

# Language in Action – Vygotsky and Leontievian Legacy Today

Jyväskylä, Finland, June 8–10, 2006

Centre for Applied Language Studies  
Department of Languages  
University of Jyväskylä

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## *Dear colleagues,*

Welcome to the conference “Language in action: Vygotsky and Leontievian legacy today” in Jyväskylä. The conference is hosted by the Centre for Applied Language Studies and Department of Languages of the University of Jyväskylä.

The idea for the conference was first raised by Dorothy Robbins, the Honorary President of the conference, in an informal discussion with Kari Sajavaara, the former director of the Centre in early 2005, who is the godfather of this conference in many ways. At that time, the idea was to organise a roundtable to honor the work of both L.S. Vygotsky and A.A. Leontiev.

Destiny wished otherwise. A.A. Leontiev passed away in 2005, and what was meant to be a forum for lively discussions about Vygotsky and Leontievian legacy with A.A. Leontiev as an active participant turned out to be a forum for celebration and commemoration of the life and work of three great Russian scholars, L.S. Vygotsky, A.N. Leontiev, and A.A. Leontiev.

The goal of the conference remains the same: to offer a forum for scholarly discussions concerning the nature of language in action and activity. For this purpose, we have invited a number of eminent scholars in this field to participate in the conference to address these issues in individual papers and a special colloquium on the unit of analysis.

The conference programme includes almost 50 individual presentations and two colloquia with the speakers coming from practically every part of the world, from Japan to Brazil, and from the U.S. to New Zealand, covering a great variety of themes and issues.

We hope that you will enjoy the conference and will have a good time meeting each other and debating with your friends and colleagues.

We would like to thank the University of Jyväskylä, the Academy of Finland, the City of Jyväskylä, Jyväskylä University Printing House, and Oy Lindell Ab for their financial support.

**On behalf of the organising committee,**

*Riikka Alanen & Sari Pöyhönen*

### **Organising Committee**

Dorothy Robbins (Honorary President)

Riikka Alanen (Chair)

Kari Sajavaara

Hannele Dufva

Sirkka Laihiala-Kankainen

Minna-Riitta Luukka

Sari Pöyhönen (Secretary)

# Thursday, June 8

11.30–15.00	<b>Registration</b> Agora, Lobby		
14.00–14.15	<b>Opening words: Kari Sajavaara</b> Agora, Auditorio 3		
14.15–15.15	<b>Keynote: Anna Stetsenko</b> Agora, Auditorio 3		
15.15–15.45	<b>Coffee Break</b> Agora, Lobby		
15.45–17.45	<b>Papers &amp; Colloquia</b>		
	<b>Theory and Methodology I</b> Auditorio 3	<b>Classroom I</b> Gamma	<b>Private Speech &amp; Literacy</b> Beeta
19.00–22.00	<b>Conference Dinner</b> Agora, Restaurant Piato		
20.00–21.00	<b>Keynote Memorial Address</b> <b>Dorothy Robbins &amp; Aida S. Markosyan</b> Agora, Restaurant Piato		

# Friday, June 9

09.00–10.00	<b>Keynote: Tatiana V. Akhutina</b> Agora, Auditorio 3		
10.00–10.30	<b>Coffee Break</b> Agora, Lobby		
10.30–12.30	<b>Papers &amp; Colloquia</b>		
	<b>Theory and Methodology II</b> Auditorio 3	<b>Colloquium: A sociocultural investigation of open-endedness and classroom discourse</b> Gamma	<b>Identities</b> Beeta
12.30–13.30	<b>Lunch</b>		
13.30–15.30	<b>Papers &amp; Colloquia</b>		
	<b>Theory and Methodology III</b> Auditorio 3	<b>Classroom II</b> Gamma	<b>Language Assessment</b> Beeta
15.30–16.00	<b>Coffee Break</b> Agora, Lobby		
16.00–18.00	<b>Invited Colloquium:</b> <b>Yrjö Engeström, James Lantolf, Gordon Wells &amp; Anna Stetsenko</b> <b>Language in action and activity: The unit of analysis</b> Agora, Auditorio 3		
19.00–20.30	<b>Reception (Hosted by the City of Jyväskylä)</b> Town Hall		

# Saturday, June 10

09.00–10.00	<b>Keynote: Yrjö Engeström</b> Agora, Auditorio 3			
10.00–10.30	<b>Coffee Break</b> Agora, Lobby			
10.30–12.30	<b>Papers &amp; Colloquia</b>			
	<b>Theory and Methodology IV</b> Auditorio 3	<b>Agency Gamma</b>	<b>Language Education</b> Beeta	<b>Multimodality in Language Learning</b> Delta
12.30–13.30	<b>Lunch</b>			
13.30–14.30	<b>Keynote: Dmitry A. Leontiev</b> Agora, Auditorio 3			
14.30–15.00	<b>Closing words: Riikka Alanen</b>			

## Keynotes

Thursday, June 8  
14.15–15.15  
Agora, Auditorio 3

**Foundations of cultural-historical activity theory:  
The dialectics of history**  
Anna Stetsenko

Thursday, June 8  
20.00–21.00  
Agora, Restaurant Piato

**Remembering the life of Alexei Alexeevitch Leontiev:  
Personality, culture, language**  
Dorothy Robbins & Aida S. Markosyan

Friday, June 9  
9.00–10.00  
Agora, Auditorio 3

**Vygotsky-Luria-Leontievs School of psycholinguistics:  
The mechanisms of language production**  
Tatiana V. Akhutina

Saturday, June 10  
9.00–10.00  
Agora, Auditorio 3

**Mediation and agency**  
Yrjö Engeström

Saturday, June 10  
13.30–14.30  
Agora, Auditorio 3

**Non-classical approach in human sciences**  
Dmitry A. Leontiev

## Colloquia

Friday, June 9  
10.30–12.30  
Gamma

**A sociocultural investigation of open-endedness and  
classroom discourse**  
Ana Serrano, Barbara Hawkins, Gabriele Kahn,  
Lynda D. Stone & James K. Ah Yun

Friday, June 9  
16.00–18.00  
Auditorio 3

Invited colloquium:  
**Language in action and activity: The unit of analysis**  
Yrjö Engeström, James Lantolf, Gordon Wells & Anna Stetsenko

# Individual papers by strand

## Theory and Methodology I

**Thursday, June 8**

**Auditorio 3**

- 15.45–16.45                      **Development or learning? Using Vygotsky’s insight into the inter-relationship between development and learning to remodel the theory of post-pubertal second language learning within a cognitive linguistic framework**  
Randal Holme
- 16.45–17.45                      **Taking one’s turn: The organization of multi-party talk**  
Gordon Wells

## Theory and Methodology II

**Friday, June 9**

**Auditorio 3**

- 10.30–11.00                      **Experiencing the horizon of the ZPD: Reclaiming an ethics of teaching in neoliberal times through Vygotsky, Gadamer & Dewey**  
Emily Duvall
- 11.00–11.30                      **The Vygotskii and Bakhtin Circles: Explaining the convergence**  
Craig Brandist
- 11.30–12.00                      **From socio-behaviorism to cultural psychology – continuity and rupture in Vygotsky’s work**  
Jussi Silvonen

### **Theory and Methodology III**

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**Friday, June 9**  
**Auditorio 3**

- 13.30–14.00                      **Metalinguistic activity and everyday philosophy**  
Viatcheslav B. Kashkin
- 14.00–14.30                      **Language as problem and problematic in the Vygotskian-Leont'evan legacy**  
Peter E. Jones
- 14.30–15.00                      **A unit for the analysis of L2 speech activity**  
Yuichi Nishimoto
- 15.00–15.30                      **Rethinking the unit of analysis in action research**  
Ines Langemeyer

### **Theory and Methodology IV**

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**Saturday, June 10**  
**Auditorio 3**

- 10.30–11.00                      **Collaborative research: Analysis of the activity system based on speech and col-  
laboration**  
Maria Otilia Guimarães Ninin
- 11.00–11.30                      **The role of semiotic artifacts in a participatory research discourse**  
Federica Caruso & Paolo Sorzio
- 11.30–12.00                      **The role of methodological choices in investigations conducted in school contexts:  
Critical research of collaboration in teacher continuing education**  
Maria Cecília Camargo Magalhães & Sueli Salles Fidalgo

## **Classroom I**

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**Thursday, June 8**

**Gamma**

- 15.45–16.15      **“I mean, what she means is...”: Regulation in a language classroom**  
Aisling O’Boyle
- 16.15–16.45      **Dynamics of teaching and learning communication strategies**  
Kazuyoshi Sato
- 16.45–17.15      **Talking of talk: How the concept of leading activity can illuminate classroom discourse**  
Ros Fisher
- 17.15–17.45      **Discussing the sense-meaning relation in a professors’ teaching activity**  
Mona Mohamad Hawi

## **Classroom II**

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**Friday, June 9**

**Gamma**

- 13.30–14.00      **InterActing in English: Action researching sociocultural theories in practice**  
Raquel Benmergui
- 14.00–14.30      **How to make use of ZPD in foreign language education? The case of teaching Swedish grammar to Finnish learners**  
Olli-Pekka Salo
- 14.30–15.00      **The English language in bilingual education: Teaching-learning object and mediating tool**  
Ana Paula Barbosa Riserio Cortez
- 15.00–15.30      **Critical reading of genres: A cross-curricular tool-and-result in the teaching-learning activity**  
Angela Cavenaghi-Lessa & Fernanda Liberali

## **Private Speech & Literacy**

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**Thursday, June 8**

**Beeta**

- 15.45–16.15      **Dialogic aspect of private speech: A study of interactional dynamics of adult bilinguals' private speech**  
Jina Lee
- 16.15–16.45      **Interrelationship of literacy learning practices and private speech**  
Lynda D. Stone & Tabitha Hart
- 16.45–17.15      **Writing as a language activity**  
Ingrid Andersson
- 17.15–17.45      **Spinoza and Vygotsky in the construction of the concept of reading**  
Fernanda Liberali & Valdite Fuga

## **Identities**

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**Friday, June 9**

**Beeta**

- 10.30–11.00      **Identity and heteroglossia: Relationships with Finnish**  
Hannele Dufva & Sari Pöyhönen
- 11.00–11.30      **Language and identity – the case of teacher trainees**  
John Smeds
- 11.30–12.00      **Identity and ecological pedagogy in language education**  
Miguel Mantero
- 12.00–12.30      **"No man is an island?": Self-portraits of language learners**  
Hannele Dufva, Paula Kalaja & Riikka Alanen

## Language Assessment

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### Friday, June 9

#### Beeta

- 13.30–14.00                    **Assessing listening for development**  
Rumia (Rimma) Ableeva
- 14.00–14.30                    **Assessing language use as socially mediated activity**  
Minako Yamada
- 14.30–15.00                    **Reliability, validity and feasibility of the Project- a component in the Israeli EFL matriculation test**  
Tziona Levi
- 15.00–15.30                    **Language proficiency as a gatekeeper for citizenship**  
Mirja Tarnanen

## Agency

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### Saturday, June 10

#### Gamma

- 10.30–11.00                    **Language in action for social justice: Vygotsky and the Leontievan legacy in learning and development in Scotland's poorest communities**  
Chik Collins
- 11.00–11.30                    **Agency, motives and possibilities for learning**  
Kirsten Lundgaard Kolstrup
- 11.30–12.00                    **"It doesn't matter what part you are in the play, it just matters that you're there" - analysing the formation of collective agency in pupil talk and activity in school**  
Riikka Hofmann & Anna Pauliina Rainio
- 12.00–12.30                    **Interactions between a teacher and a five-year-old boy in a New Zealand classroom: Sites for learning?**  
Elaine W. Vine

## **Language Education**

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**Saturday, June 10**

**Beeta**

- 10.30–11.00                    **Vygotsky's zone of proximal development and teacher training**  
Martha M. Lengeling
- 11.00–11.30                    **Language as cultural tool in multicultural science teaching settings**  
Panagiotis Kokkotas & Dimitrios Lathouris
- 11.30–12.00                    **Discourse analysis as a tool for the transformation of the nature and type of peer group interactions in four Greek elementary science classrooms**  
Panagiotis Piliouras & Panagiotis Kokkotas

## **Multimodality in Language Learning**

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**Saturday, June 10**

**Delta**

- 10.30–11.00                    **Language learning web-sites as a mediated tool in self-study activities**  
Kenneth Kong
- 11.00–11.30                    **Activity theoretical perspectives on the development of learner autonomy in technology-rich language learning environments**  
Françoise Blin
- 11.30–12.00                    **Collaborative peer-review feedback: An activity for transforming learning and expanding knowledge during asynchronous, computer-mediated communications and face-to-face interactions in an ESL writing classroom**  
Stella K. Hadjistassou
- 12.00–12.30                    Discussant: Peppi Taalas

## **Vygotsky-Luria-Leontievs' school of psycholinguistics: The mechanisms of language production**

The first objective of this presentation is to clarify Vygotsky's understanding of a way leading from thought to speech not just as a sequence of steps "Motive – Thought – Inner Speech – Semantic Layer – Outer Speech", but rather as a performance of "a living drama of verbal thinking". The second objective is to relate this understanding to the basic ideas of the speech production model proposed by A.A. Leontiev and T.V. Akhutina. The model is based on the analysis of both psycholinguistic data and aphasia as classified by A.R. Luria. The third objective is to consider

the most controversial issues relating to the initial "acts of the verbal thinking drama": thought and inner speech as they appear in neuropsychological analysis and cognitive science. To achieve this goal, difficulties in recollection and generation of texts by patients with thinking, perception and speech disorders will be analyzed. To interpret them, a concept of "genre" by M.M. Bakhtin and a concept of "frame" by M. Minsky will be used. The former allows to describe speech disorders accompanying dynamic aphasia (after left hemisphere lesions), while the latter

could be applied to explain disorders of visual perception and thinking caused by right hemisphere lesions. In conclusion, some issues of the methodology of psycho- and neurolinguistics in the light of theoretical approaches proposed by L.S. Vygotsky, A.R. Luria, A.N. Leontiev and A.A. Leontiev will be discussed. In particular, we will demonstrate how important it is to observe the principles of system and dynamic structure of higher mental functions which are often ignored when interpreting data obtained in contemporary psycholinguistic and neurolinguistic research.

## Yrjö Engeström

Center for Activity Theory and Developmental Work Research  
University of Helsinki, Finland

**Day:** Sat, 10.6.2006  
**Time:** 9.00.–10.00  
**Room:** Agora, Auditorio 3  
**Session:** Keynote

## Mediation and agency

The relationship between tools and signs, or instrumental and semiotic mediation, or practical activity and talk, has been a central problem in cultural-historical activity theory since Vygotsky. I will examine some recent attempts to redefine this relationship, in particular the recent paper by Bødker and Andersen (2005) on complex mediation. The analysis leads me to four theoretical conclusions which have also serious practical and methodological implications: (1) analytical separation and juxtaposition of

instrumental and semiotic activity (or actions) leads to problematic dualisms; it is more useful to look at the instrumental and the semiotic aspects of mediation as superimposed and intertwined layers of one and the same activity (or action); (2) activities are mediated by entire instrumentalities, complex constellations or tools and signs; such instrumentalities may be analyzed and designed with the help of a framework of epistemic levels of artifact-mediation; (3) activities are historically and societally evolving

systems that cannot be constructed arbitrarily and subjectively; the presence of societal contradictions as the driving force of instability and development in activities is a crucial hallmark that makes activity theory a history-making approach; (4) mediation by tools and signs is the core of an activity-theoretical understanding of agency, the possibility of human beings to change their circumstances and themselves.

**Dmitry A. Leontiev**

Moscow State University

President of the Institute of Existential Psychology and Life Enhancement,  
Russia**Day:** Sat, 10.6.2006**Time:** 13.30.–14.00**Room:** Agora, Auditorio 3**Session:** Keynote

## Non-classical approach in human sciences

Multiple talks on non-classical, post-non-classical, or postmodern science during the last decade reflect the awareness that the “classical” type of scientific inquiry aimed at the discovery of universal, value-free and researcher-independent causal laws can cover but a very limited range of human phenomena. Even in natural sciences such a classical view is considered to be no longer completely relevant (I.Prigogine), not to mention human sciences.

In its broad meaning, non-classical approach refers to any type of research methodology and metatheoretical framework that diverges from

the classical model of natural science in order to embrace meanings, texts, signs, etc. – human-produced contents that can circulate between individuals and the cultural field, maintaining the high degree of invariance. In its narrow meaning, the term “non-classical psychology” refers to D.Elkonin’s interpretation of Vygotsky’s opinion that mental phenomena exist in the external cultural field prior to being interiorized and becoming a part of the individual psyche.

The contents included into human functioning mediate the actions, providing us with the Archimedes’ points of

support, allowing to relate to ourselves and to overcome the effects of immediate stimulus–response chains. The whole system of activity determination and regulation is becoming more complicated and in no way subject to causal explanation. The elaboration of special non-classical explanatory approaches is currently under way; qualitative methods make the special research methodology of the non-classical approaches. They are supposed to be diverging, rather than unifying, and provide the shift from the study of the necessary to the study of the possible in human living.

**Dorothy Robbins**  
Central Missouri State University, USA

**Aida S. Markosyan**  
Moscow State University, Russia

**Day:** Thu, 8.6.2006  
**Time:** 20.00–21.00  
**Room:** Agora, Restaurant Piato  
**Session:** Keynote

## Remembering the life of Alexei Alexeevitch Leontiev: Personality, culture, language

We will review the life of A. A. Leontiev, including his various and diverse scientific interests related to language. We will discuss some aspects of his language theories, which are connected to the process of transformation of both the individual personality and culture. There will be a general review of some of his fundamental, global thoughts. In his own words: "Language is the most important orienting point in man's activity in the world. If we understand this activity as a deep, meaningful dialogue between a person and the world, as

polyphonic, partly co-operative, partly controversial communication between different components of the colossal system, which we call the World---in this case, language is Language of the Personality." It is the language system, in contrast to a central focus on other points, such as "units," that will be at the center of our thoughts. In his words: "...for us, language system is neither text structure, nor an 'individual' language system of speech behavior, nor a pure construct: it is the actual form of interaction among speech activity features

that can be interpreted using various models." In other words, "it is the system-forming role of consciousness in relation to the entirety of activities, and second, within the double-sided interdependence between the dynamic of the internal structure of consciousness and the dynamic of the structure of activity." Theoretically, it is clear that the sum is more than a totality of its parts. The question is how to transfer such an understanding to theories of language that will ultimately lead to a transformation of a human personality.

**Anna Stetsenko**

The City University of New York, USA

**Day:** Thu, 8.6.2006

**Time:** 14.15–15.15

**Room:** Agora, Auditorio 3

**Session:** Keynote

## **Foundations of Cultural-Historical Activity Theory: The dialectics of history**

This talk will address the relevance of history in the cultural-historical activity theory and how this dimension can be more centrally integrated into accounts of development and learning. The following issues revolving around the concept of history will be discussed. First, because CHAT emerged as an answer to a particular historical and socio-political challenge of its time and as a value-laden instrument of social transformation, discussions of its relevance need to address

whether and how this challenge continues to be present in today's world in order to better understand the potential of CHAT. Second, the dimension of history was central to CHAT and therefore conceptualizations of human development, including that of language, need to address how history is implicated in these conceptualizations. Specifically, the question of how language evolved and how it, in turn, contributed to human evolution and history awaits

further elaboration especially in light of the need to counter today's reductionist socio-biological tendencies (e.g., in evolutionary psychology). Third, the dialectical notion of history itself needs to be spelled out and expanded so that CHAT can become a foundation on which many progressivist theories and notions of development and learning from today's research and discourse can be integrated.

**Serrano, Ana**

Department of Arts & Humanities  
Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, USA

**Hawkins, Barbara**

Department of Arts & Humanities  
Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, USA

**Kahn, Gabriele**

Department of Arts & Humanities  
Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, USA

**Stone, Lynda D.**

Department of Child Development, California State University, Sacramento, USA

**Ah Yun, James K.**

Department of Communications, California State University, Sacramento, USA

**Day:** Fri, 9.6.2006  
**Time:** 10.30–12.30  
**Room:** Agora, Gamma  
**Session:** Colloquium

## A sociocultural investigation of open-endedness and classroom discourse

This colloquium proposes an examination of discourse practices of learning activity, focusing on their predictive power for participants to achieve intersubjectivity, agency, motivation and transformation. Our studies draw from sociocultural theories (Cole, 1996; Engestrom et al, 1999; Vygotsky, 1978) to examine how students and teachers learn and develop through engagement in dynamic, interactive learning practices.

The first data set examines development of motivational inclinations in mathematics and literacy activities

in seven elementary classrooms with children from diverse backgrounds. To document motivation in context, qualitative and quantitative methods were combined with cross-sectional sampling procedures over a two-year period. Findings suggest that: a) motivation is a process of socialization into local meanings of competency; b) achievement goals are better conceptualized as semiotic mediators used by students to regulate their actions and interactions rather than individual belief systems; c) classroom practices characterized by contradiction, conflict, and negotiation

but not high levels of competition create opportunities for “productive agency”. The second data set examines how adult learners in a community-based, open-ended learning context construct collaborative narratives. Findings from a qualitative, turn-by-turn analysis of classroom language suggest that an open-ended activity structure is instrumental in promoting intersubjectivity, providing a foundation for gradual and dynamic developments in learners’ intrapsychological functioning over time. As learners interpret and reinterpret their original activities, new,

spontaneous information gaps emerge and are bridged into a more coherent understanding by both the teacher and learners over interactional time.

The third data set examines how seven-year olds in a heterogeneously grouped classroom take advantage of dynamic activities to explain, argue and augment or change their ways of thinking. With the teacher maintaining a neutral role in the knowledge production phase of the lesson, students contemplate various theories about the position of islands in relation to the bottom of the ocean. Findings suggest that sustained engagement with a problem

allows students to offer and evaluate their personal theories, and through collective interactional exchanges negotiate and develop more accurate conceptions of the natural world.

The last data set examines nine-year olds with English as a Second Language (ESL) students acting as liaisons between their social studies and their ESL classrooms. The study focuses on an extended period of interaction between the ESL teacher and students as the children try to relate what they have understood as important factual information in their social studies class. Both the children and ESL teacher bring expertise, requir-

ing inquiry and sustained negotiation to achieve a shared goal. Neither the teacher nor the students knows exactly where the interaction will lead, even though the terminal objective is clear to all. Qualitative discourse analysis reveals that the open-ended nature of the activity promotes tremendous efforts by both the students and the teacher as they work both to develop intersubjectivity and their objective.

Results of these studies indicate the importance of open-ended activity systems as a powerful element in promoting motivation and knowledge development.

**Engeström, Yrjö**

Center for Activity Theory and Developmental Work Research  
University of Helsinki, Finland

**Lantolf, James**

Center for Language Acquisition  
The Pennsylvania State University, USA

**Wells, Gordon**

Department of Education  
University of California at Santa Cruz, USA

**Stetsenko, Anna**

The City University of New York, USA

**Day:** Fri, 9.6.2006  
**Time:** 16.00–18.00  
**Room:** Agora, Auditorio 3  
**Session:** Colloquium

**Invited colloquium:***Language in action and activity: The unit of analysis*

L.S. Vygotsky's ideas have influenced research in psychology and education since the 1970s. However, there is no one monolithic Vygotskian or neo-Vygotskian, let alone sociocultural, research paradigm. A great number of researchers have developed the ideas presented by L.S. Vygotsky, A.R. Luria, A.N. Leontiev and A.A. Leontiev and taken them into new directions. The conference has invited a colloquium on the following

theme: "Language in action and activity: the unit of analysis." The speakers in this colloquium include well-known and well-respected scholars who have written about language and its role in action and activity, Yrjö Engeström, James Lantolf, Gordon Wells, and Anna Stetsenko. The aim of the colloquium is to open the discussion on the nature and role of language in various sociocultural approaches.

**Ableeva, Rumia (Rimma)**

Department of French and Francophone Studies  
The Pennsylvania State University, USA

**Day:** Fri, 9.6.2006  
**Time:** 13.30–14.00  
**Room:** Agora, Beeta  
**Session:** Language Assessment

## Assessing listening for development

Anchored in the Vygotskian concept of the *Zone of Proximal Development*, dynamic assessment (DA) has been gaining attention as an alternative assessment procedure among second language (L2) educators. DA represents an approach to the organization of assessment practices that emphasizes the development of learners' intellectual abilities. Although studies applying DA techniques to the teaching of different school subjects were conducted for a long period of time (e.g. Russian as L1, geometry etc.), L2 research has only recently begun to include voices arguing in favor of DA. This early L2 DA-based research has motivated the present study.

Language instructors teaching intermediate courses at the university level are confronted with students of different language learning backgrounds. The reality of the French as foreign language classroom is that students with insuf-

ficient backgrounds have difficulties comprehending the authentic audio texts required by the language program. This situation is due, in part, to students' language proficiency, to the type of text that students listen to etc. However, assessment practices can also influence text comprehension.

At present static assessment is a predominant assessment administered worldwide in language classrooms. The purpose of this assessment is to evaluate what students already know. However, experience has shown that static tasks do not always allow intermediate students to achieve a sufficient understanding of texts. In order to enhance students' comprehension of authentic audio texts, this pilot study adopts a DA procedure to listening comprehension instruction. Therefore, the specific research question to be addressed in this study is: To what extent can DA procedure, as opposed to

static assessment, augment the comprehension of French authentic audio texts among L2 intermediate university students?

The results of this study indicate that (1) students' listening comprehension is considerably affected by word recognition and that (2) static assessment does not always allow intermediate students to achieve a satisfactory understanding of audio texts. The study suggests that the DA-based approach to listening comprehension can (1) help intermediate students with insufficient language backgrounds to gain a deeper understanding of audio texts and (2) enhance their L2 development. The paper presentation will begin with a brief outline of DA theoretical issues. Then, the data, analysis, and findings will be presented.

## Writing as a language activity

Drawing on activity theory and relating these theories to literacy, the present study investigates what is taken for granted regarding space orientation and direction in early literacy development. The study draws on data from two rural communities in Africa. The first is collected in a school setting where children, at the end of their first year of schooling, were asked to recognize letters from the alphabet. Moreover, they were videotaped when they were trying to solve a jig-saw puzzle problem. The second data collection was made in a pre-literate society where the participants made at-

tempts to writing despite of the fact that they had no experiences of schooling. The findings show that paper and pencil work as well as access to pictures and books are scarce in these rural cultures. This suggests that space orientation is different from participants in cultures where pictures and written language are frequently displayed in their every day settings. Also, the participants seem to use multiple perspective views which are commonly found in some children's drawings. Of special interest is to follow the pre-literate participants' drawing/writing process and how they with great

interest are making attempts to write letter-like signs. The findings are discussed in terms of socio-cultural theories with emphasize on the zone of proximal development and how making use of tools in guided participation differs from a learning environment without support from experienced others. Questions are raised about what we can learn in the field of early literacy development when participants represent extreme learning conditions and in what way they can shed light on situations often taken for granted in cultures well known to the researchers.

## **InterActing in English: Action researching sociocultural theories in practice**

The foreign language classroom can never replace the experience gained in an authentic environment however; the use of applied drama can transform the classroom into a *third space*, where learning as *exploration and inquiry* is possible. This transcultural space is co-created by the community of participants engaged in the drama. This paper will discuss some findings of ongoing action research into the use of a cross disciplinary approach to language teaching which integrates elements of drama, intercultural communication and ethnography, applying them to the educational context of the university

language classroom. Topics addressed will include the relationship between language and personal identity, diversity and language learning, motivation and self, empathy taking and autonomy. The methodology in question is deeply rooted in Vygotsky and Leontievan theories of learning. The focus is on the process of learning in co-operation with others, not on formal a performance. The entire class is involved and no outside audience exists. Even when certain participants may be looking on as “audience members”, they are not passive spectators but spect-*Actors*, actively engaged in this communal process. The

drama unfolds in a nonlinear fashion, built through a series of ‘episodes’ which allow for exploration of various themes and create an interrelated web of meaning. The learners move in and out of the drama world through the guidance of drama conventions and reflection. These may involve different ways of communicating ideas from discussions to nonverbal representations of meaning to writing in role, but all focus on fostering open dialogue with the self and others.

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**Day:** Sat, 10.6.2006

**Time:** 11.00–11.30

**Room:** Agora, Delta

**Session:** Multimodality in Language Learning

## **Activity theoretical perspectives on the development of learner autonomy in technology-rich language learning environments**

The relationship between learner autonomy, computers and language learning has been at the forefront of pedagogical debates in language learning since the early eighties. More often than not however, learner autonomy is understood in terms of independent and/or self-directed learning. Self-access, distance or computer-assisted language learning have become synonymous with learner autonomy. Yet, learner autonomy does not just happen by placing language learners in front of state-of-the-art computers. Self-directedness is not an innate attribute.

This paper argues that Cultural-Historical Activity Theory and the

theory of expansive learning (Engeström, 1997) provides a suitable framework to investigate the development of learner autonomy as language learning activities unfold. Following a brief discussion on the methodological issues (such as defining the unit of analysis or delineating the boundaries of the language learning activity system under study) and drawing on the findings of two empirical analyses conducted with a group of university students of French over a full academic year, it will show that the mediating components of the language learning activity (i.e. rules and conventions, division of labour, and tools and artefacts) play a

significant role in the development and exercise of learner autonomy, which they can promote *and* hinder. Through an analysis of the contradictions that emerged in the course of the language learning activity, it will posit that the capacity to resolve contradictions can be seen as an attribute of learner autonomy. It will also propose that the potential for the development and exercise of learner autonomy is enhanced by the activity system capacity to resolve its systemic tensions in expansive ways, i.e. through the creation and adoption of new tools and procedures by the participants, be they individual learners or small groups.

## The Vygotskii and Bakhtin Circles: Explaining the convergence

Similarities between the works of the Vygotskii and Bakhtin Circles have attracted interest since the two groups came to the attention of western commentators in the 1960s and 70s, but attempts to explain the convergence has most often been confined to speculation about possible direct contacts between the two groups. While such contact cannot be ruled out a-priori, sustained contact seems, at very least, unlikely. It is certain that Valentin Voloshinov was familiar with one of Vygotskii's works from the 1920s and with Luria's early work on Freud, but there is no further evidence of the mutual influence of their ideas. The convergence of the ideas of the Circles needs to be examined on a different basis.

This paper will examine the grounds for convergence of ideas by identifying

the common intellectual sources of their respective ideas and the institutional factors that shaped the modes of engagement with those ideas. The intellectual sources are predominantly, though not exclusively, Germanic in origin and may be categorised as those dealing with the dialogic structure of consciousness and those dealing with the historical emergence of culture and mind. The former have their roots in various neo-Kantian and phenomenological traditions, though the influence was often filtered through aspects of Russian scholarship, especially philology. The latter trend has its roots in Hegelianism and *Völkerpsychologie*, though again this was processed through such indigenous movements as those associated with the prominent archaeologist and linguist N.Ia. Marr. Significant differences of approach

between the circles remain, however, reflecting both respective disciplinary orientations and relationships towards philosophical idealism in general.

One seldom researched, but crucial dimension of this question also related to the participation of members of the respective circles in collective research projects within institutions that came within the administrative orbit of the Russian Association of Research Institutes in the Social Sciences, RANION. Involvement in these projects played an important role in shaping the way the predominantly German ideas were received, applied and transformed. New light will be cast on this as a result on sustained research in Russian archives.

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**Day:** Sat, 10.6.2006

**Time:** 11.00–11.30

**Room:** Agora, Auditorio 3

**Session:** Theory and  
Methodology IV

## The role of semiotic artifacts in a participatory research discourse

In this proposal, the inferential model of communication (Reddy, 1979; Sfard and Kieran, 2001; Sperber and Wilson, 1988) is integrated into the Activity Theory, in order to explain the interplay between discourse and joint understanding. We analyze some excerpts of teacher-researcher discussions in a participatory inquiry conducted to promote new understandings and innovative practices, in order to integrate immigrant children in the mainstream classrooms. According to the proposed approach, the discourse provides a means for making each participant's own perspective public, object of discussion and development. The acts of meaning do not occur in isolation but as dialogic contributions in which participants try to figure out each interlocutor's perspective and to coordinate their interventions on the inter-subjective plan. A discourse is productive when it has some lasting effects on the community of participants: comparison of alternatives about an issue, working out a problem solution, chang-

ing personal perspectives and modifying the subjects' mutual positioning.

An effective communication relies upon the clarity of the discursive focus (Sfard and Kieran, 2001), therefore the interlocutors cooperate in the integration of three different dimensions: the *intended focus* (each participant's intentions and models), the *pronounced focus* (the linguistic meaning of the symbolic expressions), and the *attended focus* (the act of referring to specific aspects of a shared entity). Artifacts can play a pivotal function in clarifying the discursive focus: the participants refer to some potentially relevant aspects of available artifacts to highlight their intended meanings, to disambiguate expressions and to maximize the opportunities to develop a joint understanding.

The process of integration between individual intentions, symbolic expressions and joint reference to available artifacts is crucial in conducting an educational participatory research.

In the paper, the model developed

by Sfard and Kieran (2001) is applied to some excerpts of joint discussions among a research group and a primary school teachers' community, about relevant topics in multicultural learning. A critical idea for the approach is encouraging teachers and researchers to make explicit their different perspectives and modes of discourse about classroom practice, in order to discuss scaffolding strategies to foster immigrant children's participation and learning. In each teacher-researcher session, a specific artifact was introduced as a material basis for the ongoing discussion in order to support the different perspectives on the emergent educational issues. The specific function played by three artifacts (an immigrant child's drawing; an ethnographic protocol of actual classroom activities; a narrative scheme) in mutual understanding is highlighted through a "focal analysis". The mutual positioning of participants on the regulative plane of discourse is analyzed through an "interpersonal analysis".

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**Day:** Fri, 9.6.2006  
**Time:** 15.00–15.30  
**Room:** Agora, Gamma  
**Session:** Classroom II

## Critical reading of genres: A cross-curricular tool-and-result in the teaching-learning activity

This presentation discusses the importance of genre critical reading as a cross-curricular tool-and-result in the teaching-learning activity. Based on the Socio-Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (Vygotsky, 1934; Leontiev, 1977), it discusses a teacher continuous education project - part of a teacher-education intervention program run by PUC-SP, a Brazilian University in São Paulo - aimed at the teaching-learning of different subject areas mediated by different genres (Bakhtin, 1953).

Conducted in 2005, the project was based on a teacher education perspective that involves looking at socially situated events (De Lauretis, 1987), and comprised teachers from 34 public schools from a dormitory town in the outskirts of São Paulo. Each school sent three teachers of different subject areas to meet monthly and discuss how to critically deal with the reading tasks of different genres in their own subjects, *i.e.*, discuss teaching-learning approaches to

discursively engage in social practices. Meetings focused on genres as varied as cartoons, informative texts and short narratives. They further develop tasks to work with their students.

The presentation will discuss two tasks developed by the teachers to critically read cartoons in mathematics and history. We will focus on the concepts of activity object and tool. The idea of activity is taken here due to the assumption that subjects act upon the real concrete object in its articulation with the images of the object in order to fulfill their needs. In Vygotskian terms, human individuals never react directly to the environment, but have their relationship with the object mediated by cultural tools. According to Newman & Holzman (1993), tools should not be considered categorically distinguishable from the object that results from their use. Thus, tool is seen as a tool-and-result, which is specifically designed to create the object one ultimately wishes to produce

(Newman and Holzman, 1993/2002). The activity with tools-and-results is therefore revolutionary because it will be defined in and by the process of the production of its objects.

Teacher-designed tasks analyzed seem to indicate a view of reading as a tool-and-result, which integrates tool and object. It turns the teaching-learning activity into a revolutionary experience since the students have a chance to learn the contents of the different school subjects through the texts they read. At the same time, they learn to read these genres critically. Such approach provides an innovative perspective in teacher education since it establishes solid ground for a cross-curricular view of education, creating a chance to move from the divided - though unshared - knowledge reproduction school model to a share, undivided type of production, of truly non-encapsulated knowledge (Engeström, 1991).

## **Language in action for social justice: Vygotsky and the Leontievan legacy in learning and development in Scotland's poorest communities**

In struggles to achieve a collective, conscious regulation of societal relations, in the pursuit of social justice and freedom, the capacity of protesting groups depends crucially on their learning and development. While this fact may be evident, the comprehension of such learning and developmental processes remains a problem of great theoretical complexity. This paper will show, by referring to processes in some of Scotland's poorest communities, that Vygotsky's and Leontiev's theorisation of consciousness and language is important in seeking to understand learning in the context of – and as a major aspect of – such struggles. In doing so it seeks to build on contributions to ISCRAT 2002 and ISCAR 2005.

It suggests that by beginning from Vygotsky's theorisation of human consciousness, and linking this to, and developing it in the light of, Leontiev's

discussion of 'meaning' and 'personal sense', we are able to achieve a very good theoretical framework for studying processes of learning and development within groups seeking to grapple with social injustice. In turn, linking this to the work of Bakhtin and Voloshinov, we can develop an orientation towards tracing these quite intricate processes in concrete circumstances. Finally, it is argued that recent contributions from Stetsenko and Arieivitch, which suggest that CHAT theorists turn more systematically to the work of Paolo Freire, help us to think through the problems of engaging this theoretical orientation in practice.

In particular, it is argued that Freire's contribution helps us to engage perhaps the key problem which emerges from Leontiev's concept of 'personal sense' in this context. For the 'subjective personal meanings' of unjust social relations are

not necessarily, or indeed very often, as Leontiev says, 'adequate meanings'. In order to avert "disintegration of consciousness" and "a devastation capable of turning into a psychological catastrophe" – phenomena which seem all too apparent in the degeneration of Scotland's poorest communities – it is necessary that "there take place a reshaping of subjective personal meanings into other more adequate meanings" (Leontiev, 1978, pp.93-94). Freire focuses our attention on, and develops a deeply humanistic pedagogy for, the necessarily collective process through which "more adequate meanings" get developed. In this way his work returns us to the fundamental problematic, and legacy, of the cultural-historical tradition – how human beings struggle to achieve a collective, conscious regulation of their relations, in pursuit of social justice and freedom.

## **The English language in bilingual education: Teaching-learning object and mediating tool**

The aim of this work is to discuss the role of the English language as a mediating tool in bilingual education due to the lack of research in the field in Brazil. Some researchers such as Mello (2002) and Boleiz Júnior (2001) have discussed bilingualism and bilingual education, but there is no study or documentation on the role of the English language in their investigations. Therefore, we believe in the importance of the contribution of studies focused on English in this framework.

This study is grounded on the social-historical-cultural Activity Theory (Vygotsky, Leontiev), which is well founded by the dialogical comprehension of language (Bakhtin, 1981). Besides, there

are also the conceptions of bilingual education present on the work of Hamers and Blanc (2000).

This is a critical action-research (Kincheloe, 1997), since there is evaluation, reflection and reconstruction of our own practice, in a critical paradigm, inserted in the context of bilingual education, which aims at the transformation and new alternatives for the ones involved in the research and also at new horizons in the bilingual teaching-learning process. This research includes the researcher-teacher and the group of grade six students at a bilingual school where the researcher works. The study was carried on in the second term this year (2005) and the material

collected is composed of video recordings of the classes taught in that term. The data was selected, organized and categorized by the criteria of analysis proposed by Bronckart (1997) referring to the organization of the group of thematic content. Then, we observed the perspectives of language as an object, which are constituted/shown in the language classes present in the recorded teaching-learning activities according to Bakhtin (1981). At last, we analyzed the way language is shown as a mediating tool/artifact from the perspective of the typology of turns by Galembeck (1999). During the presentation, analyzed data will be displayed for the appreciation and comments of the audience.

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**Day:** Fri, 9.6.2006  
**Time:** 12.00–12.30  
**Room:** Agora, Beeta  
**Session:** Identities

## **“No man is an island?”: Self-portraits of language learners**

Language is an all-important resource not only in human communication but also in thinking and cognitive activity. Being a tool for both articulating and mediating our experience, verbal language is a central mode of human conceptualising. However, language is not our sole resource in this. Here, we will discuss visual representations as a meaning-making system. We will argue that the conceptualisations that can be read in an image may differ from those that are found in a verbal narrative. Each mode – verbal and visual – are being shaped as characteristic of their medium and also, constrained by different cultural conventions of representation.

In our talk, we will examine on how people conceptualise themselves as

language learners. Conceptualisations of language learning (e.g. beliefs and attitudes held by learners) have been studied over the past few decades by making use of various types of verbal data, including oral interviews and written narratives. However, there are also other methods that one could consider in doing research on learning experiences. Consider, for example, drawings and other type of visual representations.

For this study, we asked over 100 Finnish university students to draw their self-portraits as learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and to provide their interpretations on the reverse side of the task sheet. The task was part of an introductory course of language learning. The drawings were subjected

to a thematic analysis. One of the most important themes that emerged from the students’ drawings concerned their depiction of themselves as social agents: on the one hand, some students depicted themselves as individual (rationalist) subjects, acting seemingly alone, while on the other hand, other students chose to portray themselves as engaged in (social) action. We draw on both socio-cultural and action theoretical views in discussing the significance of such findings on the role of co-operation and collaboration in thinking and learning and comment on the differences between the students’ visual representations and verbal comments.

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**Day:** Fri, 9.6.2006  
**Time:** 10.30–11.00  
**Room:** Agora, Beeta  
**Session:** Identities

## Identity and heteroglossia: Relationships with Finnish

When an individual tries to construct his or her identity through language, there is not only the voice of oneself but also of a group of others whose words and manners of speaking one borrows and resonates. I alone is nothing but the role of the other is essential for defining a person. From this point of view, identity can be described as multi-voiced or polyphonical.

One of the factors that affects the multi-voiceness of identity is the heteroglossia of language, in other words, its diversity. In dialogical language philosophy, language is not seen as a stable, unified and simplified system, but as

dynamic and multilayered. Language reflects different social contexts – it is under constant change. Thus, language is composed of national languages and social dialects, as well as social and historical languages (for example, dialects, jargons, languages of different eras), all of which are interconnected. To sum up, language is a heterogenic and dynamic entity – like a woven fabric (in Russian *tkan'*) of different languages (Bakhtin 1979, 5).

In this presentation, we will review different relationships with the Finnish language. Our analysis is based on interviews, autobiographies and

compositions of language users (native and non-native speakers as well as monolinguals and multilinguals). The heteroglossia and hybridity of Finnish emerges in individuals' views and usages. Consequently, from the point of view of an individual, the classification of Finnish language into mother tongue and second/foreign language might be artificial. Language and ethnic identities are negotiated more often in multicultural contexts where dualistic views and boundaries between languages become blurred.

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**Day:** Fri, 9.6.2006  
**Time:** 10.30–11.00  
**Room:** Agora, Auditorio 3  
**Session:** Theory and Methodology II

## **Experiencing the horizon of the ZPD: Reclaiming an ethics of teaching in neoliberal times through Vygotsky, Gadamer & Dewey**

The experience of teaching as a conjoined moment of teaching-learning is considered. Teaching-learning is situated the lived experience of hermeneutic activity that occurs as the zone of proximal development (Vygotsky) emerges and the fusion of horizons (Gadamer) for the teacher and the learner takes place. Gadamer's hermeneutic philosophy

of human understanding is applied to Vygotsky's theory of cognitive and affective development and the dialogic and dialectic nature of the experience is considered pragmatically. Thus the paper examines the teaching-learning moment both theoretically and practically from the perspective of a teacher-researcher by examining what an experience of

Gadamer's fusion of hermeneutic horizons within Vygotsky's zone of proximal development looks like and how the activity is transformative, taking seriously the Deweyian ideal of life-long learning. The discussion concludes with the development of a claim for the necessity of an ethical stance when teaching in neoliberal times.

**Fisher, Ros**

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**Day:** Thu, 8.6.2006

**Time:** 16.45–17.15

**Room:** Gamma

**Session:** Classroom I

## Talking of talk: How the concept of leading activity can illuminate classroom discourse

This paper draws on research into teachers' and pupils' perceptions of talk in school. Drawing on neo-Vygotskian perspectives, it shows that expectations of talk are grounded in particular socio-cultural values that represent hegemonic interpretations of the quality of talk and classroom discourse. Many studies of classroom discourse have shown how the dominant pattern of interaction locates the control of learning centrally with the teacher.

Although much has been written about classroom talk, the pupils' voice is often absent from discussion. This study analysed interview and questionnaire data from students in seven schools in a disadvantaged area of England. The students in this study revealed very

different views of home and peer talk as opposed to school talk. In particular, they appeared uncertain about whether their teachers liked them to talk but they seemed very clear that the teacher was in control of the talk. On the other hand, the teachers in this study demonstrated fixed and culturally driven expectations of the quality of talk according to student's social circumstances.

This paper adopts an activity theoretical framework to explore the concept of leading activity in relation to classroom talk. Stetsenko and Arieivitch (2004) argue that viewing the self as a leading activity can show how people can position themselves to contribute meaningfully to the world rather than being positioned by mighty social forces.

It is argued that by viewing discourse through an activity theoretical lens, a more dynamic picture of classroom activity can be revealed. As participants in the activity, students and teachers contribute to social practices as opposed to merely participating in them. Whereas talk in the classroom is seen by most educationalists as an important aspect of learning, both teachers and students in this research expressed differing perceptions of the quality and purpose of classroom talk. It is argued that both pupils' and teachers' expectations are guided more by their own perceptions of an ideal state than by pedagogic or heuristic motives.

## **Collaborative peer-review: An activity for transforming learning and expanding knowledge during asynchronous, computer-mediated communications and face-to-face interactions in an ESL writing classroom**

The emergence of Engeström (1987;1999) and Cole and Engeström (1993) approach as a psycholinguistic paradigm that places the interactional mechanism within a broader cultural-historical framework that builds not simply on the individual interactive developmental processes but also on the broader historically-culturally-bound collective activity has provided a new theoretical and methodological forum to examine the complex mechanism of interaction in Second Language Acquisition. Their proposed “complex model of an activity system” has introduced a context-based interactional approach to examine SLA within a goal-aimed activity and a collective-aimed activity that is grounded on a systematic analysis of the theoretical-methodological practices where the “object, subject, mediating artifacts

(signs or tools), rules, community and division of labor” are examined (Engeström 1987;1999 and Cole and Engeström 1993). Thorne (2004) applies Engeström (1987;1999) and Cole and Engeström (1993) approach as a theoretical-methodological tool to investigate how collaborative interaction in asynchronous peer review sessions among Spanish speakers of two different developmental levels can form an innovative process to acquire new knowledge in the target language, Spanish. However, as Thorne (2004) postulates, for future collaborative peer review research examining the mediational means “the possibility of face-to-face encounters if the logistically arrangements could be arranged” should be considered. The aim of this study is to apply Engeström (1987;1999) and Cole and Engeström

(1993) approach to address the following questions: (1) What is the role of asynchronous mediated communications in helping students think more critically about their essay topics and explore the multiple dimensions of a topic? (2) How can face-to-face interactions during peer review sessions help students improve their rough drafts and expand their knowledge in the target language? Seventeen students from different nationalities enrolled in an advanced ESL writing class at Arizona State University were recruited for this study. The students participated in asynchronous-mediated communications and various in-class activities where they provided and received feedback on how to examine their tentative topic from different perspectives and then on how to revise their papers effectively.

## Discussing the sense-meaning relation in a professors' teaching activity

This presentation aims at discussing the senses four Language Professors make of their own teaching activity at university level. Bearing in mind that personal senses are constructed through opinions and judgments about the meaning of teaching activity, the analysis focuses on how participants evaluate their teaching activity.

The social-historical subjects' ways of thinking, acting and feeling is part of their conscious mediated by language taken here as the fundamental mediating tool. For this reason, language actions are regarded as the unity of analysis in the endeavor of discussing how research participants evaluate the elements of the teaching activity system, that is, how they conceive of the object, subjects, artifacts, rules, division of labor, community and results.

In this perspective, the Social Cultural Historical Activity Theory (Vygotsky, 1934/1987, 1978/1998; Leontiev, 1978; Engeström, 1987, 1999-a) is the episte-

mological basis to the sense-meaning discussion of the conscious formation. Besides that, the Systemic Functional Grammar (Halliday, 1985, 1994, 2004; Eggins, 1994), which advocates a social-semiotic language approach, was used as a mediator in the constitution of the object (the meaning of the teaching activity). It is also through the perspective of the SFG that language analysis is conducted, based on an interpersonal system, as proposed by Thompson e Thetela (1995), specially the interactional function that deals with the projected roles either by nomination or by attribution. It is essential to realize the roles participants project to themselves as well as to the other elements of their teaching activity systems through nomination, materialized in the language they choose to use.

The research was conducted in a university at São Paulo with four in-service professors from a Language Department, from different areas: Portuguese,

English, Brazilian Literature and Teaching and Research Methodology.

The results show that the senses made of the teaching activity at university is limited to the classroom and disconnected of a broader social-historical context, for example, the university institution as such. They also indicate that the professor, when nominated as the subject of the activity, plays the role of the actor of the actions assuming the responsibility for the teaching activity. In relation to the rules and the division of labor, they are situated in the modulation sphere, at the level of the "have to" and "must do".

From the results it is possible to think and to come up with proposals aimed at looking at the university as a community placed within a network of teaching activity systems where all the elements need to be involved in order to improve the results.

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**Day:** Sat, 10.6.2006  
**Time:** 11.30–12.00  
**Room:** Agora, Gamma  
**Session:** Agency

## *“It doesn’t matter what part you are in the play, it just matters that you’re there”* **- analysing the formation of collective agency in pupil talk and activity in school**

The experiences of togetherness and a sense of shared agency are among our most important childhood memories. These experiences are not only significant for learning and development (Vygotsky 1978; Holzkamp 1991) but also an important counter-force to our current culture and society marked by individualism. Rarely, however, are these memories from the context of school. In school, different collaborative forms of learning are often reduced to group work methods. The risk is that, for many pupils, curriculum-based and pedagogically oriented group work turns into artificial and uninteresting “school tasks”. There is thus a need to develop alternative models of learning activity that would support the formation of collective agency in school. There is, however, a shortage of theoretically founded thinking about forms of learning activity that would enable the formation of a sense of shared agency in the context of school. It is these alternatives that we are interested in seeking and

analysing in our ongoing doctoral research projects.

In psychology, agency has traditionally been taken to be an individual phenomenon, while more recent approaches often locate it in language. Our work is placed within a sociocultural and activity theoretical framework that emphasises the cultural-historical constitution of the subjects of learning. Our particular interest is in how the subjects of learning are defined, positioned and located, not only in language but also in the concrete learning activity. Through bringing the notions of activity (Leont’ev 1978) and ‘positioning’ (e.g. Davies & Harré 1999) into our discussion, we aim to analyse individual experiences and verbal interactions without a retreat to the individual reductionism of mainstream psychology nor the linguistic reductionism of discursive psychology through locating these phenomena in concrete social practices.

We will discuss the formation of agency in school activity especially

as a collective process, based on our empirical dissertation material. Riikka Hofmann discusses her analysis of children’s talk of their experiences of participation and agency in collective narrative learning processes in a primary classroom. Her data comes from a narrative subject-integrated history project as well as from a school play. Anna Rainio introduces her analysis of video-data of interaction between children and teachers in a narrative learning setting called ‘playworld’ realised in a mixed-aged primary school classroom in Finland.

The aim of our paper is to open up new ways of thinking about and analysing the subjects of learning in formal education. We want to contrast the dominant notion of the subject of learning as an individual category with the collective subject of the *narrative learning activity*, particularly dramatic play, while also examining and making visible the (potentially differential) access of different individuals to agentic positions within this collective subject.

## **Development or learning? Using Vygotsky's insight into the inter-relationship between development and learning to remodel the theory of post-pubertal second language learning within a cognitive linguistic framework**

Theories of second language acquisition divide very broadly between those who reject the possibility of conscious analytic language study being automatised as reflexive, unconscious and successful knowledge (see for example Krashen 1985, Sharwood-Smith 1994, Schwarz and Sprouse 1996), and those who see it as a cognitive process which is not always distinguishable from other forms of learning (see for example, Anderson 1983, McLaughlin 1987 and Ellis 1990). For the former group, acquired language knowledge is perceived as modular and organized according to rules that are internal to it and which have evolved from its generative need. For the latter, language knowledge is organized according to broader cognitive principles and may evidence processes employed by other forms of knowledge building.

This second group also evidences a quite marked subdivision between schools of thought that can be termed cognitivist and constructivist. The cognitivists emphasise knowledge proceduralisation as a key to successful second language use and the constructivists place their interest in models built from a Vygotskian interpretation of knowledge building as a form of self-mediated, social activity. This paper will argue that we should now be moving towards the establishment of an experientialist as opposed to a constructionist model of second language acquisition. It will refer first to how the neo-Vygotskian failure to acknowledge Vygotsky's Marxist framework has turned the socio-cultural theory of mind into a saga of the socially constructed mind. It will argue that this social constructionist interpretation of

Vygotsky has over-emphasised the external or social nature of the educative process, perceiving cognition as social action whilst failing to account for how social actions are a consequence of enduring forms of cognitive conceptualization. The argument will next use current experientialist or cognitive linguistic theories of language and meaning (see for example Langacker 1987, Lakoff 1987 and Croft 2004), and Vygotsky's concepts of education and development to show how second language error data supports a new understanding of second language learning/acquisition as both an acculturative education in concept acquisition and the proceduralisation of acquired concepts as the result of a process of enhanced development.

## Language as problem and problematic in the Vygotskian-Leont'evan legacy

The paper builds on the critical discussion, begun at ISCRAT 2002 and continued at ISCAR 2005, of the problem of language and communication in CHAT perspective and the problematic relationship between CHAT and orthodox linguistic theory.

While an understanding of language was crucial to the work of Vygotsky and Leont'ev, their reflections on communication and semiosis - sometimes brilliant, but fragmentary overall and often ambiguous and contradictory - did not establish a coherent approach consistent with the revolutionary premises and methodology of cultural-historical theory. The consequent use by some CHAT researchers of apparently more developed linguistic frameworks - e.g. that of Halliday - has led to the importing of undialectical methods of analysis and investigation together with assumptions about social life which have quite different intellectual roots and are

inimical to CHAT.

Although it has value for pedagogic purposes and in presenting very broad and superficial generalizations about the communicative activity of large numbers of people, conventional linguistic thinking distorts our understanding of actual instances of communicative behaviour because:

- It takes human sociality to be founded on shared meanings and values rather than as the concrete forms of active interaction and interconnection between particular individuals. By the same token it conceives the processes of thinking, intellectual enquiry and critical interrogation in terms of the use of a pre-established store of 'shared meanings' which define and delimit 'what the community thinks', rather than seeing thinking as a creative problem-solving process interpenetrating with practical activity and experience.

- Its counter-factual preconception of communication as depending on a 'system' or 'code' shared by 'the community' (Roy Harris's 'language myth') implies a view of semiotic mediation as the 'use' of pre-existing linguistic units rather than as the conscious formation of original behavioural acts in context whose communicative significance is a function of the participants' ability, in and through these acts, to transiently integrate, regulate and coordinate their ongoing actions (practical and/or intellectual).

- It arbitrarily abstracts observable aspects of communicative behaviour and reifies them into the realizations of 'units' belonging to the 'language system'. Consequently, present (or future) communicative behaviour is forever slave to the past; movement and change in the communicative sphere is frozen and the dialectic suppressed. Furthermore, the indissoluble connec-

tion between the communicative and all other aspects of human behaviour (ethical and political as well as practical) is thereby severed.

The paper attempts to explore the implications of this critique of conventional linguistic theory for the development of an approach to communication consonant with

a) Vygotsky's views on the development of the communicative skills involved in the conscious 'regulation' and 'self-regulation' of behaviour in 'free action', and

b) Leont'ev's conception of the individual's activity as 'those processes that realize a person's actual life in the objective world by which he is surrounded, his social being in all the richness and variety of its forms'.

**Kashkin, Viatcheslav B.**

Department of Translatology and ICC  
Voronezh State University, Russia

**Day:** Fri, 9.6.2006

**Time:** 13.30–14.00

**Room:** Agora, Auditorio 3

**Session:** Theory and Methodology III

## Metalinguistic activity and everyday philosophy

Studying what people think or feel about their own language and communication activities came into focus in the last decades of the previous century [Wenden; Horwitz; Hawkins; Bain; van Lier; Dufva; Kalaja, Kashkin, Arutyunova, Debrenne et al.]. These studies have revealed a lot of preconceived beliefs, referring mainly to the sphere of meta-cognition in foreign or second language learning. But there are still a lot of questions that remain open or even unasked: *how are language-learning beliefs related to the whole system of human cognitive activity and activity in general? What is the relation between language learning beliefs and naïve ideas about the essence, function, and use of language and other communication systems?* So there is a necessity for greater generalization of facts and observations at the level of everyday language philosophy.

What was named by Roman Jakobson as metalinguistic function of language seems more likely to be part of language users' activity. Every naïve language user not only speaks or writes or understands language, he/she is constantly controlling every step of this

activity. Metalinguistic activity can be observed in two layers, one of them implicit, and the other, explicit. Implicit metalinguistic activity is deduced from the strategy and tactics of languaging (H.Maturana's term), from the choices the user makes in favor of this or that formal representation of his/her intention. Explicit metalinguistic activity finds its expression in reflection on language, personal proto-theories, beliefs and other instances of linguistic mythology.

The mechanism of metalinguistic activity is driven by stereotyped schemes, a whole system of mythologemes that form the core of personal constructs (G.Kelly) formed by naïve language users both through language use and language study. Part of these mythologemes are never expressed in words, only in action patterns. Some of them, though, are presented in the form of explicit generalizations about language in general, words and their meaning, language use and abuse (complaint tradition), one's native and foreign languages and cultures, the ways to study and to teach them which are regarded

as most suitable to the bearer of those views, etc.

The following mythologemes constitute the basis of everyday language philosophy which has a profound impact (whether positive or negative) on every linguistic action of a naïve user: a) **reification** of words, 'chosisme' (G.Bachelard's term): words or other language units are treated like material things); b) **natural connection** belief (words are treated as if their relation to objects they denote were natural and inseparable); c) **contextual determinism** (situation and context strictly and almost mechanically predetermine what formal linguistic means are used in an utterance); d) **discrete semantics** bias (meanings are minor things within one big thing – a word, they can be counted); e) **linear translation** technique (word-per-word translation: words-things of the source language are simply replaced by words-things of the target language); f) **semiotic frontier** mythology (the language within the Humboldtian circle, or the native language, in many respects, is judged as being more 'positive' than any language from outside the circle).

**Kokkotas, Panagiotis**

Department of Primary Education  
University of Athens, Greece

**Lathouris, Dimitrios**

Department of Primary Education  
University of Athens, Greece

**Day:** Sat, 10.6.2006

**Time:** 11.00–11.30

**Room:** Beeta

**Session:** Language Education

## Language as cultural tool in multicultural science teaching settings

In modern societies, emphasis has been given to multicultural science teaching, since there is a great cultural divergence in science classrooms either because of students' different ethnicities, or because of their different sociocultural and economic backgrounds. In such a context, culture of science and school science and students' culture are usually in dissent creating barriers for learning science (Aikenhead, 1996).

Language plays a determinant role in science lessons, since it is the mean by which knowledge is constructed or transferred. Wells (1999) suggests that students' opportunities about learning and knowledge depend decisively on activities nature in which they are involved and the functions that language

has within these activities. Through reflection on talk in a science classroom in activities context, one can examine the way by which science is presented to students.

Sociocultural learning theory formulated mainly by Vygotsky (1978), sets language in the centre of educational process. Especially about science teaching in multicultural settings, language can play a significant role since it can be the link between science culture taught in school and students' culture. Language is a cultural tool that students bring to school and they use it to understand the world they live. Some of the students, who belong to different culture from that of the school, may experience cultural violence.

Science teaching should aim at eradicating this cultural violence and develop equal opportunities for all students. To do so, language should be used in a way that students appropriate smoothly the complex meanings that stem from science language. Language and science in connection with cooperative teaching in multicultural settings, present a new way of forming the suitable activities involving language aspect of science. In this study, students' group activities in multicultural science teaching are analyzed in the context of classroom discourse (Edwards & Westgate, 1994). The activities are linguistically orientated in order to help students to appropriate the meaning of difficult science concepts.

## Agency, motives and possibilities for learning

The purpose of this paper is to explore how a Zambian learner of Danish as a second language experiences her possibilities for learning in her classroom during a 3 months period. This implies an analysis of how her agency and motives are constructed within an Activity theoretical framework. In this particular 3 months period the learner went through a shift from one teacher to another and another shift back to the first teacher. The data consists of interviews, informal conversations, observation notes, and audio recordings from her classroom and illustrates, from various perspectives, a relation between the learner's personal life story, her motives for learning and her experience of agency in the classroom.

Similar relations have been documented in previous studies on learner

stories, motives, change of motives, and on agency in the classroom by e.g. Gillette (1994), Norton (2001), and Lantolf & Genung (2002). Gillette shows how learners' different background, previous experience with learning languages etc. shape different motives and therefore form different agencies among the students in a foreign language classroom. Norton found that a learner's imagined community is best understood within the context of his or her investment. In terms of Activity Theory this means that in order to understand the learner's experience of own agency we need to look at the aspects that constitute the learner's motives for learning. Lantolf and Genung observe the changing motives of a learner of Chinese and document how the changes are socially constructed.

My data suggest that a change in

classroom context change a learner's agency and experience of own agency, which as a result influence the learner's motives for learning. In my presentation I will propose that the first shift of teacher involves what could be called an agency-enhancement (Lantolf & Pavlenko, 2001) in the classroom for this particular learner, which changes back to an agency-restriction when the original teacher returns.

The paper will be a part of my Ph.D. dissertation, which is a part of a large-scale study in Denmark called "Learning and Integration – Adults and Danish as a Second Language", supported by The Danish Research Council for the Humanities.

**Kong, Kenneth**

Department of English Language and Literature  
Hong Kong Baptist University, Hong Kong

**Day:** Sat, 10.6.2006  
**Time:** 10.30–11.00  
**Room:** Agora, Delta  
**Session:** Multimodality in Language Learning

## Language learning web-sites as a mediated tool in self-study activities

Self-study has played an increasingly important role in the learning and instruction of many subjects, including second and foreign languages. With the rapid development of the Internet, language websites for self-study purposes are flourishing. While print-based teaching materials have received more attention, these websites are largely ignored by educationists and regarded as simply duplicates of their print-based counter-

parts. This is far from satisfactory since web-based and print-based materials are very different tools through which participants negotiate their learning activities. The study reported here is an ethnographic research project investigating how web-based language websites draw on the resources of print-based materials in terms of the use of verbal and visual language. This appropriation was found to be successful in certain

respects and less successful in others. These results were verified by detailed ethnographic interviews with the end-users. The research findings underscore the importance of notions such as 'tool', 'activity' and 'practice' in the areas of language learning and acquisition in self-study environments.

**Langemeyer, Ines**

Department for Media and Communication Studies  
University of Erfurt, Germany

**Day:** Fri, 9.6.2006  
**Time:** 15.00–15.30  
**Room:** Agora, Auditorio 3  
**Session:** Theory and  
Methodology III

## Rethinking the unit of analysis in action research

Within the framework of cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT), the idea of the “unit of analysis” is part of a dialectical methodology that is able to profoundly reflect the dynamics and the contradictions of developmental processes. Because of this, CHAT has been increasingly deployed in different

research fields and has contributed to the development of an emancipatory action research. Regardless of notable efforts and results of its application in practice, it seems that within the current appropriation of this theory, the unit of analysis is also used to elaborate rather functionalistic views of activity. The pur-

pose of this presentation is to highlight some of the problematic ways in which CHAT is read, developed, and deployed in research and how it loses the theoretical advantages that it has achieved in its development.

**Lee, Jina**

Doctoral Program of Second Language Acquisition  
University of Wisconsin-Madison, USA

**Day:** Thu, 8.6.2006

**Time:** 15.45–16.15

**Room:** Agora, Beeta

**Session:** Private Speech & Literacy

## **Dialogic aspect of private speech: A study of interactional dynamics of adult bilinguals' private speech**

Private speech (PS) is variously called *speech-for-self*, which was originally called 'egocentric speech.' When L2 users confront difficulty in performing a task in their L2, they often try to overcome their difficulties through strategic behaviors that help them to guide and monitor their activity and actions in the task. If those efforts take the form of verbal expressions, these verbal expressions often take in form of private speech. Often the function of private speech has been described as self-regulatory in Vygotskian perspective.

From Bakhtin's perspective, all speech genres are viewed as dialogic. Adopting the notion of dialogism, Bakhtin and Vygotsky viewed private and inner speech as intrapersonal dialogue. Vocate (1994) similarly asserts that in intrapsychological communication, the "I - You" social interaction becomes an "I - Me" dialogue in which "I" makes choices with regards to what to talk about and "Me" interprets and critiques these choices (p. 12). Kohlberg, Yaeger and Hiertholm (1968) also treat private (egocentric) speech as *self-communicative*

*speech* or *self-dialogue*. They assert that "the difference between self as auditor-director and self as speaker-actor is not a difference between two roles (e.g., child and adult) but the difference between the 'Me' and the 'I'" (p. 706).

Inspired by Bakhtin's and Vygotsky's dialogic perspectives and following Diaz's (1992) and Fuson's (1979) findings regarding the structural similarities between social and private speech, I present the evidences for dialogic aspects of private speech. In order to investigate the dialogic aspects of private speech, in this paper I report on my study of private speech produced by seven Korean-English bilingual students at a North American university. The data are video- and audio-recordings of three hours of each student's solitary exam preparation activity in a private room.

To elucidate interactional dynamics in the participants' internal activities, I have adapted several terms from conversation analysis (CA), such as sequence organizations in discourse structure: *question-answer sequences*, *repair sequences*, *reactive expressions*, etc. CA

is a study of *talk-in-interaction* – social speech. The benefits of using CA terms in analyzing private speech discourse are: (1) It enables one to look at the sequential organization of talk, which enables us to understand the naturally and momentarily occurring interactional dynamics in the PS data in terms of action sequences; (2) It can suggest the structural parallels between social speech and private speech in discussing their discourse structure. Since CA is a representative study of social speech, if the structural parallel between social speech and private speech is indicated, it can elucidate the dialogic aspect of private speech; (3) In so doing, it can aid in demonstrating the social origin of private speech by illustrating the structural similarity.

This then ultimately documents how each participant is participating in his or her activities by deploying a dynamic interaction with the self, with one's own actions and activities, and with the study materials (written texts).

## Vygotsky's zone of proximal development and teacher training

Vygotsky's zone of proximal development (ZPD) was first applied in the area of child development and more recently has also been applied to the area of teacher education. It has strong implications for teacher education because implementing the concept consciously helps promote a positive relationship between the trainer and trainee. Social interaction and dialogue are a basis for this relationship. Furthermore, the use of this concept creates a community of people who work together using language with a common goal in mind.

This presentation uses Vygotsky's zone of proximal development in relationship to a teacher training program for in-service EFL (English as a foreign language) teachers in central Mexico. The advantages of its use and how it has been used will be addressed. This idea is used along with reflection and microteaching. The reasoning of its use was to move beyond the transmission

of ideas as input and include the trainees within the process of learning. The trainees have a more active role when they participate through doing.

Microteaching is used as a way for trainees to feel comfortable with new techniques and methods. It is also used to exemplify and analyze specific skills, techniques, or methods of teaching English as a foreign language. As well it is a training tool that the teacher trainer can use to see if the trainees have mastered a specific skill. Microteaching and ZPD correlate with each other because microteaching offers a way for ZPD to be put in practice.

The roles of the teacher and student are ones of mutual collaboration. The trainee learns new techniques and strategies and in the process of this mastery, the trainer acts as a guide, a facilitator, and a mentor. The trainer gives feedback to the trainees and aids in the reflective process. Social interaction is

a starting point for this process. Reflection is carried out in a number of ways within the program; among these are journal writing and group discussion. An openness of dialogue is needed in order to work collaboratively.

Scaffolding, another term associated with ZPD, refers to the support that is given to go beyond the current level of expertise of the trainee to the next high level. The words that come to my mind in relation to scaffolding are arid, support, confidence, and assistance. Once the necessary support has been gained, the trainee can carry out the task at the higher level without the collaboration of the trainer.

Both Vygotsky's ZPD and scaffolding are concepts that have been used in teacher training to help trainees to become more accomplished in the acquisition of skills and methods of teaching English as a foreign language.

## Reliability, validity and feasibility of the *Project*- a component in the Israeli EFL matriculation test

**Background:** In Israel, the Ministry of Education conducts school-leaving exams in all subjects named the matriculation exams, or in Hebrew: the Bagrut. Inspectors are responsible for the test contents, their washback and results. In 2003, an assessment component, known as the *project*, was added to the national EFL matriculation exam in order to reflect the changes proposed by the innovative national English curriculum introduced in 2001.

**Research aim:** This study sets out to investigate the quality of the project component by examining its inter-rater reliability, content validity and its pragmatic features i.e. the practicality and the feasibility of its implementation. Data about the project were collected from structured interviews, questionnaires and expert analysis.

**Research questions:** What is the quality of the project component as part of the matriculation exam in EFL in terms of

a. its inter-rater reliability as judged by teacher raters?

b. its content validity as judged by expert analysis?

c. its pragmatic features focusing on its feasibility as judged by teachers implementing the project component in their teaching?

**Methodology:** a) For examining inter-rater reliability, structured interviews were held with teacher-raters in two stages. First, the teachers were asked to examine and provide an overall grade for 32 *projects*. The second stage was to justify and rationalize the grading process by providing their assessment criteria. This was carried out by comparing 96 teacher ratings and justifications. b) In the second part of the study, for the examination of content validity, seven experts were asked to compare the *project* component requirements and criteria with the content of the Israeli curriculum. c) To examine the pragmatic aspects of the *project*, a double-section

questionnaire was used relating to the implementation facets and feasibility of the *project* component, distributed to 62 EFL teachers in grades 7-12, who teach towards the school-leaving exam. Information about participants' background was gathered to gain better understanding of participants' experience in EFL instruction and project component implementation.

**Main findings:** The first research question resulted in inter-rater reliability of the overall *project* grade ( $r = .81$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Yet, the data significantly reveals disagreement among raters regarding the internal components of the rating scale. The criterion descriptors that allowed reliable ratings were found lacking in describing *Project* features. The second research question regarding the *project's* content validity, as judged by experts, revealed inconsistencies between the *project* guidelines and the reflection of their underlying construct in the curriculum.

Data from questionnaires relating to pragmatic aspects of the *project* indicated a positive correlation between teachers' comprehensive understanding of what the *project* component entails and the weight they attach to the *project*. As such, the pragmatics of the *project* was detected through teachers' willingness to take an active role in implementing the *project* in their classes. In addition, a strong positive correlation was found between teachers who view the *project* as an opportunity for educational value enhancement and those who expressed

willingness to rate *projects* externally and devote time to assimilating the *project* component among other teachers and students.

**Conclusions:** This study advocates the use of the *project* assessment component as added to the matriculation test but recommends a re-examination of the Ministry of Education's rating-scale used to assess it, due to the low inter-rater reliability found in the internal components, as opposed to the high ratings in the overall grade. The teachers found the *project* feasible; yet

it is recommended that certain conditions are met when implementing it to improve inter-rater reliability such as training future raters in high stake EFL tests. In addition, suggestions based on expert analysis as to what may enhance successful implementation of the *project* component in a high-stake EFL test were proposed, mainly in terms of re-thinking the process in which *project* guidelines and rating scale descriptors would be fully coordinated with the curriculum.

**Liberali, Fernanda**

Catholic University of São Paulo, Brazil

**Fuga, Valdite**

Catholic University of São Paulo, Brazil

**Day:** Thu, 8.6.2006

**Time:** 17.15–17.45

**Room:** Agora, Beeta

**Session:** Private Speech & Literacy

## Spinoza and Vygotsky in the construction of the concept of reading

This paper presentation aims at discussing the influence of Ethics (Spinoza, 1677) on L.S.Vygotsky theoretical frame (1934), in order to understand some concepts which support the relationship between consciousness and activity in the socio-cultural-historical theory. Specifically, it focuses on Spinoza's concepts of adequate and inadequate ideas, trying to relate them to Vygotskian concepts of meaning and sense.

The topic has been discussed by a larger collaborative research group in Applied Linguistics (LACE), in the context of the project "*Acting as Citizen: reading in different fields*", developed by PUC-SP and some public schools in Brazil, which aims to form teacher support teams (Daniels, 1996) to work in an autonomous way with critical reading in several fields, based on some genres (Bakhtin, 1953), focusing on cartoons,

informative texts and short narratives, that is, the texts are related to students needs based on political and ethical educational discussion.

According to Spinoza, the notion of non-separability is related to a monist perspective which understands that there is one single absolute infinite substance that is constituted by infinite number of finite mode. Only the substance which contains the whole can have adequate ideas because it contains the totality of all ideas that alone are inadequate. For the author, the human being, mind-body, is a finite mode of the substance. In this sense, she/he is in search of adequate ideas, but this can only be partially and temporarily achieved in connection with others, in an attempt to reach happiness through knowledge. This effort to search for adequate ideas can be connect to the idea of negotiation of meaning. In this

sense, Vygotsky distinguishes between the stable meaning of a word and its sense, or personal and contextualized meaning that emerges from particular ways people deploy words in mediating their mental activity.

On a parallel between Spinoza's concepts above, this paper focus on teachers' senses of reading at the beginning of the Project "*Acting as a citizen*", which has transformed in partially shared meaning during the meetings with RG LACE. It is important to say that the construction of meaning occurs through conflicts, when people are working jointly and, more specifically, in the context, "*Acting as a citizen*", the participants, in a collaborative way, are able to build a renewed meaning of reading, which can be suitable for their socio-historical-cultural needs.

**Magalhães, Maria Cecília Camargo**

Catholic University of São Paulo, Brazil

**Fidalgo, Sueli Salles**

Catholic University of São Paulo, Brazil

**Day:** Sat, 10.6.2006

**Time:** 11.30–12.00

**Room:** Agora, Auditorio 3

**Session:** Theory and Methodology IV

## **The role of methodological choices in investigations conducted in school contexts: Critical research of collaboration in teacher continuing education**

This presentation discusses the importance of methodological choices in research conducted with continuing education aimed at providing school staff – teachers, coordinators, principals – as well as participants external to school contexts – schools supervisors and researchers a locus for critical reflection and development on how the teaching-learning process is related to contextual needs based on political and ethical educational discussion. More specifically, it discusses **critical research of collaboration** as theoretical and methodological bases, which provide participants with a frame in which to collaborate and negotiate towards knowledge-construction regarding the pedagogical choices made in schools, and the teaching-learning concepts that base them. It is, therefore, an analysis of how people involved – regardless of their functions in the school environment (students included) – work towards or against meeting their

and others needs as a way to critically reflect and relate theory to practice, thus, constructing new knowledge. The Socio-Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (Vygotsky, 1934; Leontiev, 1977) provides an epistemological base to work with continuing education. Besides, considering the concept of ZPD as a locus for collaboration *par excellence*, it becomes crucial to support the creation of discussion groups where all members can collaborate to critically reflect on school context and on requirements to be met in each case. Based on Leontiev (1977), we see that collaboration and critical reflection allow staff to overcome the individualism that usually characterizes complex activities with fragmented division of labor. More specifically, in terms of school-bound activities, individualism and alienation make it difficult for educators to relate the results of their actions to their original goals and actions, and their educational perform-

ance to the students' behaviour. This lack of connection between actions and results, which gives rise to alienation is also responsible for difficulties and tension in relationships. In this direction, providing a locus for continuing education in school settings, organized under collaborative-critical actions, enables participants' to rethink meanings, making them public and shared, allowing group members to build new perspectives on educational concepts and to conceive their practices according to democratic ideals and professional dignity (Freire, 1970, Kincheloe, 1997, Giroux & Mc Laren, 2002).

This research is conducted in a community-based program (*Citizens in Action*) whose performance is organized in different fronts, including: *regional state school directorates (DE)* - where teacher-support teams are organized to deal with reading difficulties in different subject areas - and *teachers' pedagogical*

*meetings at schools (HTPC)* - whose aim is to review and transform classroom actions.

The target for these activity systems is twofold: educators and students who live in, and study or work on the bread-

line, either in *favelas* or in dormitory towns in the outskirts of São Paulo. Our work was developed as a result of the existing demand for teacher education, arising as a consequence of changes in the Brazilian state school system.

## Identity and ecological pedagogy in language education

The social turn in second language acquisition and applied linguistics has allowed us to focus on the realm identity and second language education. Arguably, it has been an unofficial center of attention for many years, but it has not been until recently that notions involving the self, discourse, and negotiation of identity moved from the periphery to the center of many investigations and theoretical inquiries.

This paper will present a contemporary post-structuralist view of identity formation in second language learners as framed (and influenced) by Vygotsky and Leontiev's work. More importantly, it will be demonstrated how Vygotsky and Leontiev's research can inform current pedagogy in language classrooms with the hopes of developing a renewed vision of the purpose of discourse and language learner participation in communities of practice.

The concept of identity in language learners will be thoroughly explored and discussed. This argument will focus on the longstanding debate over linguistic quantity vs language quality. It is dif-

icult to argue that a focus on linguistic quantity (the sum of language that we know) is less important than the quality of language that we know because we would hope that the more language we know the more we are able to do with it. Perhaps it is difficult to argue a quality-based approach because we have traditionally approached second language education from a "building" standpoint, and traditional thought says that the more we build language through input the better the quality of the output. Vygotsky and Leontiev's research sheds a welcomed light on the current debate of linguistic quantity vs. language quality in second language education.

Furthermore, historical approaches to language education will be discussed, and their implications on identity development outlined, as the construct of ecological linguistics is used to frame post-method language teaching and learning. This will present the audience with a renewed vision and purpose of language learners' voices in, arguably, in a post-method learning environment.

Finally, we will discuss the concept of voice with our theoretically frame teaching and learning directly influences instruction, learning, and identity development in educational contexts. Based on the realizations brought to light by framing language classrooms in as "language in action" we will reflect on the situated nature or lessons and on environments that are conducive to supporting individual voice without imposing certain linguistic approaches on our students that do not permit them to negotiate their identities. We will also discuss how a "Vygostky-Leontiev" framework helps to focus students' (and teachers') investment in the educational process, in and out of the classroom. This last point is important because since we invest ourselves in language learning through communities of practice, we begin to present educational activity as supporting a voice that we develop on its own after engaging in classroom dialogues in situated, activity-centered contexts.

## **Collaborative research: Analysis of the activity system based on speech and collaboration**

Instruments and procedures that are used to make science have been discussed a lot, by researchers of several areas of knowledge, and there are many works that appoint to the relevance of the research methodology, when the theme is within Social and Human Science.

In this context there is the Collaborative Research Methodology that emerged with the advent of the qualitative research, and which is conquering adepts in the academies. This research looks for to transform the contexts researched, by the actions of participants and researcher, leaving the idea of the traditional approach that researcher detains the knowledge and participants are only objects of analysis.

Dillon et al. (1989), Murphy (1989), Cole & Knowles (1993), Magalhães (1996, 1998, 1999, 2002), Bray et al. (2000), and other authors emphasize important aspects related to the collaborative research methodology, supported

by critical perspective. Nevertheless, there are many forms of understanding collaboration, and of understanding the difference between “collaboration in the research procedures” and “collaboration in the research actions”.

As explained above, descry itself a complex frame to be inquiry more deeply, in which I intend to insert this research. At this form, I intend to discuss the procedures that characterize the collaborative research, aiming to establish the differences between “collaborative research” and “collaborative actions in the research”. My intention through the discussion about the steps of the research, the theoretical studies, and the theory – practice relation, is to carry out researchers to the reflection about the responsibility of their intervention in the researched contexts. The collaborative research presupposes the intervention of the people forward to the transformation by themselves, and overcoat, to change the researched situ-

ation, which is social and it is lived in community. So the objective of this work is to share and to contribute effectively by everybody about the quality of the produced knowledge in the process developmental.

At this perspective, this research takes as example, the relations between researcher and persons that exercise head teacher functions and pedagogical coordination in public schools, and starting to collected data in this context, it discuss the collaborative research. It seek, at this form, to leave out the passive role of the subjects with limited involvement and oriented by researcher’s power, perspective that is present in the traditional research, to emphasize the plurality in the interpretation of the collected data, based on collaboration of the people involved and on the multifaceted relation no based on the hierarchic power between researcher and participants.

Methodological dilemmas are dis-

cussed based on Sociocultural Activity Theory (Vygotsky, 1930/1978, 1934/1962, 1978/1998; Leontiev, 1959, 1978; Engeström, 1993, 1999, 2001, 2003; Bedny et al., 2000; Collins et al., 2002; Daniels, 2003), and the collaborative research is understood as activity system.

For this, I try to characterize the fundamental elements of the system - subjects, community, and object; and essential elements - rules, artifacts mediating and division of labor, as responsible to burst transformations in the social context considered.

## A unit for the analysis of L2 speech activity

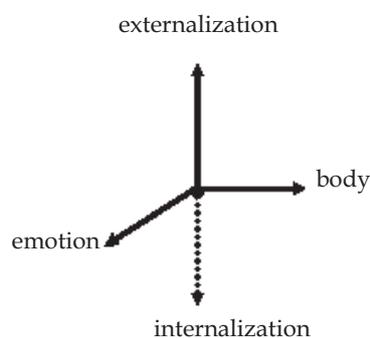
The presentation aims to provide students and scholars alike with a Vygotskian and A. A. Leontievan approach to foreign language education research. The focus is on speech activity. First and foremost, following A. A. Leontiev, we can regard learning a second language (L2) as a transformation from static L2 form into *dynamic speech activity*. We can refer to the genetic origin of the activity as *speech activity cell* or *speech activity unit*. This cell or unit is composed of indivisible moments integrally related to each other. More precisely, the speech activity unit is assumed to have four three-dimensional vectors. Each vector has its own scale and direction. These four vectors are body, internalization, externalization, and emotion. (See Figure 1) Speech activity is reconstructed as an integrated vector from those four vectors. Next, the presentation discusses the following points:

1) speech and body  
The vectors of internalization and externalization mean the *reciprocating* movement of speech activity. Speech activity is based on *segmentation* of the universe, which also requires BODY to segment all meanings of the universe (Merleau-Ponty). Recent brain science reports that a neurocircuit which is activated by a motion of body is also activated by its imaginary motion.

2) speech and emotion  
The manifestation of emotion produces qualitative change when it is connected with both sensory and language systems. The former concerns the first signal system and the latter the second signal system. Cognitive and emotional functions are inseparably related, and they both together contribute to a reflection of objective reality into consciousness.

3) practice  
Lastly but not least, the presentation reports a practice in a classroom. Detailed analysis is shown, based on the *meaningful* voices of the learners. It is emphasized that the ultimate goal of language education is to foster a person who is *sincere* in his or her own speech and personality development by language education pivots round the fusion of speech, body, and emotion.

Figure 1.  
A Three-dimensional Model of Speech Activity Unit



**O'Boyle, Aisling**

School of Education

Queen's University Belfast, Northern Ireland

**Day:** Thu, 8.6.2006

**Time:** 15.45–16.15

**Room:** Agora, Gamma

**Session:** Classroom I

*"I mean, what she means is...":*  
**Regulation in a language classroom**

This paper presents data from a spoken corpus made up of recordings of an ESL classroom in a university setting. Language learners enrolled in a seminar skills course in order to learn how to exchange and understand ideas and opinions in a university seminar. The social meaning attached to this enrolment in terms of sharing knowledge and

procedures is explored and tentatively traced through a process of objectification. The actions within this activity are analysed in terms of the language used by the participants. Exploring how language is used in this context, patterns of regulation have emerged; self-produced language is used to regulate the self, the language of others is also used

to regulate the self. It is suggested that the knowledge produced as a result of the regulation of self, others and material may be drawn upon for future use. Regulation across a number of dimensions which impact on the shared nature of the space and time of this collective activity are also explored.

**Piliouras, Panagiotis**  
University of Athens, Greece

**Kokkotas, Panagiotis**  
University of Athens, Greece

**Day:** Sat, 10.6.2006  
**Time:** 11.30–12.00  
**Room:** Beeta  
**Session:** Language Education

## Discourse analysis as a tool for the transformation of the nature and type of peer group interactions in four Greek elementary science classrooms

Our paper refers to a “developmental work research” program (Engeström, 1996) that concerns the gradual transformation of the nature and type of peer group interactions in more collaborative inquiry conditions in four elementary science classrooms. The basic strategy in order to accomplish this goal was to give the chance to teachers and students to analyze their own talk, using appropriate simplified discourse tools in the format of worksheets.

This study assumes a sociocultural perspective which draws on the work of the Vygotskian school of thought and its focus on the cognitive development of children as it emerges through social interaction, mediated by language. We adopt the sociocultural driven position that the learning process can be viewed as appropriation-transformation through participation in gradually evolving discourses and practices

(Rogoff, 2003). To accomplish this choice we should seek for a collaborative inquiry in nature (e.g. Wells, 1999) and oriented towards discourse (e.g. Hicks 1996) learning environment. However, there are deep constraints and built-in obstacles in the establishment of a collaborative inquiry learning environment in a “science classroom” activity system. Literature review reveals that social interactions in collaborative activities do not always create effective learning processes (e.g. Hogan, 1999).

Therefore, we conducted a research which aimed at increasing students’ discursive and collaborative inquiry competencies. The basic strategies for accomplishing these goals were: a) the explicit negotiation of communicative rules when children were engaged on tasks requiring collaborative group work b) analysis of peer group talk by the teachers c) analysis of peer group

talk by the students themselves. We, based on the Engeströms’ expansive learning approach to research, proceeded in the implementation of the following discourse analysis oriented actions: *Action 1: “Literature review: The nature and type of teacher- student and peer group interactions”, Action 2: “How students talk in their teams?”, Action 3: “Co-deciding how we should talk in our team”, Action 4: “How we talk in our team?”.*

The study and analysis of the data that we made with the active participation of the teacher-researchers (action 2) indicated that initially most students had not the competency to cooperate and to work together. The talk of the groups was usually disputational or cumulative and not exploratory. Students proposed ideas that were usually accepted unchallenged and without justification. After the creation of pupil-generated ground rules (action 3) we analyzed new sam-

ples of peer group talk. We found that there was an obvious increase in the use of exploratory talk in relation with the previous action. After the completion of the forth action in which students analyzed their own group dialogues to trace the nature and the type of their own talk, the discourse analysis indicated that students became more capable of productive and investigative group discourse. There was a marked change in the type of talk generated by students and a sub-

stantial increase in the use of exploratory talk. This means that the analysis by the students of their own discourse practices functioned as a transformative tool to peer group interactions.

Discursive practices are the most important practices in a community, because they produce and mediate communication, embed all other practices, and constitute the members' world (Roth 1998). Our research indicates that it is very important to involve not only

teachers but also students in analyzing their own talk. The discourse analysis tools provided teachers and students with a meta-discursive and meta-collaborative awareness. They gradually internalized/appropriated aspects of the discourse tools that led to an automatization (Hutchins, 1997) of appropriate dialogic and the collaborative cultural repertoires.

## **How to make use of ZPD in foreign language education? The case of teaching Swedish grammar to Finnish learners**

One of the best-known concepts coined by Vygotsky is that of the zone of proximal development (ZPD). From a language education point of view, this notion can be defined “as the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by individual linguistic production, and the level of potential development as determined through language produced collaboratively with a teacher or peer” (Ohta 2001, 9). Thus, to make use of ZPD the language teacher needs to be able to judge what the distance between the actual and the potential performance level is. One can fairly reliably assess the actual developmental level by looking at what the student manages to

do in the target language. Then again, it is far from self-evident how the level of potential development is to be determined, as language development does not necessarily proceed linearly. In addition, the process of language development on a more detailed level has not yet been studied intensively, and, therefore, we cannot yet say which features of language the student could master if she was scaffolded by someone. A promising tool to be used in approximating the potential level of language development is the Processability Theory (PT) originated by Manfred Pienemann (1998). PT builds on the idea that the processes behind the production of language are

hierarchically constructed, which means that they also have to be acquired in a hierarchic order. In other words, the student must first acquire the lower-level grammatical structure(s) before she can grasp another structure requiring processing on a more complex level. In my presentation, I shall describe what kind of opportunities PT offers to the teachers (as well as the students) to help them to identify what the scope of ZPD in each individual case actually is. I shall also exemplify the phenomenon by looking at how Swedish grammar is presented in study books for novice Finnish learners, which, in turn, in many, if not most, cases also determines how it is taught in the classroom.

## **Dynamics of teaching and learning communication strategies**

Communication strategies (CSs) are what learners use “to overcome the inadequacies of their interlanguage resources” (Ellis, 1994, p. 396). Similarly, Corder (1981) defines CSs as “a systematic technique employed by a speaker to express his [or her] meaning when faced with some difficulty” (p.103). Although the importance of communication strategies is widely recognized, “little has been discovered about the developmental nature of CSs in L2 production” (Ellis, 1994, p. 402). This study reports the result of the yearlong classroom research on how Japanese university students learned to use CSs from a sociocultural perspective. In essence, the study reveals the dynamics of teaching and learning CSs in a language classroom.

Using multiple data sources, including surveys, diaries, videotaped-conver-

sations, self-assessment, and interviews, this study describes how students learned to use CSs and how their use influenced their L2 learning. The study found that explicit teaching of CSs was useful to raise learners’ awareness but not sufficient for them to be able to use those CSs in their conversations. Learners need continuous opportunities to actually use English and to evaluate their own use of CSs. In particular, recycling the process seemed to be effective to improve not only their strategic competence but also their overall communicative competence. In other words, learning CSs affects their L2 acquisition. Moreover, the obtained data showed that learners were greatly influenced by others’ use of CSs. It seems to be essential to create a learning community in a classroom to develop autonomous

language learners for life.

Such a study is expected to shed light on the dynamics of teaching and learning from a sociocultural perspective. In fact, second language acquisition research has begun to take into consideration social, institutional, and classroom contexts where teaching and learning take place (Lantolf, 2000). In short, Savignon (1997) stresses the significance of “rapport” in the classroom, by saying that “Practice in communication, by definition, forces learners to come out from behind memorized dialogues and ready-made phrases, leaving them in a particularly vulnerable position. The rapport they feel with the teacher as well as with classmates may be crucial in determining the success or failure of the venture” (p. 81).

## From socio-behaviorism to cultural psychology – continuity and rupture in Vygotsky's work

In his seminal work *The Historical Meaning of the Crisis in Psychology* (1927) Vygotsky wrote that “science commences to be understood dialectically in its movement, i.e. from the perspective of its dynamics, growth, development, evolution.” (CW3, 292). In my presentation, I attempt to examine Vygotsky's own work from the perspective of development. If Vygotsky's work is to be understood as a non-classical psychology, representing a new kind of theory, how then this new theory emerged from the classical psychology? How are “new” and “old” elements related to each other in Vygotsky's own work?

We can identify several distinct phases in the development of Vygotsky's theory. In his earliest works, he was interested in arts and the psychology of aesthetic experience. After that, he committed himself to the task of developing monistic, materialistic theory of human mind. His genuine invention was the cultural theory of higher psychological

functions. He developed this theory step by step moving from a socio-behaviorist perspective to a cultural explanation of human mind.

In his socio-behaviorist phase Vygotsky understood the human personality as “fully determined by the social environment.” (CW3, 157, 158). By doing so “the problem of mind is resolved without any waste of energy” and the “consciousness is wholly reduced to the transmitting mechanisms of reflexes.” (CW3,77). A break with this explanatory strategy was necessary to achieve a proper understanding of the specific features of the human psyche.

Cultural-historical theory then evolved from the years 1926/27 in two steps, which are not easily separated from each other. The key to a post-Cartesian psychology was the idea of mediated activity: “The central fact of our psychology is the fact of mediation.” (CW3, 138). Vygotsky first assumed an analogy with signs and tools. The

concept of psychological tools (PT) was developed during this phase. The PT model, however, was not enough sensitive to the meaning forming function of the sign; consequently a more semiotic approach was needed.

In the last phase of his thinking Vygotsky emphasized the semiotic aspect of the mediated activity. “In psychology we first attempted to understand logical memory as the tying of a knot, now as semantic memorization.” Consequently; “semiotic analysis is the only adequate method for the study of the systemic and semantic structure of consciousness.” (CW3, 137). Respectively, the interests of the late Vygotsky were in word meaning and in emotional experience (*perezhivanie*).

It is obvious that there is some continuity and some ruptures in Vygotsky's thought. He was interested in the same problems during his career, but his explanatory concepts developed and changed step by step. It is claimed that

the analysis of the dialectic of continuity and rupture in Vygotsky's work is essential if we want to understand what is really unique in his work. This kind of analysis as a 'history of present' (Foucault) can offer tools for the understanding of the current methodological debates in cultural-historical tradition.

## Language and identity – the case of teacher trainees

The paper looks into the formation of multilingual speakers' identities by investigating short biographies by 64 language students in teacher education. The main focus of the research is the extent to which these future language teachers have acquired multilingual identities as a part of, and as a result of, their formal training and what impact their life situation as a whole has on the way they describe themselves as language learners. Tentatively, the results show that one group among the teacher trainees conceived of their language trajectories in metaphors related to formal training; admiration of the language teacher and pleasure derived from successful school achievements. In the language of the successful school achiever, the learning experience from the world outside school is typically not strongly present. The identity of the learner is still distanced from situations of multilingual language usage. Another group, on the other hand, have mainly described their experience in terms of cultural encounters and immersion in

the culture represented by the foreign language. Among this group we typically find teacher trainees in Swedish with bilingual backgrounds and students of French who have lived in a French-speaking country for a long time and/or have formed bilingual families or common-law marriages. There is yet a third group with mixed experiences. These students originate in basically monolingual backgrounds and start out their development as participants in formal education in school, but later enlarge their social circle to include participation in the community of speakers of the target language, typically during holidays among target language speakers, as exchange students, or during work abroad. Later in life they look for opportunities to spend long periods in countries where the target language is spoken and they may enter into permanent relationships with speakers from the target language culture. They thus move from a monolingual community into a multilingual one. A similarly mixed group are the ones who narrate bilingual experiences

in childhood which later spark off an 'academic' interest in languages. The formal teaching of grammar and vocabulary in school becomes meaningful as a means of improving communicative ability in foreign languages.

The teacher trainee students who participate in the investigation are special cases in the sense that they have decided to apply to university in order to study languages and are at the moment of writing their biography on the threshold to entering a professional role as a person whose knowledge of several foreign languages will earn them their living; people whose identity will become rigidly anchored to the fact that they master languages. Their trajectories are interesting as combinations of formal education, informal or incidental learning, and professional identities. Perhaps their experience will contribute something to others who for professional reasons use foreign languages either in their home environment or abroad.

**Stone, Lynda D.**

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California State University, Sacramento, USA

**Hart, Tabitha**

Department of Communications  
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**Day:** Thu, 8.6.2006

**Time:** 16.15–16.45

**Room:** Agora, Beeta

**Session:** Private Speech & Literacy

## Interrelationship of literacy learning practices and private speech

The aim of this proposal is to share findings from a qualitative study of private speech used by first graders to engage in literacy learning over an academic year.

**Background**

According to Vygotsky (1934/1986), private speech "...grows out of its social foundations by means of transferring social, collaborative forms of behavior to the sphere of an individual's psychological functioning" (p. 45). In other words, children's private speech is a form of "thought spoken out loud" and used by children in agential, opportunistic, and creative ways. To determine how private speech is both influenced by and influences the social surrounds, we examined private speech as a discursive process embedded in a particular context.

**Methods**

We conducted a year long ethnographic and discourse analytic study.

*The Setting*

Data were collected in a first-grade classroom in an urban elementary school in northern California.

*Data Collection*

Twenty complete literacy activities (i.e., encompassing each of the three phases) were video- and audio-tape recorded. Four focal children were selected, two African American and two Latinos between the ages of 6 and 7.

*Processing, Coding, and Analyzing the Data*

Video recordings were transcribed using the conventions developed by Gail Jefferson (see Atkinson & Heritage, 1984). Private speech was identified using the standards described by Smolucha (1992).

**Findings**

Analysis of the data revealed that the functions of private speech was significantly influenced by the historical norms and expectations of help-giving and help-seeking of the local context.

Private speech was characterized by a complex mixture of cognitive (speech used to produce new knowledge), metacognitive (speech used to over see and direct actions), and motivational talk (speech used to foster engagement in and completion of a task).

The cognitive function of private speech was used by children to:

- a. create new literacy knowledge out of an existing knowledge base (referred to as a bridging process in this research)
- b. produce elaborated oral texts in conjunction with written work
- c. sound out and spell new words

The metacognitive function of private speech was used by children to:

- a. over see and direct story writing actions
- b. plan what needed to go into stories e.g., words, actions, colors

- c. determine if spellings of words were correct or if word usage was correct
- d. monitor thinking, e.g., what was known, what needed to be known to complete a written story

It is important to note that metacognitive talk occurred in all private speech

events and this talk resulted in help seeking as children used self-questions and/or statements to determine if they needed help. In other words, metacognitive talk promoted motivational the pursuit of learning and influenced the local context.

The motivational function of private speech was used by children to:

- a. express interest
- b. display attitudes
- c. evaluate actions
- d. take a perspective on on-going activity

**Tarnanen, Mirja**

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University of Jyväskylä, Finland

**Day:** Fri, 9.6.2006  
**Time:** 15.00-15.30  
**Room:** Agora, Beeta  
**Session:** Language Assessment

## Language proficiency as a gatekeeper for citizenship

The current Citizenship Act in Finland came into force in June 2003. Compared to the old Act, the new Act states more detailed requirements for language proficiency. The language proficiency requirements have aroused discussion about the relationship between citizenship and language proficiency. Further, the standardized assessment of language

proficiency for citizenship purposes has been considered discriminating.

This presentation focuses on language proficiency as a requirement for the citizenship application. First, the concept of citizenship is considered from a legislative, political, and cultural perspective. Second, the Finnish proficiency of the citizenship applicants is looked

at in the light of test scores and testees' feedback on tests. Finally, the focus is in the social and individual consequences of standardized assessment: e.g., how realistic does the language requirement appear to immigrants and how fair do testees with varying backgrounds consider the test to be.

**Wells, Gordon**  
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**Day:** Thu, 8.6.2006  
**Time:** 16.45-17.45  
**Room:** Agora, Auditorio 3  
**Session:** Theory and Methodology I

## Taking one's turn: The Organization of classroom talk

Typically, whole class interaction takes the form of triadic dialogue (I-R-F), in which the teacher takes two turns for every turn by a student. However, if we accept the CHAT perspective that discourse is always mediating some action beyond itself and is conducted in a

genre appropriate for the chosen goal, we need to ask how effective the genre of triadic dialogue is and why teachers seem to find it necessary.

Basing my talk on a collaborative action research project with teachers, in which we videorecorded many lessons,

I shall describe how, over a period of several years, they attempted to make discussion in their classrooms more truly dialogic in the interest of optimizing learning opportunities for all participants.

**Vine, Elaine W.**

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**Day:** Sat, 10.6.2006  
**Time:** 12.00–12.30  
**Room:** Agora, Gamma  
**Session:** Agency

## **Interactions between a teacher and a five-year-old boy in a New Zealand classroom: Sites for learning?**

This paper presents a case study of Brian, a five-year-old boy in a New Zealand “new entrants” classroom. This is a class for children in their first year at school. The case study focus on analyses of one-to-one interactions between Brian and his teacher, Ms Nikora, as potential sites for learning. The data were collected as part of a larger, collaborative study which involved multiple video,

audio and observational monitoring of both individual and class activity during a nine-hour social studies curriculum unit of study.

A sociocultural learning theory approach is used to explore whether and how Brian and Ms Nikora engage with social studies curriculum content through the interactions, and whether and how they engage in teaching/learning how to “do school”. The pos-

sibility that there is a dialectic relationship between the two processes is then explored.

Brian is an English-speaking New Zealand child. The paper concludes by briefly comparing the analysis of his interactions with Ms Nikora with findings of previous analyses of interactions in the same classroom between Fa’afetai, a Samoan immigrant to New Zealand, and Ms Nikora.

## Assessing language use as socially mediated activity

In recent years, studies of sociocultural theory have gained prominence in the fields of foreign/second language teaching and learning. However, as Lantolf (2005) makes it clear, the essence of sociocultural theory has not been well understood among second language acquisition researchers. This paper argues that the same is true for language testers and proposes conceptualising language assessment as a part of assessment of socially mediated activity. In order to support this contention, this paper presents three studies.

In language testing, it is assumed that levels of language proficiency can predict task outcome. However, sociocultural theory assumes that task performance varies from one situation to another because of the combined effects of mediation through language, cultur-

al/historical artefacts, past experiences interlocutors bring to interactions, and the social milieu in which interlocutors interact with one another. If language proficiency is a defining feature of task performance, it is predicted that native speakers will outperform non-native speakers in terms of task outcome. The first study investigates on the basis of activity theory to determine whether this is in fact true by comparing the outcome of a map-completion task performed by Japanese college students and that of British college students.

In order to examine the nature of traditional Japanese school learning, in which obedience is valued in maintaining public order more than mastering practical skills that are useful in real-life settings, the second study reports on a case study of an American child who

studied Japanese at an institution in the U.S.A. The case study illuminates the impact of modelling on the child mediated through tertiary artefacts and the contrasting views of the child's achievement held by the teachers and the parents.

The third study examines the nature of Japanese cultural norms that are likely to impinge on test-takers' performance. An observation-based study of Japanese learners of English at a university in Japan shows the sociocentric nature of Japanese interactional style manifested in class.

Implications for English teaching and assessment in Japan in relation to high-stakes testing are discussed from the perspectives of activity theory and cultural psychology.



