7

Situating Pedagogy: Moving beyond an Interactional Account

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Introduction

In this article, I discuss a development within the cultural historical tradition in social science that makes a contribution to our understanding of pedagogy and thus to educational research. This departure involves the incorporation of sociology of pedagogy into the post-Vygotskian formulation of the social formation of mind. In so doing, it seeks to extend the understanding of pedagogic practice beyond the analysis of dyadic or small group interactions so often found in studies which acknowledge the formative influence of Lev Vygotsky's writing and develops further the analytic and descriptive capacity of the various versions of activity theory developed in the wake of A. N. Leontiev's early work.

A non-dualist conception of mind claims that 'intermental' (social) experience shapes 'intramental' (psychological) development. This is understood as a mediated process in which societally produced cultural artifacts (such as forms of talk, representations in the form of ideas and beliefs, signs and symbols) shape and are shaped by human engagement with the world (Vygotsky, 1987). In recent years, sociology of this social experience which is compatible with, but absent from, Vygotskian psychology has been developed (Bernstein, 2000). Part of Bernstein's argument is that everyday discourse, which is often not the object of conscious reflection and analysis, puts in place our understanding of the world.

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Such discourse is ordinary in that its sayings and their meanings are seen as entirely natural, and arguably, that is why it is so effective. It is also instrumental in creating 'habits of the mind' that are crucial to a subject's ways of engaging in decision-making in the social world (Hasan, 2005). The challenge for educators is to theorize how this everyday aspect of pedagogic discourse is produced in different settings and how it mediates engagement with the social relations of its production site and other settings. Such theorization brings with it possibilities for analyzing and describing specific forms of pedagogic practice. The position that I advance here is that a conception of pedagogy compatible with the cultural historical turn in Vygotsky's later writing must take a full account of the setting in which learning and development take place. This notion of the 'setting of development' is clearly represented in his later writing and yet it is often not fully operationalized. What is therefore required is a way of articulating the way in which the setting mediates engagement in the social world.

Vygotsky and pedagogy

In this section, I identify the tensions between the aspirations and the reality of Vygotskian perspectives on pedagogy. In so doing, I make the case for the expansion of the term's remit beyond a narrow focus on the overt features of pedagogic interaction. My argument is that the broader situation of pedagogic exchange implicitly mediates that interaction. Pedagogy is shaped by the history of the setting in which it is enacted. Pedagogic practice involves explicit and implicit meditational effects as the interactional and the wider setting shape the formation of mind. Vygotsky considered the capacity to teach and benefit from instruction as a fundamental attribute of human beings:

> Vygotsky's primary contribution was in developing a general approach that brought education, as a fundamental human activity, fully into a theory of psychological development. Human pedagogy, in all its forms, is the defining characteristic of his approach, the central concept in his system (Moll, 1990:15).

Whilst Vygotsky declared an interest in more broadly defined sociocultural development, he spent a major part of his time focusing on a somewhat constrained operational definition of the 'social' in his investigations of individual development in instructional settings. However, in his early writing, Vygotsky provides an emergent sociological position on pedagogy that attests to his own evolving aspirations. He argues that:

> … pedagogics is never and was never politically indifferent, since, willingly or unwillingly, through its own work on the psyche, it has always adopted a particular social pattern, political line, in accordance with the dominant social class that has guided its interests (Vygotsky, 1997: 348).

Vygotsky was thus suggesting a process of social formation in the development of educational ideas: pedagogies arise and are shaped in particular social circumstances. He is also seen by some as being concerned with much more than face-to-face interaction between teacher and the one taught: It is quite possible to regard the school itself as a 'message' that is, a fundamental factor of education, because, as an institution and quite apart from the content of its teaching, it implies a certain structuring of time and space and is based on a system of social relations (between pupils and teacher, between the pupils themselves, between the school and it surroundings, and so on) (Ivic, 1989: 434).

This statement calls for a radical extension in the scope of the understanding of pedagogy than has been adopted in much of the present classroom research, and it would seem that others have also noted a similar challenge.

> We argue that in order to understand social mediation it is necessary to take into account ways in which the practices of a community, such as school and the family, are structured by their institutional context. Cultural tools and the practices they are associated with, have their existence in communities, which in turn occupy positions in the broader social structure. These wider social structures impact on the interactions between the participants and the cultural tools (Abreu & Elbers, 2005: 4).

Taken together with Vygotsky's development of units of analysis that conceptually integrate person and context, this understanding of pedagogy may be seen to reveal a concern to create a broadly based account of a person formed in as well as forming culture and society. What is interesting is that his conceptual orientation is also implicit in the general definition of pedagogy offered by Bernstein (1999), who suggests that:

> … pedagogy is a sustained process whereby somebody(s) acquires new forms or develops existing forms of conduct, knowledge, practice and criteria, from somebody(s) or something deemed to be an appropriate provider and evaluator. Appropriate either from the point of view of the acquirer or by some other body(s) or both (Bernstein, 1999: 259).

Now, this definition emphasizes that conduct, knowledge, practice and criteria may all be developed from 'somebody(s) or something' and sets it apart from definitions of teaching or learning that attend only to matters of skills and

knowledge. Moreover, it suggests that a complete analysis of processes of development and learning within pedagogic practice must consider cognitive and affective matters. It also suggests that pedagogic provision may be thought of in terms of the arrangement of material things as well as persons. This would appear to accord with the opinion that Vygotsky aspired to a view of the breadth of formative influences in pedagogic relations.

The introduction of new tools into human activity does more than improve a specific form of functioning – it transforms it. The focus of research in this tradition is on how the inclusion of tools and signs leads to qualitative transformation in human functioning. In the second phase of Vygotsky's (1987) work appearing in parts of *Thinking and Speech*, he discusses the process of development in terms of changes in the functional relationship between speaking and thinking. He asserts that "… change in the functional structure of consciousness is the main and central content of the entire process of mental development" (Vygotsky, 1987: 188). The incorporation of the setting of development into an account of social formation of mind requires an enhanced understanding of mediation. The philosophy of 'ideality', according to which humans inscribe significance and value into the very physical objects of their environment, is of relevance to this demand. Ideality results from sensuously objective activity, transforms and creates the activity of social beings. Thus, the "… transcendental account of the origin of subject and object in activity portrays nature as a kind of shapeless raw material given form by human agency. Nature is the clay on which humanity inscribes its mark" (Bakhurst, 1995: 173).

> Russian thinking has developed in a culture that embodied a powerful anti-Cartesian element. This contrasts with the kind of intellectual environment, found in many settings in the West, where so much effort has been expended in conceptualizing the mind as a 'self-contained private realm, set over against the objective, 'external' world of material things, and populated by subjective states revealed only to the 'self' presiding over them (Bakhurst, 1995: 155–156).

The argument in this article is that culture and community are not merely independent factors that discriminate between settings. They are, as it were, the mediational medium with and through which ideas (and learning) are developed. It is through tool use that individual- psychological and cultural-historical processes become interwoven and co-create each other, and it is this understanding which lies at the very heart of Vygotsky's thesis. The cultural historical nature of the development of ideality is emphasized at the macro and micro level of analysis. He also seeks to unify the analysis of the ideal and the material. Arti-

facts are both ideal (conceptual) and material. "Their creators and users exhibit a corresponding duality of thought, at once grounded in the material here and now, yet simultaneously capable of entertaining the far away, the long ago, and the never has-been" (Cole, 1994: 94). Similarly, Wartofsky's (1973) definition of artifacts as objectifications of human needs and intentions is already invested with cognitive and affective content. He distinguishes between three hierarchical levels of the notion of artifacts. <u>Primary artifacts</u> include needles, clubs and bowls, which are used directly in the making of things. <u>Secondary artifacts</u> are representations of primary artifacts and of modes of action using primary artifacts. They are therefore traditions or beliefs. <u>Tertiary artifacts</u> are imagined worlds. Works of art are examples of these tertiary artifacts or imagined worlds. These three artifact levels function in processes of cultural mediation. These processes may be viewed as pedagogic in the widest sense of the term and are compatible with the following definition of implicit mediation:

> … part of an already ongoing communicative stream that is brought into contact with other forms of action. Indeed, one of the properties that characterizes implicit mediation is that it involves signs, especially natural language, whose primary function is communication . . . they are part of a pre-existing, independent stream of communicative action that becomes integrated with other forms of goal-directed behavior (Wertsch, 2007: 185).

This account of implicit mediation echoes some of Bernstein's (2000) work on invisible mediation. Bernstein paid very close attention to what he termed invisible semiotic mediation – how the unself-conscious everyday discourse mediates mental dispositions, tendencies to respond to situations in certain ways and how it puts in place beliefs about the world one lives in, including phenomena that are supposedly in nature and those which are said to be in our culture. Here discourse is not treated as simply the regulator of cognitive functions; it is, as Bernstein states, also central to the shaping of dispositions, identities and practices.

To understand these forms of mediation, we must take into account ways in which practices of school and the family are structured. These have arisen and have been shaped by the societal, cultural and historical circumstances in which interpersonal exchanges arise, and they, in turn, shape thoughts and feelings, identities and aspirations for action of those engaged in interpersonal exchange in those contexts. This should provide a means of relating the social cultural historical context, the setting of development, to the form of the artifact. If processes of social formation are posited, research requires a theoretical description

of the possibilities for social products in terms of principles regulating the social relations in which they are produced. We need to understand the principles of communication in terms derived from a study of principles of social regulation at the institutional or organizational level.

Production of discursive artifacts

In this section, I argue that we need to understand the ways in which artifacts are produced if we are to be in a position to investigate pedagogic effects on the basis of a wider understanding of the pedagogic setting. As we talk, we enter the flow of communication in a stream of both history and future; researchers need to have some definition of the situation or activity at hand. This definition must in some way relate to the structuring of the setting and the way in which categories are constructed in institutions. Thus:

> By sorting things out we are able to cope with complexity and maintain a measure of social order in our private and professional lives… This is a historical process initiated by individuals in specific activities (e.g., personal concerns), but when generalized, the resulting categories may serve as governing parts of institutional activities (e.g., laws) (Morch, Nygard & Ludvigsen, 2010: 186).

At a very general level, a challenge has been set within modern interpretations of Marxist theory: "… social life … must be understood in terms that do justice both to objective material, social and cultural structures and to the constituting practices and experiences of individuals and groups" (Calhoun, LiPuma, & Postone, 1993: 3). There is a long running debate as to whether Vygotsky was a Marxist who wished to create a Marxist psychology. There is no doubt that he drew on theoretical Marxism, and it has been argued, for example, by Bernstein (2000) that this in itself presented him with a particular theoretical challenge.

A crucial problem of theoretical Marxism is the inability of the theory to provide descriptions of micro-level processes, except by projecting macro-level concepts on to the micro-level unmediated by intervening concepts through which the micro-level can be both uniquely described and related to the macro-level. Marxist theory can provide the orientation and the conditions the micro language must satisfy if it is to be 'legitimate'. Thus, such a language must be materialist, not idealist, dialectic in method, and its principles of development and change must resonate with Marxist principles. In addition, there are limita-

tions in the Marxian interpretation of Hegel's conception of self-creation though labour:

> Human nature is not found within the human individual but in the movement between the inside and the outside, in the worlds of artifact use and artifact creation . . . the creative and dynamic potential of concrete work process and technologies remains underdeveloped in his (Marx's) work (Engeström & Miettinen, 1999: 5).

If activities are to be thought of as 'socially rooted and historically developed', how do we describe them in relation to their social, cultural and historical contexts of production?

If Vygotsky (1987) was arguing that formation of mind is a socially mediated process, then what theoretical and operational understandings of the social, cultural, historical production of 'tools' or artifacts do we need to develop in order to empirically investigate the processes of development? The metaphor of the 'tool' itself serves to detract attention away from the relation between its structure and the context of its production.

> The metaphor of 'tool' draws attention to a device, an empowering device, but there are some reasons to consider that the tool, its internal specialized structure is abstracted from its social construction. Symbolic 'tools' are never neutral; intrinsic to their construction are social classifications, stratifications, distributions and modes of recontextualizing (Bernstein, 1993: xvii).

These questions concerning the production of artifacts or tools would appear to be a matter of some priority for the development of the field, as so much of the empirical work that has been undertaken struggles to connect the analysis of the formative effect of mediated activity or tool use with the analysis of tool or artifact production. I now invoke an account of the production of psychological tools or artifacts, such as discourse, that allows for exploration of formative effects of the social context of production at the psychological level. This also involves a consideration of the possibilities afforded to different social actors as they take up positions and are positioned in social products such as discourse. This discussion of production thus opens up the possibility of analysing the possible positions that an individual may take up in a field of social practice. I use the following statement as a device to start a debate about the relationship between principles of social production, regulation and individual functioning:

> The substantive issue of the theory is to explicate the processes whereby a given distribution of power and principles of control are translated into specialised principles

of communication differentially, and often unequally, distributed to social groups/classes. And how such an unequal distribution of forms of communication, initially (but not necessarily terminally) shapes the formation of consciousness of members of these groups/classes in such a way as to relay both opposition and change. The critical issue is the translation of power and control into principles of communication which become (successful or otherwise) their carriers or relays (Bernstein, 2000: 91).

Particularly when the cultural artifact takes the form of a pedagogic discourse, we should also analyse its structure in the context of its production. The term 'pedagogic' does not mean just those discourses that are enacted in educational institutions. The general practitioner, the policymaker, the therapist, the broadcaster and the journalist are all involved in a form of pedagogic practice. From this point of view (and given that human beings have the capacity to influence their own development through their use of the artifacts, including discourses, which they and others create or have created), we then need a language of description that allows us to identify and investigate.

A language for describing pedagogic practice

The development of Vygotskian theory calls for the development of languages of description that will facilitate a multi-level understanding of pedagogic discourse, the varieties of its practice and contexts of its realization and production. Different social structures give rise to different modalities of language that have specialized mediational properties. They have arisen and have been shaped by the societal, cultural and historical circumstances in which interpersonal exchanges arise, and they in turn shape the thoughts and feelings, the identities and aspirations for action of those engaged in interpersonal exchange in those contexts. Hence the relations of power and control, which regulate social interchange, give rise to specialized principles of communication, as they mediate social relations. Within activity theory, the production of the outcome is often discussed – but not the production and structure of the tool itself. The rules, community and division of labour are analysed in terms of the contradictions and dilemmas that arise within the activity system specifically with respect to the production of the object.

The language that Bernstein has developed, uniquely, allows researchers to take measures of institutional modality. That is to describe and position the discursive, organizational and interactional practice of the institution. Through the concepts of classification and framing, Bernstein provides the language of

description for moving from those issues that activity theory handles as rules, community and division of labour to the discursive tools or artifacts that are produced and deployed within an activity. Research may then seek to investigate the connections between the rules children use to make sense of their pedagogic world and the modality of that world. For example, in a school, the curriculum may then be analysed in terms of a social division of labour and pedagogic practice as its constituent social relations through which the specialization of that social division (subjects, units of the curriculum) are transmitted and expected to be acquired. Power is spoken of in terms of classification which is manifested in category relations, which themselves generate recognition rules (possession of which allows the acquirer to recognize as difference that is marked by a category). Control is spoken of in terms of framing which is manifested in pedagogic communication governed by realization rules (possession of which allows the acquirer to perform, in this case speaking, in a way that is seen as competent and realize difference that is marked by a category). The distribution of power and principles of control specialize structural features and their pedagogic communicative relays differently.

A key feature of the structure of pedagogic discourse involves making the distinction between instructional and regulative discourse. The former refers to the transmission of skills and their relation to each other, while the latter refers to the principles of social order, relation and identity. Regulative discourse communicates the school's public moral practice, values, beliefs and attitudes, principles of conduct, character and manner. It also transmits features of the school's local history, local tradition and community relations.

Different institutional modalities may be described in terms of the relationship between the relations of power and control which gives rise to distinctive discursive artifacts. For example, with respect to schooling, where the theory of instruction gives rise to a strong classification and strong framing of the pedagogic practice, it is expected that there will be a separation of discourses (school subjects), an emphasis upon acquisition of specialized skills, the teacher will be dominant in the formulation of intended learning and the pupils are constrained by the teacher's practice. The relatively strong control on the pupils' learning itself acts as a means of maintaining order in the context where the learning takes place. This form of instructional discourse contains regulative functions. With strong classification and framing, the social relations between teachers and pupils will be more asymmetrical, that is, more clearly hierarchical. In this instance, the regulative discourse and its practice is more explicit and

distinguishable from the instructional discourse. Where the theory of instruc-tion gives rise to a weak classification and weak framing of practice, children will be encouraged to be active in the classroom, to undertake enquiry and perhaps work in groups at their own pace. Here the relations between teacher and pupils will have the appearance of being more symmetrical. In these circumstances, it is difficult to separate instructional discourse from regulative discourse, as these are mutually embedded. The formulation of pedagogic discourse, as an embed-ded discourse comprised of instructional and regulative components, allows for the analysis of the production of such embedded discourses in activities struc-tured through specifiable relations of power and control within institutions.

The pedagogic subject

Subject–subject and within subject relations are under-theorized in activity theory. In activity the possibilities for use of artifacts depend on the social posi-tion occupied by an individual. Sociologists and sociolinguists have produced empirical verification of this suggestion. The notion of 'subject' within activity theory requires expansion and clarification. In many studies, the term 'subject perspective' is used. The term infers subject position but does little to illuminate the formative processes that gave rise to this perspective. It requires a theoretical account of social relations and positioning. The theoretical move that Bernstein makes in relating positioning to the distribution of power and principles of control opens up the possibility of grounding the analysis of social positioning and mental dispositions in relation to the distribution of labour in an activity.

The concept of social positioning can be brought to the fore in a discussion of social identity. Bernstein used this concept to refer to the establishing of a spe-cific relation to other subjects and to the creating of specific relationships within subjects. Social positioning through meanings is inseparable from power rela-tions. Bernstein (1990) provided an elaboration of his early general argument:

> More specifically, class-regulated codes position subjects with respect to dominant and
> dominated forms of communication and to the relationships between them. Ideology
> is constituted through and in such positioning. From this perspective, ideology inheres
> in and regulates modes of relation. Ideology is not so much a content as a mode of
> relation for the realizing of content. Social, cultural, political and economic relations
> are intrinsic to pedagogic discourse (Bernstein, 1990: 13–14).

Here the linkage is forged between social positioning and psychological attributes. This is the process through which Bernstein talks of the shaping of the possibilities for consciousness. The dialectical relation between discourse and subject makes it possible to think of pedagogic discourse as a semiotic means that regulates or traces the generation of subjects' positions in discourse. We can understand the potency of pedagogic discourse in selectively producing subjects and their identities in a temporal and spatial dimension. Within the Bernsteinian thesis, there exists an ineluctable relation between one's social positioning, one's mental disposition and one's relation to the distribution of labour in society. Here the emphasis on discourse is theorized in its influence on dispositions, identities and practices rather than only in terms of the shaping of cognitive functions.

> Through the notions of 'voice' and 'message', he brings the division of labour and principles of control (rules) into relation with social position in practice. The implication is that subject in an activity theory driven depiction should be represented by a space of possibility (voice) in which a particular position (message) is taken up. It is also argued that multiple identities are developed within figured worlds and that these are 'historical developments, grown through continued participation in the positions defined by the social organization of those world's activity' (Holland, Lachiotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998: 41).

This body of work represents a significant development in our understanding of the concept of the 'subject' in activity theory. Goals and actions are free-floating, generally intelligible, cultural–historically contingent possibilities. Because concrete embodied actions articulate between society and the self, a person's identity does not constitute a singularity but is itself inherently intelligible within the cultural unit. It is because of what they see each other doing that two (or more) persons come to "… recognize themselves as mutually recognizing one another" (Hegel, 1806/1977: 112). Publicly visible actions serve as the ground of recognizing in the other another self that recognizes in me its corresponding other. It is this linkage between self and other through patterned embodied actions that have led some to theorize identity in terms of agency and culture in which a person participates (Roth, 2007a).

From my point of view, there remains a need to develop the notion of 'figured world' in such a way that we can theorize, analyse and describe the processes by which that world is 'figured'. The concept of social positioning seems to me to concur with the analysis outlined by Holland et al. (1998). Bernstein (2000) relates social positioning to the formation of mental dispositions in terms of

the identity's relation to the distribution of labour in society. It is through the deployment of his concepts of voice and message that Bernstein forges the link between division of labour, social position and discourse, opening up the possibilities for a language of description that will serve empirical as well analytical purposes. The distinction between what can be recognized as belonging to a voice and a particular message is formulated in terms of distinction between relations of power and relations of control. In his last book, Bernstein (2000) argues:

> Voice refers to the limits on what could be realized if the identity was to be recognized as legitimate. The classificatory (boundary) relation established the voice. In this way power relations, through the classificatory relation, regulated voice. However voice, although a necessary condition for establishing what could and could not be said and its context, could not determine what was said and the form of its contextual realization; the message. The message was a function of framing (control). The stronger the framing the smaller the space accorded for potential variation in the message (Bernstein, 2000: 204).

Thus, social categories constitute voices and control over practices constitutes messages.

Identity becomes the outcome of the voice–message relation. Production and reproduction

have their social basis in categories and practices; that categories are constituted by the social division of labour and that practices are constituted by social relations within production/ reproduction; that categories constitute 'voices' and that practices constitute their 'messages'; message is dependent upon 'voice', and the subject is a dialectical relation between 'voice' and message. Thus a socially structured zone of possibility rather than a singular point would represent subject. This representation would signify a move to attempt to theorize the subject as emerging in a world that was 'figured' by relations of power and control.

Conclusion

It is necessary to take into account ways in which the practices of a community, such as school and the family are structured by their institutional context and that social structures impact on the interactions between the participants and the cultural tools. In a footnote to the introduction of a recent volume of the

journal *Mind, Culture and Activity*, Roth (2007b) sees what might be the root of a problem in translation:

> English translations of Marx and Leont'ev use the adjective social (sozial, [sozial'no]) where the German/Russian versions use societal (gesellschaftlich, [obshchestvenno]). The two English adjectives have very different implications in that the latter concept immediately introduces society as a major mediating moment into the kinds of relations that people entertain and realize (Roth, 2007b: 143).

Thus, it is not just a matter of the structuring of interactions between participants and other cultural tools; rather that the institutional structures themselves are cultural products serving as mediators in their own right. In this sense, they are 'messages', that is, fundamental factors of education. When we speak, we enter the flow of communication in a stream of both history and future. When we speak in institutions, history enters the flow of communication through the invisible or implicit mediation of institutional structures. There is therefore a need to analyse and codify the mediational structures as they deflect and direct attention of participants and as they are shaped through interactions which they also shape. In this sense, I advocate the development of cultural-historical analysis of the invisible or implicit mediational properties of institutional structures which themselves are transformed through the actions of those whose interactions are influenced by them. This move would serve to both expand the gaze on activity theory and at the same time bring sociologies of cultural transmission into a framework in which institutional structures are analysed as historical products, being themselves subject to dynamic transformation and change as people act within and on them.

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