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## **VYGOTSKY'S ZONE OF PROXIMAL DEVELOPMENT, IMITATION AND MIMESIS: THOUGHTS REGARDING AND PSYCHOLINGUISTICS**

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Концепция зоны ближайшего развития Л. С. Выготского, подражание и мимезис размышления относительно изучения иностранного языка и психолингвистики

Данная статья посвящена подробному анализу понятия «зоны ближайшего развития», проделанному автором. Отталкиваясь от концепции зоны ближайшего развития АС. Выготского, Д. Роббинс сопоставляет существующие интерпретации данного понятия, созданные последователями культурно-исторической психологии при решении самых разных теоретических и практических задач, выявляя в итоге ряд существенных характеристик ЗБР.

Центральным моментом анализа выступает обсуждение описания механизмов имитации и мимезиса в контексте обучения иностранному языку. Автор уделяет значительное внимание обсуждению названных понятий: они описываются и понимаются не просто как копирование учеником действий учителя. При этом имитация и мимезис рассматриваются как психологические основания процессов интериоризации, обуславливающие свойства зоны ближайшего развития. Особенно подробно в этом контексте обсуждается взаимодействие двух или нескольких людей, имеющее место в процессе обучения иностранному языку. Автор работы полагает, что предельно глубокое понимание ЗБР должно охватывать целостные личности ученика и учителя в процессе их развития.

### **ZONE OF PROXIMAL DEVELOPMENT**

Before beginning this paper the reader is asked to imagine the following: the goal is to view the ZPD as an activity that is dynamic and fluid. It does not contain fixed stages leading to development, and the ultimate goal is one of unity of both the individual and society. The ZPD is normally understood as a construct designed for the individual to gain personal growth, independent of the growth of society. However, the goal in this paper is to fuse both the growth of the individual and society in order to form a new organic unity of interdependency. Within this understanding the paradox of totality and change are of relevance within process as opposed to product. «Vygotsky wanted us to see the totality, the whole, the unity, tool-and-result, because it is only from that vantage point that we can come to understand anything about its processes and functioning» (L. Holzman, 1997). In this vision the focus is not on one ZPD, but on the creation of multiple ZPDs within an asymmetrical framework, including progression and regression. It is the creation of a new space that allows for a unified totality (e. g. Spinozian monism), and a changing dialectic of growth simultaneously. Within this framework of thinking the ZPD, as a metaphor, becomes a principle of creating a new community.

One of the most important aspects of the ZPD is the understanding that it is used to describe functions that are not yet visible. Vygotsky is given credit for the coining of this term, yet he

himself gives credit to Meumann and to other Americans. 1 «The American researcher Dorothea McCarthy showed that among children between the ages of three and five there are two groups of functions: those the children already possess, and those they can perform under guidance, in groups, and in collaboration with one another but which they have not mastered independently» (L. S. Vygotsky, 1978). In better understanding the ZPD, it has been stated that

First, it entails a reference to a zone - essentially a field-theoretical concept in an era of psychology that has largely forgotten the gargantuan efforts by Kurt Lewin to adopt topology for purposes of psychological discourse. Second, the understanding of development has been highly varied in contemporary psychological discourse, ranging from loosely formulated ideas about age-group differences (or age effects) to narrowly definable structural transformation of organisms in irreversible time and within context (J. Valsiner, 1987, 1989). Finally - to complicate the matters even further - contemporary psychologists have to wrestle with the qualifier of proximal (or potential, or nearest), as it is the connecting link between the field-theoretic zone and the concept of development in this complex term. (R. R. Cocking, 1993)

The ZPD is defined 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» (L. S. Vygotsky, 1978); and in Russian the ZPD is called *zona blizhaishego razvitiya*, which has also been translated into English by Simon & Simon (J. Valsiner & R. Van der Veer, 1993) as the zone of potential development by. For example:

The earliest documented mention of ZBR [ZPD] can be found in a lecture given in Moscow at Epshtein Institute of Experimental Defectology on March 17, 1933... In the first part of this text, Vygotsky emphasized the qualitative structural reorganization (dialectical synthesis) nature of the developmental process... Six crises periods in child development were outlined by Vygotsky: those of newborn age, 1st, 3rd, 7th, 13th, and 17th year. It is during these periods that the emergence of higher levels of psychological organization take place. Vygotsky was always ready to view developmental change as a process of dialectical synthesis..., and the crisis periods in ontogeny guided him to look for relevant developmental phenomena. (J. Valsiner & R. Van der Veer, 1993).

The ZPD is understood as being a descriptive rather than explanatory principle, and the focus... is not on transferring skills, as such, from those who know more to those who know less but on the collaborative use of mediational means to create, obtain, and communicate meaning. ... The role of the adult is not necessarily to provide structured cues, but through exploratory talk and other social mediations such as importing everyday activities into the classrooms, to assist children in appropriating or taking control of their own learning... » (L. C. Moll, 1992).

At this stage it is important to know what the ZPD is not; for example, the ZPD is not a method used to teach discrete, separable skills and subskills. The ZPD, however, is used for 1. establishing a level of difficulty. This level, assumed to be the proximal level, must be a bit challenging for, the student but not too difficult 2. providing assisted performance. The adult provides guided practice to the child with a clear sense of the goal or outcome of the child's

performance. 3. Evaluating independent performance. The most logical outcome of a zone of proximal development is the child performing independently. (L. C. Moll, 1992).

The basic paradox of the ZPD concerns the fact that it is used in measuring the child's potential age, as compared with her/his actual age; however, the core of the ZPD is the potential that is neither past nor present, hence difficult to measure. Certainly the ZPD has not remained free of criticism. For example, the ZPD is considered to be a powerful rhetorical device, yet «it [ZPD] pointed to the need to study processes of development on-line, but provided very little opportunity for an explicit theory of the developmental stages» (J. Valsiner & R. Van der Veer, 1993). A major criticism of the ZPD that remains a persistent problem today relates to the fact that Vygotsky did not even mention how this concept is supposed to be dialectical, which implies a unidirectional movement of development, without a dynamic relationship between teacher and learner. A second problem relates to the concept of scaffolding that does not always address the process of creativity in the child or the learner, as is often assumed. For example, «when the child is with an incompetent adult, we can underestimate his developmental potential» (J. Valsiner & R. Van der Veer, 1993). Another problem that resulted in testing the ZPD was the relationship of the child to her/his social milieu. «The examples Vygotsky gave to demonstrate the use of the zone of proximal development suggest that he was conceived of the environment as a static background to the dynamically developing child» (R. Van der Veer & J. Valsiner, 1991). Vygotsky suggested a regression factor in children coming from more privileged families, since the school setting was supposed to be an equalizing factor (in particular in the socialist model), where underprivileged children from an impoverished social environment would gain much, while the privileged would lose. 2 This presumption reflects the Utopian understanding of idealism Vygotsky maintained, and has not proved to be true as a general law.

With these thoughts in mind, the method used to measure the ZPD will be connected to the potential level of development and not the actual level. Valsiner & van der Veer (R. R. Cocking, 1993) are clear in stating that «indeed, the ZBR/ZPD concept has been widely used as a metaphor, and its operationalization has been complicated when attempted. But of course not every theoretical concept in psychology needs operationalization and measurement, and arguments against turning ZPD into another measured characteristic have substance». Before describing this paradigm it is assumed that there is agreement with Vygotsky's belief that learning precedes development; however, this is not always the case, where much controversy has arisen, because in many areas the ZPD has been taken literally. Newman & Holzman (F. Newman & L. Holzman, 1993) argue that «learning is not "ahead of development. Learning is not temporally related to development at all. Rather the "two" form a unity - an active historical completeness". 3 Perhaps Vygotsky would not have totally disagreed with this statement *mutatis mutandis* since his overall purpose was not to debate such an issue, but to establish an overarching philosophical construct that remains consistent with most of his ideas, ranging from aesthetics to defectology (i. e., the study of human "defects"; by this term Vygotsky meant the study of brain damaged children and adults and the mentally retarded). As a top-down analyst (which would be called global thinker today, although he was at the same time an analytic thinker), Vygotsky took the highest level he could imagine as his starting point, and measured the problem at hand in view of the metastructure he had established. In the case of the ZPD, a higher aesthetic consciousness was the highest positioning point, where it was also assumed that the teacher was extremely competent, such as his own tutor, Solomon Ashpiz. The

tutor/teacher would pass down cultural values to be internally transformed by the student and carried on by the next generation. Vygotsky in no way believed in pedantic teaching or in overexerted authority. Probably the authority he understood and accepted was derived from the competence of the teacher, who could instill knowledge and motivate the student with the ultimate responsibility being placed upon the shoulders of the student to reach autonomous behavior within societal restraints. Ashpiz consciously used the Socratic method in discussions, which led to a "give and take" form of argumentation and clarification-modification of conclusions made.

## EXAMPLES OF THE ZPD

It has often been noted that the major contribution Vygotsky gave to education was his concept of the ZPD. Many scholars in various countries have written so many articles that it would be impossible to give an overview of all of them. Only a few selected examples will be given, beginning with the research tradition of the former Yugoslavia, which maintains a symbol-constructive nature regarding human development. This tradition views internalized experiences that are investigated within a semiotic analysis of iconic systems, meaning figural, nonverbal phenomena that occur in symbolic play and dreaming (J. Valsiner & R. Van der Veer in Cocking, 1993).<sup>4</sup> This approach includes the following:

The main aim for this empirical elaboration is to retain the complementarity of the adult-child joint action in different contexts defined in respect to the child's process of development. The latter aim leads the researchers to view the ZPD in relation to other domains (or zones) of experience. Zone of Actual Development, Zone of Future Development, and Zone of Past Development (see Ignjatovic-Savic et al., 1988). The developmental process proceeds by "moving" some aspects of joint activity from the Zone of Future Development to ZPD, and subsequently to Zone of Past Development. Phenomena from these different zones can be observed in microgenetic task settings intermittently - reminding otherwise all too enthusiastic "Vygotskians" that not every aspect of joint action is actually productive for further development (J. Valsiner & R. Van der Veer, 1993, p. 55).

Another approach has been established by Jaan Valsiner, based somewhat on the tradition of the eco-cultural theory proposed by J. W. M. Whiting, elaborated by Charles Super and Sara Harkness in Cole (M. Cole, 1996):

Jaan Valsiner (J. Valsiner, 1987) distinguishes niches with respect to the role of adult involvement in a manner that complements the positions sketched out so far. The innermost level of the developmental niche is called the Zone of Free Movement (ZFM); it structures the child's access to different parts of the environment, exposure to different objects and events, and ways of acting. Within the ZFM, adults promote children's actions in various ways, creating the Zone of Promoted Action (ZPA). According to this scheme, Vygotsky's idea of a Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is treated as a ZPA so matched to the child's present developmental state that it guides the child's further development. Each way of structuring interactions provides essential constraints enabling development

Another example is Barbara Rogoff's fusion of person and culture, and although an interesting model she does not include Vygotsky's understanding of internalization.

Starting from an interest in neo-Gibsonian "ecological psychology" on the one hand, and Leontiev's version of Vygotsky's perspective on the other (B. Rogoff, 1982), she has moved to view ZPD as a framework in which the "stretching" of the child's skill and understanding takes place... The "event" (interactive setting) that is constructed jointly by active (goal-oriented) child and the other person who is more knowledgeable about the cultural ways of acting than the child (but equally goal-oriented) becomes the "unit of analysis" of the guided participation process as the context for human development (J. Valsiner & R. Van der Veer, 1993).

Newman, Griffin & Cole (D. Newman, P. Griffin & M. Cole, 1989) offer the concept of The Construction Zone, which is a magic place where minds meet, where things are not the same to all who see them, where meanings are fluid, and where one person's construal may preempt another's... Imagine, if you like, two people whose activities are linked together following relatively simple rhythms, routines, and prompts. The low-level cues sustain the activity, though the meanings and understandings possessed by each actor may be quite different. Through such shared activity a teacher may create (in Courtney Cazden's phrase) "competence before performance" or a zone of proximal development (ZPD). (pp. IX-XI)

Cole (M. Cole, 1985), a few years earlier, extended the ZPD to include collectively organized activity, with an emphasis on «mutual construction of culture and person».

In that joint activity, an individual person indeed develops from present to future on the basis of ideal models of the future, and of the past... However, the emphasis on collective shared activities leads Cole into the theoretically central adoption of the Soviet focus on activity theory in general terms, and of the concept of leading activity in particular. This extension of Vygotsky's ideas to the domain of activity theory leads to the establishment of a hybrid theory™ Although an explicit emphasis here is made upon internal operations and internalization, the major focus remains on the different kinds of activities in which the child is embedded. (J. Valsiner & R. Van der Veer, 1993).

The following list of 14 points covers many of the areas of the ZPD as it is understood within Vygotskian theory. This list is not exhaustive, and readers are also asked to come up with their own lists:

(1) The ZPD deals with the potential of the learner and teacher. There is a focus of potentiality as being within «height» psychology, as opposed to «depth» psychology where Freudian paradigms of the unconscious are understood within multiple personal problems. Height psychology or Vygotskian psychology view the heights of potentiality of the individual, also including unconscious components; however, the unconscious is viewed as the seat of creativity and problem solving. 6

(2) The ZPD relates to functions that are not yet emergent Vygotsky was using the term functional in reference to Torndike's faculty psychology (B. Lee, 1985). 7 Mike Cole referred to a concept developed by Rommetveit (Rommetveit, 1974) called prolepsis. The example of adults

reacting to a baby are a good example of prolepsis. It is clear that adults speak baby talk to very young infants, but they also speak an adult version of language as well. It is clear that they do not expect the infant to respond in a proper fashion, but there is the expectation that the infant will grow into the community and one day be able to use language. This metaphor is excellent in demonstrating that we often forget to use prolepsis within the education setting. At this point there should be a focus on the actual vs. the potential age of the learner. This is also a simple metaphor in this sense, to not view the learner as she communicates today, but to view her within her highest potential age.

(3) Personal transformation. This will be a demonstrative component if one: has experienced the ZPD. Personal transformation in no way implies a positive experience all of the time. In fact regression must be accounted for if there is to be real growth and development

(4) The next two aspects form a unit that focuses on the overcoming of Cartesian dualisms. The first area is called dialectical unity. This involves «a dialectical process in which the transition from one step to another is accomplished not by evolutionary, but by a revolutionary path - we need to concentrate not on the product of development, but on the very process by which higher forms are established» (B. Lee, 1985). Within dialectical unity the underlying principle is the general genetic law of development that actually sets the boundaries of the ZPD. 8

(6) Unity of development - Overcoming dualisms: Within the ZPD there is not a listing of stages of development, such as in Piaget's epistemological psychology. Vygotsky did describe critical stages of crisis in child development (e. g., 1, 3, 7, 13, 17), however this labeling was descriptive rather than prescriptive<sup>9</sup> As well, there is a call to not fall victim to general dualisms, such as learning precedes development (where development precedes learning in many traditional approach of educational psychology). It is clear that both learning and development must go hand in hand for growth to take place. 10

(7) Process vs. Product It is argued that the Cartesian scientific method of focusing on product will not be an integral part of the ZPD. At the same time, there needs to be completion within the process approach. For example, «learning "completes" development, while development "completes" learning although, of course, they do not complete each other the same way, since learning leads development (L. Holzman, 1997).

(8) Assessment For a good summary on this issue refer to Gordon Wells (G. Wells, 1999). The basic paradox of the ZPD is contained within assessment For the most part, the ZPD is placed within the traditional education system around the world, with assessment not being changed It is clear that for the ZPD to maintain a viable presence in the classroom, assessment will have to be restructured completely. One of the worst areas of adaptation of assessment in the ZPD to date is to simply create an atmosphere of group work testing, with the teacher serving the role as facilitator, and then giving a grade. If this type of assessment is used, it is suggested that there be four elements offered regarding the final grade: student grade, teacher grade, group grade for each student, and class grade for each student. In reality, when taking the ZPD seriously, the traditional mode of grading should be completely questioned and revised.

(9) Internalization: A part of the ZPD that can be operationalized is concept development, which can represent stages leading to rooting or ingrowth. These moments are surely accompanied by the experience of catharsis, or the magic moment where it all «clicks. » There is not a call to implement a difficult study of semiotics at this point, but to simply view the entire personality of each student as a whole. Within Cartesian science and much traditional educational practice, the psychology of personality is viewed in atomistic parts, such as motivation, anxiety, personality types, styles of learning, empathy, and so on. These traits are often viewed separately, and not holistically. It is suggested that the ZPD contain an awareness of internalization related to the entire personality of both the participant and the teacher.

(10) Role of Expert vs. Role of Competent Peer: Within the ZPD the role of expert will be reevaluated in terms of its needs. What is an expert? When is an expert truly needed? Should we develop the same trust to competent peers? How has the role of expert changed over the past 20 years?

(11) ZPD is not just a cognitive zone: (a) the ZPD should often include some aspect of play, (b) Lois Holzman (L. Holzman, 1997) stated that two of the most important tools for the ZPD are creative imitation and completion. Imitation was important for Vygotsky related to the ZPD.

(12) «To learn in the ZPD does not require that there be a designated teacher..., development does not have any predetermined end, or telos ... (G. Wells, 1999).

(13) Unfossilization: Within the ZPD there should be a focus on pliability and a reshaping the thinking of learning in general. This new freedom of movement, thought, action should be directed at «unfossilizing» older ways of thinking that have become rigid and do not allow for new learning.

I propose a process to unfossilize learning and develop new connections by using similar contexts, parallel concepts or processes. New links to the fossilized end points are developed. Connections are made, and new categories are created. The old knowledge is reconnected, the new knowledge is added to the categories, and the students develop a broader understanding of the relationships involved. Unfossilization is not the same as relearning since relearning involves repeating the original process, retracing the same strands (C. M. Lerch, 2000).

(14) Situation Redefinition: «something that involves giving up a previous situation definition in favor of a qualitatively new one» (B. Rogoff & J. V. Wertsch, 1984).

In closing the new definition of the ZPD is offered by L. Holzman (L. Holzman, 1997):

A ZPD is a form of life in which people collectively and relationally create developmental learning that goes beyond what any individual in the group could learn on her or his own. Our effort is to create continuously overlapping ZPD's, a particular relational activity that simultaneously is and makes possible the transforming of rigid behavior (forms of life that have become alienated and fossilized) into new forms of life. (p. 71)"

With these thoughts in mind, regarding the implied creativity of the ZPD in child (and in adult) development, the following section will look at the role of imitation and mimesis, in particular in the Second Language Acquisition (SLA) classroom situation. It is argued that there needs to be a new focus on imitation - mimesis as a starting point for internalizing values students can then develop into personal creativity.

## IMITATION

The word imitation usually conjures up picture-images of the non-authentic, or fraud, or something artificial, etc. Rarely do we sit back and realize what this term used to mean in education. Imitation has traditionally been understood as memorizing facts, etc. in order to pass down culture to further generations, or memorizing poetry for the joy of recitation. Imitation is, for example, an integral part of the harmony and joy of an orchestra playing classical music, which is viewed as being authentic. However, at the same time, especially within Vygotsky's educational system, imitation was a form of practice, or internal restructuring and of gaining entrance to other worlds, in order to expand one's own consciousness. Vygotsky placed imitation squarely within his notion of the ZPD. For example,

Speaking of imitation, we do not have in mind mechanical, automatic, thoughtless imitation but sensible imitation based on understanding the imitative carrying out of some intellectual operation. In this respect, on the one hand, we restrict the meaning of the term, using it only in the sphere of operations that are more or less directly connected with mental activity of the child. On the other hand, we extend the meaning of the term, applying the word "imitation" to all kinds of activity of a certain type carried out by the child not independently, but in cooperation with adults or with another child. Everything that the child cannot do independently, but which he can be taught or which he can do with direction or cooperation or with the help of leading questions, we will include in the sphere of imitation (L. S. Vygotsky, 1998).

During his youth Vygotsky and his friends established a circle to discuss topics of history and they would often imitate famous figures who would then simulate discussions and argue philosophical points. Also, Vygotsky memorized much poetry, and his daughter, Gita L'vovna, recalls that he would stand and recite poetry to the listener's delight. As well, Gita L'vovna offers another example of a game Vygotsky would play, which was based on simple associationistic principles, not to be understood as a means of reaching mature concept formation, but to be understood as a simple game:

In the evenings, the family would always gather in grandmother's room... around a big table. After obligatory tea, some would remain seated by the table, while others would move to the warm stove (the flat was always cool). Then the most interesting things would begin. Someone would read aloud, and everybody else would listen. There would be debates about new plays, reciting of poems, joking. When Lev Semenovitch came alone, he always took part before going to our room to work [Vygotsky used his children's room to work, not having one for himself]. In those hours, he liked to stand, his back to the masonry of the stove, his hands behind his back... He knew very many poems, loved them very much, and was always ready to recite - usually, the classics. From contemporary poetry, he would most often recite Pasternak... He could recite poems literally for hours, and everybody, having fallen silent and seated themselves comfortably,



listened to him with pleasure... Right there, by the stove, Lev Semenovitch would demonstrate to us his ability to remember large numbers of words. We would, working together, compile a list of 100 words... and hand it over to Lev Semenovitch. He would slowly read each word, return the list, and then offer to recite it in any order. To our amazement and joy, he would, without mistake, repeat all the words on the list from beginning to end, and then repeat them in the reverse order. Then we would ask him to reproduce the 17th, 4th, 61st, 7th, and so on, word, and he without difficulty and without any mistakes, would do it (G. Vygotskya, 1995).

When thinking about contemporary education, one of the problems that is also found within constructivism is the fact that young children, as well as college level students, are asked to interact with each other, work in groups, collaborate. Certainly this alone is a welcome relief to many learners when faced with the alternative of a «teacher-centered» atmosphere, where only lecturing, note taking and testing results. However, it is within the Zone of Proximal Development that teacher role-modeling takes on a different meaning, with the teacher profoundly interested in the personality development of each and every individual. The classics, math, music, art, foreign languages are then presented within a new framework, with the assumption that the teacher or competent peer is an expert in his or her own field of knowledge. It has been stated that much of contemporary education represents the opposite values compared to those of the 1920s where scientific-academic concepts were learned in schools, which would then be mediated by everyday spontaneous concepts. Today, it sometimes appears that the format which seemingly replicates scientific concepts often includes many spontaneous concepts once learned at home, or a church, etc. For example, while at school, students often learn about information on drugs, sex, AIDS, how to deal with strangers, etc., all of which represent spontaneous concepts. At the same time, when scientific-academic concepts are introduced, they are often presented verbally, in the older sense of-«teacher-oriented» learning, which does not always translate into concept development for the child, or even for the L2 learner in many situations. [81] Belyayev (B. V. Belyayev, 1964) offered an interesting approach to imitation and its role in education by stating that reproduction is impossible without recognition, but production is impossible without reproduction. Because of postmodern hypersigns and hyperimages, students are saturated with images and often cannot take on more, unless room is made for assimilation. There has to be a motivated reason for internalizing more images when offered with the L2 classroom. Therefore, in order to become motivated there must be recognition, and at the same time reproduction must be meaningful, otherwise the results will become empty verbalism.

Vygotsky's understanding of the term imitation was similar to that of Mark Baldwin's persistent imitation concept, as opposed to simple imitation. 12

That concept implies "imitation" of the (socially given) models beyond copying them (rather than merely producing an exact copy, at best). Thus, "persistent imitation" equals constructive experimentation with the given model, and its transformation into a novel form-both in actions directed toward the model and in the resulting internalization of understanding of the model (R. Valsiner & J. Van der Veer, 1993).

Therefore, the understanding of imitation hopefully takes on a new (or old!) meaning, which is now placed within the perspective of using imitation as a bridge for internalizing given cultural

information (be it poems, mathematics, literature). However, this is only the starting point continuing with problem-solving exercises, role-playing, research projects, portfolios, creative journal writing, videos of self-produced activities, plays, etc. At the same time, there is a call for sensitivity to the learner's background. Students can often recite lines of their favorite rock/rap music for up to six or seven minutes, with astonishing results. This type of imitation can, perhaps, be restructured for the classroom, where the learner is in charge of motivating others, or simply demonstrating one's own interests.

In returning to Vygotsky, it is clear that he did not give us complete answers regarding the use of imitation in the classroom, yet it is understood that imitation for him did not simply mean copying.

The concept of imitation has overtones of noncreative copying mechanisms. Although it is true that Vygotsky tried to avoid such an explanation for children's imitation, by claiming that he was thinking of "intellectual imitation," he did not refer to or provide a fully-fledged theory of imitation that might have solved the problem... he [Vygotsky] made it very clear that he attached great value to these forms of deferred imitation both for cognitive and emotional development (R. Van der Veer & J. Valsiner, 1991).

Vygotsky carefully studied the theories of Konstantin Stanislavsky, a noted actor, in charge of theater production and the creator of the Actors Method, which was actually adopted by many Hollywood stars in the late 1940s and 1950s. Actors were given notes written on the side of their scripts, which explained certain feelings of the particular role in a scene. In order to practice for the roles, actors would research lines in a historical context, and they would imitate the lines or even words using as many varying nuances as they could come up with. «In teaching this system of acting, Konstantin Stanislavsky required the actors to uncover the "subtext" of their lines in a play... Every sentence that we say in real life has some kind of subtext, a thought hidden behind it... Just as one sentence may express different thoughts, one thought may be expressed in different sentences» (L. S. Vygotsky (in A. Kozulin(ed. )), 1994). Stanislavsky called his theory of acting the theory of emotional experience and one of his favorite words was grip, a concept that is used unconsciously in many L2 classroom situations:

In real life one can do without a grip, but on the stage it is needed almost everywhere, continuously, every minute of this lofty creativity... This special, concentrated, typical "summarized communication," stage communication, becomes a clutch, a grip, and demands participation of the actor's total inner and outer resources... Thus, the actor's inner communication with the character he is impersonating merges, as it were, with his communication with other actors and is inseparable from the indirect communication with the audience. (N. B. Berkhin, 1988)

Teachers do not have to apply principles used in the theater, and might not identify themselves with such parallels in the first place. However, L2 teachers are left with the problem of imitation, in particular in phonology. At the same time, the use of imitation understood by Vygotsky was pivotal in initial speech development, which automatically led to concept formation. This paradigm is radically different for adults, which brings up the problem of trying to adapt Vygotsky's understanding to the L2 classroom. Caution is given in trying to use Vygotsky's ideas

within a new model of imitation; however, one aspect seems to be important, namely disobjectivation or displacement, where students learn to «step out of their own reality, » and envision themselves in a completely new setting. Students must be able to deal with ambiguity within these phases of learning, which is a difficult step for many. One bridge that can sometimes work is the presentation of traditional fairy tales within the L2. However, the intentionality of the teacher will either motivate the students, or truly turn them off. Students can learn vocabulary, go through slides of a fairy tale, then see a cartoon version of the fairy tale in the foreign language. They can try to rewrite the fairy tale, update it, or write their own versions. They can act it out, video tape it, etc. There can be a critical analysis of the fairy tale, such as the connotations of Red Riding Hood going through her teenage years and the various implications of that reflected in the story line. The German interpretation of taking wine to a sick grandmother can be compared to the American version. If L2 students are asked to enter this process as themselves, surely there would be much resistance to such childish content. As well, the attempt to take on the same form of identity of the protagonists of the fairy tale might spell disaster for the learner and teacher. This problem is the same when teaching «everyday notions of life in a foreign culture, » i. e. the train station, restaurant, bank, post office, or when teaching literature. As well, this problem can arise when assigning students a foreign name, without any point of reference for internalizing the meaning of having a foreign name. What can result in all of these exercises is the problem of students not knowing how to integrate the new identification of the target culture with their own identities; or should they just imitate the situation which in reality would mean that they were simply playing? It is claimed that strategies need to be in place where the L2 students can indeed learn to identify with the target culture in a realistic fashion. In order to accomplish that understanding, a first step should take place regarding the need to actually identify with the other in general. One example that has been used in German is the introduction of works by Goethe. Various translations are first researched in English and shared with members of a sub-group. Within a class, groups are initially divided according to majors or personal interests. Therefore similarity is first established within the sub-groups, allowing for a focus on differences. At this point two sub-groups are temporarily fused in order to discuss the information gained and exchange points of then, then reporting their findings to the entire class. Then the process of reading the same version in the German language takes place within the initial group, where a sense of solidarity has hopefully been established; at this point students do not feel so intimidated with the foreign language, already knowing the content in their mother tongue. The goal is to try and understand German perspectives that are selected by the students. For example, some students might be interested in history, and set up an interview with a history professor interested in Germany, Austria, Switzerland. Students might use the Internet to see if there is comparative information on Goethe from a German perspective. Students might find out who is an expert on Goethe and write to him/her. The next step is to try to discover the meaning Goethe has for Germans. In one experiment an older German woman, married to an American, was asked to read the text, and come to class to simply share her impressions. Never having been to college, she readily shared her anxiety at trying to interpret Goethe to college students (and the college students shared their fear of speaking German with her). Another German exchange student was asked to give his interpretation of the same text, so that different generations would have a voice in the personal interpretation of the German Goethe text from a German perspective. Then, the last stage was to allow the students time to try to interpret the text by Goethe to see what it meant to them at that particular moment in their lives. Time was given to the students to process the Goethe text on many levels, including a film. By the end of the

semester, they had experienced the process of disobjectivation enough that they could indeed reflect on their relationship with text, be it positive or negative. It is hypothesized that without disobjectivation, it truly does not matter what type of activity or project is presented to the students, they usually cannot identify with it immediately. Students need time to set a goal, learn the principles of patience and hard work; they need to focus on a dominant activity for a longer period of time, and they need to have their input not only count, but be recognized as necessary for the success of the class in general.

There is total agreement with the approach offered by Claire Kramersch, who is in essence the role model used for the dominant activity regarding the Goethe text. Kramersch stated that «by teaching a foreign language we should objectivize the learner's native discourse patterns and help them adopt those of the new language» (C. Kramersch, 1993).

## MIMESIS

At this point, it is suggested that the new or old understanding of imitation be placed within another category, which is called mimesis. Before beginning this understanding it will be assumed that the traditional conflicts within the historical context of mimesis will not be reviewed, since they do not add to the understanding of a new L2 classroom. As well, the underlying meaning of mimesis is very old, hence often forgotten in contemporary society. Originally mimesis was understood as serving the function of translating what is not seen or present (i. e. the ultimate reality or nouema in Kantian terminology) into the visible, within the form of the representational, including images. The attempt to return to ultimate reality (i. e. here the study of ontology) has not been a focus even in current philosophy; however, the point regarding the connection between mimesis and the L2 classroom is worth reviewing. The L2 teacher is indeed responsible for presenting the reality of the foreign language and culture to the students, and serves as a translator not only of the overall effect of the L2, but of the overall image of the culture(s) involved. Indeed, both teachers and students, as well as students individually, cannot circumvent mimesis if L2 internalization-appropriation-mastery is to be successful. Mimesis within this construct does not deal with the outcomes of L2 competency/proficiency/accuracy/fluency, it only serves to guide the process for successful outcomes.

Before defining mimesis, it should be recognized that Plato and Aristotle maintained opposing views regarding this concept, with the problem of whether the original (in its archetypal form) could be copied or not, and if that would create an automatic simulacrum (a copy of a copy). The term mimesis is almost as difficult to grasp as the word consciousness, and indeed this vastness of understanding also includes the mystery of its content. Even the term mimesis cannot be completely defined as it always remains within the stage of being created. Longer excerpts will be given, since it is felt that a key element in restructuring the L2 classroom will rest on a basic understanding of mimesis:

Mimesis is not concerned with boundaries drawn between art, science, and life. It causes accepted differentiations to lose their power to distinguish and strips definitions of their conventional meanings... New connections, distinctions, and orders of thought come into being. .. Mimetic processes are not unequivocal; they are better understood as ambivalent... Mimesis

resists a clear-cut split between subject and object ... The concept of mimesis implies a resistance to splitting the human spheres of experience, action, and symbolic production into two parts, one practical and one theoretical... In this sense mimesis is distinct from mimicry, which implies only a physical and not mental relation. There is a complementarity of perspectives in mimesis... Mimesis includes both an active and a cognitive component... Mimesis originally denoted a physical action and developed first in oral cultures. It has an indicative character, with attention turning repeatedly to the gestural over the history of the concept. (G. Gebauer & G. Wulf, 1992).

With this definition in place, the reader is asked to go back and rethink the examples of fairy tales (i. e., Red Riding Hood), and any simplified Goethe text from the point of view not only of imitation but of mimesis. How could such examples be constructed so that the student could participate and retain a meaningful after-image of the project? Perhaps the best application of this term to the classroom is from Paul Ricoeur (P. Ricoeur, 1981), who is of the opinion that «mimesis does not mean the duplication of reality; mimesis is not a copy; mimesis is poiesis, that is construction, creation. » This definition of mimesis is important, because it takes the L2 classroom out of the static, technical side of a foreign language which has to some degree become mechanistic, and places it within the realm of art, creativity and aesthetics, where it actually used to belong. In fact, this aspect represents the initial starting point with Vygotsky who began, and to some degree, ended his career within aesthetics. There is, however, no call to return to the past where foreign languages were embedded within classical education.

Many of the ideas located within the ZPD all lead to the magic moment of catharsis, where the frustration level is transformed into meaningfulness. Varsava (J. A. Varsava, 1990) put it this way: «catharsis becomes the emotional manifestation or, as was cited above, the confirmation of an actual knowledge of the known mimetic object».

In closing the discussion of imitation - mimesis, one aspect should be kept in mind that is important when relating any of the theories of Vygotsky to the L2 classroom. It should not be presumed that Vygotsky offered all of the answers to the problems of language acquisition, particularly since he spoke to us from the 1920s and early 1930s. Just as Widdowson (H. G. Widdowson, 1990) stated, the essential point is that there are no universal solutions. Vygotsky viewed his theories as being «in process, » never as a finished product. Also, it is not presumed that Vygotsky was a superman with intelligence beyond everyone else, although it has been suggested by many, including A. R. Luria, that Vygotsky was indeed a genius. If this is the case or not, it is important that the use of Vygotsky's thoughts not be turned into a bandwagon approach, trying to popularize methods with Vygotsky as the cult leader. In fact, Newman & Holzman (F. Newman & L. Holzman, 1993) address this very issue. «Clearly, we want to avoid the trap some Vygotskians have been accused of falling into, that of creating and/or contributing to a cult of personality around Vygotsky» (F. Newman & L. Holzman, 1993). However, Vygotsky offered a unique perspective, sometimes microscopic, sometimes telescopic, all within the framework of the dialectic, placed within monism. Somehow he took on the role of a «mirror» within these two views (i. e. micro - macro), focusing clearly on the essence of human nature. Another person who lived many years before Vygotsky wrote a cogent statement that could easily be applied to the overall tenor of the Vygotskian approach. This person was Comenius (1592-1670): this threefold intellectual method can be most aptly compared to the threefold artificial aid to our vision which we call the telescope, the microscope, and the mirror.

Just as the telescope brings closer to our vision things far removed, so that they can be examined even in their parts, in like manner does analysis make visible even the hidden parts of anything. And just as the microscope enlarges the smallest of things and reveals even the minutest particles of indivisible units, so synthesis ever mounting from the lesser to the greater, accurately discloses the precise structure of things.. Mirrors, however are used and always have been used more frequently than telescopes and microscopes. (V. Jelinek, 1953).

In closing, the hope of this paper is for modern language educational practice to view Vygotsky's ZPD within the parameters of process, personal transformation, space, catharsis, etc. Much of this practice is traditionally understood within the framework of free creativity, group problem solving, interaction, etc. The key element within the ZPD is personal transformation, which can have its initial starting point within Wertsch' definition of situation redefinition: «something that involves giving up a previous situation definition in favor of a qualitatively new one» (B. Rogoff, 1984). Although the example of the second language classroom was used, these ideas can apply to many classroom settings. For individuals to develop to their full potential it is important to internalize cultural value systems within the higher understanding that imitation and repetition are not the ultimate goals of learning, but represent vehicles that can help individuals reach higher personal levels of development. It is argued that a return to these areas within education should be accompanied with mimesis, and that this construct should be located at the center of the ZPD. Imitation, repetition, mimesis are only the beginning tools to be instantiated within the ZPD, followed by personal and societal tools of critical thinking and creative problem solving. The overall understanding of the ZPD should maintain a focus on the whole personality of both the learner and teacher, and on personal empowerment and transformation.

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1 «Vygotsky pointed out that Meumann and others had suggested that we should establish at least two levels of child development, namely, what the child can do already and what the child's potential is» (R. Van der Veer & J. Valsiner, 1991).

2 «However, present research seems to disprove Vygotsky's suggestion for, if anything, schooling seems to increase the individual differences in competence» (R. Van der Veer & J. Valsiner, 1991).

3 Newman F. & Holzman L. (F. Newman & L. Holzman, 1993) state in a footnote: «It might strike readers as contradictory that we are saying learning is not ahead of development, given that Vygotsky says it is. Our point is that the language used "ahead of - connotes linearity or temporality, and, more generally, instrumentation» (p. 212).

4 Also, refer to Ivic I., 1988.



5cf. Valsiner R. & Van der Veer J. in Cocking R. R., 1993, p. 52. Also see Newman F., Griffen P. & Cole M., 1989. The Construction Zone.

6 «If "superficial psychology" (for example, behaviorism) passes appearance off as essence, and if "depth psychology derives psychical existence from the sphere of the unconscious" and the "unconscious itself does not develop, " that is, if depth psychology is in principle antisocial and antihistorical, then only our "height psychology" is a truly scientific, social, and historical psychology» (A. A. Leontyev, 1992, p. 42).

7 «Consciousness is not an attribute of any particular state or process such as attention or memory, but rather an attribute of the way in which such states are organized and functionally related both to behavior and each other» (B. Lee, 1985, p. 70).

8 This idea was derived from reading Lois Holzman (L. Holzman, 1997, pp. 58-59).

9 In viewing Vygotsky's ages of crisis, a serious problem can arise to the overall level of description, because it is not at all clear that the periods of crisis happen to all children (e. g., girls and boys) at the same time, nor to all societies (e. g., tribal, technological, and so on).

10 «The dialectical unity learning/instruction - leading - development develops as a whole. Learning cannot exist without development and development cannot exist without learning» (L. Holzman, 1997, p. 58).

11 Taken from Newman & Holzman (F. Newman & L. Holzman, 1996).

12 «For Baldwin, simple imitation amounted to "sensori-motor or ideo-motor suggestion, which tends to keep itself going by reinstating its own stimulation" (1895, p. 352)... simple imitation is incapable of producing novelty beyond the model... In terms of contrast, persistent imitation entails increasing experimentation with different aspects of the model, and going beyond the model as given by way of producing imitated versions that deliberately modify the model» (Valsiner R. & Van der Veer J., 2000, pp. 152 -153).

[81]find the V. Davydov article stating that today we are learning spontaneous concepts in school, not scientific concepts.

[82]look up V. Jelinek 1953 Comenius and add to bib.