Vygotsky, Pedagogy, English, Drama: A Research Symposium

Monday 4th to Tuesday 5th July, 2011
OSAT, Department of Education, University of Oxford

Vygotsky’s work can be understood as a radical experimental method, a psychology of art and a philosophical argument. But Vygotsky also pursued a pedagogical project and this project came to inform seminal studies of language and learning, play and the development of writing following the first English translation of Thought and Language in 1962. A generation of teachers, teacher educators and educational researchers came to Vygotsky’s ideas through the writing of Bruner, Britton, Moll and others. Key ideas such as the zone of proximal development and the inter-relationship of thinking and speech were appropriated in various ways and had different kinds of influence. New directions for research were stimulated by subsequent interests in the concept of activity, in mediation and by reinterpretations of culture in response to increasing sociocultural diversity. A ‘third generation’ of activity theory emerged in Helsinki from Engeström and a ‘third space’ in Los Angeles from Gutiérrez.

In terms of English and Drama Education – and in particular, in relation to questions of pedagogy – where are we now with Vygotsky? Did Vygotsky have his day and have we ‘moved on’? Is there a ‘Vygotskian legacy’, a residual set of ideas that continue to have influence but perhaps go un-noticed? Have English and Drama Educators never really engaged with large parts of Vygotsky’s work, concentrating instead on the concerns of the works first translated? What happened to play and to literature and creativity? Does the work of Engeström and Gutiérrez suggest the future lies with ‘formative interventions’ and participatory research? Do English and Drama teachers need Vygotsky to help us develop a coherent theory of mind? How do Vygotsky’s ideas relate to those from ethnography, anthropology and sociolinguistics in developing our understanding of pedagogy?

Speakers in this research symposium will be encouraged to present their own perspectives on these questions - and others - and will be invited to engage in debate and discussion with each other. This will be a small symposium with limited places so that all participants can take part in all discussions. Each participant will be asked to talk for up to 30 minutes, no more, and with the use of Powerpoint confined to the projection of images and quotations (if it is used at all). Participants will work together towards the writing of a short closing statement that will reflect the discussions that have taken place. In the longer term, participants will be encouraged to work together to develop further proposals.

Confirmed participants so far include Myra Barrs, Carol Fox, Tony Burgess, Line Wittek, Anton Franks, John Hardcastle, Viv Ellis and Peter Smagorinsky. The symposium will be the first event organised by the Forum for English and Drama in Education, an informal grouping associated with the Oxford Centre for Sociocultural and Activity Theory Research (OSAT) in the Department of Education at Oxford University.
Vygotsky, Pedagogy, English, Drama: A Research Symposium

PROGRAMME

Monday 4th July 2011

11am Coffee
11.30 First session
1pm Lunch
2pm Second session
4pm Tea
5pm Oxford Centre for Sociocultural and Activity Theory Research Seminar: Peter Smagorinsky, University of Georgia
6.30 Drinks
7.30 Dinner

Tuesday 5th July 2011

9.30am Third session
11am Coffee
11.30 Closing session
12.30 Lunch and close

All sessions will take place in the Department of Education, 15 Norham Gardens, Oxford, OX2 6PY. For information on how to find the department, go to http://www.education.ox.ac.uk/contact/how-to-find-us/
Vygotsky, Pedagogy, English, Drama: A Research Symposium

If you would like to participate in this symposium, please send the following information as soon as possible – and by 18th June 2011 at the latest – to viv.ellis@education.ox.ac.uk:

- Your name
- Institutional affiliation (if any)
- Contact details (postal address, email address, telephone number)
- A title and description of what you would like to talk about (no more than 200 words)

Places are limited and applicants will be notified as soon as possible after they have emailed if a space is available. No applications can be considered after 18th June 2011.

Charges will be made for participation as follows:

- £150 (regular fee)
- £75 (student fee)

Payment can only be made by personal cheque (drawn on a UK bank account) or by bankers’ draft in pounds sterling and made payable to ‘The University of Oxford’. Payment will need to be received by Friday 24th June 2011 at the latest. Details will be sent to registered participants. Students will need to send a photocopy of their student ID.

The fee includes registration for the symposium, two lunches, dinner and tea/coffee. The fee does not include overnight accommodation. Accommodation in Oxford can be arranged through your travel agent or through:
http://www.oxfordcity.co.uk/oxford/home_accommodation.html

Accommodation is also available at the university-run Rewley House accommodation centre:
http://www.conted.ox.ac.uk/facilities/accommodation/index.php

Organisers of the symposium cannot recommend accommodation.