

RESENHAS/REVIEWS

<http://dx.doi.org/10.5007/2175-8026.2015v68n1p147>

Moll, L. C. (2014). *L.S. Vygotsky and education*. New York: Routledge.

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As part of Routledge's Key Ideas in Education series, *L.S. Vygotsky and Education* serves as an approachable introduction to key concepts of Vygotskian theory, as well as an edifying resource for educators already familiar with Vygotsky's work. This book series is framed as a collection of conversations about education with authorities from the field; in *L.S. Vygotsky and Education*, Moll explores Vygotskian theory relative to education, with an explicit focus on the cultural mediation of thinking, by reviewing projects from Moll's own body of work, including research from bilingual programs in elementary school and a study group for teachers.

L.S. Vygotsky and Education is divided into four chapters: (1) "Situating Vygotsky Historically," (2) "Reading in Two Languages: A Formative Experiment," (3) "Bilingual Subjectivity in the Mediation of Thinking," and (4) "Living Knowledge in Practice." The titles of the chapters foreshadow an important theme of the text and Vygotsky's work: it is essential to account for the role of history — and more generally sociocultural context — in human thought and, by extension, in all theory and practice. So before exploring the core concepts of Vygotskian theory, Moll tells Vygotsky's story, sharing his familial, cultural, and academic backgrounds in order to demonstrate how

these elements of his life facilitated and constrained the conception of his cultural-historical approach. After the reader is situated historically, Moll delves into a review of core concepts from Vygotskian theory including the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), mediation, and cultural tools. Moll incorporates the work of other Vygotsky scholars like Cole, Scribner, and Wertsch, to grant the reader access to the development of the field's scholarship.

With the foundation for discussion established in chapter one, Moll devotes the remaining three chapters to illustrating real-life applications of Vygotskian theory through his own research. All three serve to demonstrate the influence of a learner's social-historical experience and their thinking: not as a blueprint that maps a static, predetermined final structure, but as a crucial force learners struggle with throughout development. Each chapter's illustration allows the reader to view this influence and struggle from different vantage points while emphasizing different fundamental aspects of Vygotskian theory.

Chapters two and three feature teaching-learning experiments conducted in bilingual elementary school programs but the projects differ in scope. In a project situated in two reading classrooms — one Spanish, one English — the researchers recognized that the isolated design of the classrooms did not allow for teachers of one language to take advantage of a student's knowledge and abilities in the other language. In an effort to make use of the resources students brought to the classroom, Moll's team designed an approach to teaching reading in English adapted from Vygotsky's ZPD, using students' more advanced reading ability in Spanish as a proximal level of development (representing what they were capable of with assistance) and their lower reading ability in English as their actual level of development. This bilingual ZPD allowed the researchers-turned-instructors to facilitate a higher level of engagement between students, reading materials, and resulting discussion, as exemplified in included transcripts. Chapter three broadens the scope, shifting the focus from in-classroom research to longitudinal data collected from bilingual students through their elementary and middle school years.

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Instead of including transcripts from classroom discourse to demonstrate Moll's application of Vygotsky's concept of the ZPD (as in chapter two), chapter three's profiles of three young girls followed in Moll's study encourage a deeper and more global understanding of a key concept: mediation. Here, the discussion on mediation dissects how language ideologies present in the students' environments are appropriated and/or rejected as the students' subjectivities mediate and are mediated by attitudes and biases. In one example, a young girl staunchly believes her future self will speak only English because doing so is key to a successful life, even though she is educated within a bilingual program and her family communicates primarily in Spanish. Mediation is not limited to the classroom; as agentive, social beings, humans consistently form and transform their own subjectivities within their sociocultural context.

The final chapter again shifts scope, this time beyond the classroom and beyond student life to teachers and the community at large. The research centers around a study group formed of teachers and researchers (and teachers-as-researchers) with a goal to develop social networks between the community and the classroom and to, again, foster connections between students' (and their families') sociocultural experiences and their school education. In order to do so, the teachers involved explored the field of ethnographic research and applied their knowledge through observations and interviews of students' families, collecting information about the large, ever-changing pools of knowledge found in the community which were available to and relevant for teachers and students. The study group itself became a "mediating structure" (p. 117) in which teachers had an opportunity to transform everyday knowledge about the teaching-learning experience into scientific concepts, informed by readings, ethnographic investigations, and group discussions with colleagues and experts. Although in many ways, the project in this chapter is the most far-reaching, with 15 teachers each engaging with 4 families in the community, the project's motivation, development, and process get the closest scrutiny of any in the book, making this section an especially strong resource for teacher educators. Taking one last step back to widen the lens, Moll ends the final

chapter with four more related projects, situated in Spain, New Zealand, Australia, and the U.S., in order to include additional contexts and research interests relevant to Vygotskian theory.

Though the scope of the projects reviewed began narrow and expanded with each chapter, Moll successfully conveys the importance of recognizing the breadth, depth, and mutability of sociocultural experience and its interactions with thinking and education in all sizes of projects. The discussion of the various projects reviewed provides educators with a close-up look at how Vygotskian theory informs research and education, with details about teaching-learning experiments and explicit connections to key concepts from Vygotsky's work.

Recebido em: 12/02/2015

Aceito em: 27/02/2015