already been learned. Appropriation, however, is specifically concerned with language learning. It is the process through which the individual takes in particular features of the language through privately practicing and experimenting with these features. Even though the two concepts are different in focus, there would appear to be some overlap. It is not inconceivable that one could appropriate elements of language as a consequence of preparing to engage in a particular activity; that is, where the primary goal is not learning but performance.

Saville-Troike studied the appropriation function of private speech among L1 Chinese, Korean and Japanese children learning English in a North American classroom. Using wireless micro phones and video tape, she recorded the children over a six-month period. She found that at a point when some of the children refused to engage in social speech in English with their classmates, privately they continued to produce English utterances in which they manipulated morphological, phonological, lexical and syntactic features of the language. Much of the children's private speech closely paralleled what has been attested in the L1 acquisition literature as language play, and forms they had been playing with in their earlier private speech.

Broner and Tarone provide evidence similar to that uncovered in Saville-Troike's study [2, p. 168]. In addition to social ludic language play, their Spanish immersion children also produced private language play. Unlike with Saville-Troike's children, however, the immersion students generated language play in reaction to utterances produced by the teacher or other students during communicative interactions. Most often it consisted of whispered repetition of new lexical items introduced during content lessons. In one instance, however, two children became distracted from work they were doing on a geography assignment and began to engage in ludic play. The third student in the group ignored this and talked quietly to himself about the assignment and repeated a Spanish word required for completion of the assignment. It is difficult to determine if this practice is a case of rehearsal in preparation for the class presentation or whether it was intended to appropriate the new word, or both.

Lantolf, using a self-report instrument, investigated the appropriation function of private speech among learners of Spanish FL and ESL students. He found that learners reported that they manipulated the L2 in ways that paralleled the language play reported by Saville-Troike and what Weir and Kuczaj report for L1 children. He also uncovered correlations between frequency of private speech and language proficiency and between the goal for language study and private speech frequency. Beginning-level Spanish students frequency of language play than did the advanced Spanish students. He reasoned that because the ESL students were, relatively speaking, more advanced in their L2 than were the Spanish learners, and therefore they had less to learn than the Spanish students, there was less need for them to play privately with the language [6, p. 120].

With regard to goal and frequency of private speech Lantolf found that learners whose stated goal was to learn the language, either because it was interesting or because they felt it would be relevant to their future, were more likely to play with the language than those who enrolled in a language class merely to fulfill a degree requirement. Since the majority of students with the goal of fulfilling the language requirement were in the beginning-level Spanish group, Lantolf concluded that it was not surprising that this group would report a lower frequency of play than the advanced students. Gillette found a similar relationship between learner goals and private speech. Moreover, those students in her study whose primary aim was to fulfill a language requirement not only used little or no language play, they also were unsuccessful learners. Lantolf hypothesised that private speech as language play was a necessary condition for successful learning of a second language.

However, much more research is needed on this topic. In a similar vein, teachers should learn to listen to learners' private speech as well as the metatalk produced during peer mediated activities. These types of talk, whether in the L1 or L2, can be informative with regard to the kinds of generalisations, right or wrong, that learners formulate as they struggle to learn a second language. The effect of artifact mediation, especially technology, on language learning also needs to be carefully and extensively explored. If Salomon's hypothesis has any merit, the implementation of technologically mediated pedagogies could well have much more profound consequences on learning and communicating in an L2 than we might think.

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