

CONSTRUCTIVIST APPROACHES TO LEARNING



Lev Vygotsky
(1896–1934)

LEV VYGOTSKY (1896–1934)

- ▶ His work translated from Russian in 1962.
 - ▶ Emphasis on the role of the adult in supporting children.
 - ▶ A child's potential should be assessed.
 - ▶ Learning at various stages – zone of proximal development (ZPD) – the distance between child's actual development and his potential – the relationship between a child's possible learning and his/her current abilities.
- 

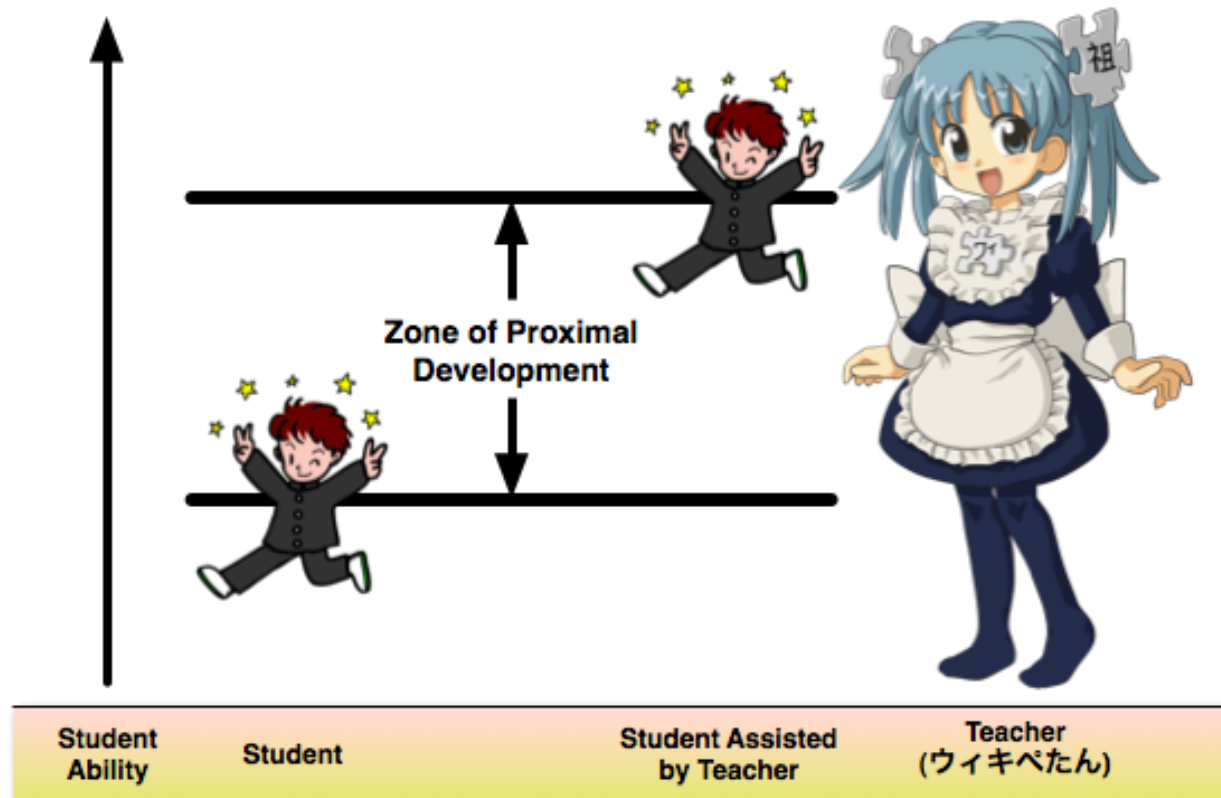
Vygotsky's theories of cognitive development

- ▶ Children's learning takes place through socialisation – SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVIST THEORY.
 - ▶ Placed great emphasis on the role of adults and other children in a child's learning.
 - ▶ Language fundamental to learning.
 - ▶ Child uses speech to direct himself, go through a stage of talking aloud to no-one in particular – 'inner voice'.
- 

VYGOTSKY

- ▶ Adult plays an important role by helping the child by scaffolding.
 - ▶ Child as an 'apprentice' who learns by being helped and challenged by others
 - ▶ Child is at the centre of the curriculum.
 - ▶ Adult acts as a guide, to support,
 - ▶ In planning, adult organises resources and experiences to enable children to develop own ideas.
- 

Zone of Proximal Development



Zone of proximal development

- ▶ **Current abilities** – *Susan is 5, she has quite good manipulative skills and wants to do up the zip on her coat.*
 - ▶ **Learning through socialisation** – *Susan's mum spends a few minutes showing her how to work the zip, she is encouraged and has a go herself.*
 - ▶ **Development of skills and concepts** – *Susan becomes skilled over time, she no longer needs her mum and has learnt how to do zips on her own.*
- 

Zone of Proximal Development

Reading to children not only develops their language skills but can help children move into the Zone of Proximal Development by the use of open ended questions.



Vygotsky's influence on early years practice

- ▶ Making practitioners aware of the importance of their role in developing children's thinking.
 - ▶ Piaget did not stress the role of the adult, practitioners led to believe that if they provided a stimulating environment, children would learn for themselves.
 - ▶ Vygotsky built on many of Piaget's theories, but did not believe in his "lone scientist".
- 

Vygotsky's influence on early years practice

- Vygotsky warned against the risks if adults focused too much on the possible intellect content of play and ignored the emotional content.
 - Vygotsky focused on language as a vital social tool and believed that when children speak out loud to themselves in play, it develops their thinking.
 - Piaget, Vygotsky and Bruner all agreed that language and thought are linked.
- 

References

Davenport, G. C. (1994) An Introduction to Child Development, 2nd Edition, London:Collins Educational

Doherty, J. and Hughes, M. (2009), Child Development:Theory and Practice 0 –11, Harlow:Pearson Education

Johnson, J. and Nahmad-Williams, L. (2009) Early Childhood Studies, Harlow:Pearson Education Limited

Riddall – Leech, S. (2010) How Children Learn: Tutor Resource Pack, London: Practical Pre-school books

