Vygotsky in the Zone

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Recommended Citation
Available at: https://vc.bridgew.edu/br_rev/vol41/iss1/18

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Vygotsky in the Zone

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Ah Vygotsky, transformer of understanding how children learn,
the James Dean, the Chadwick Boseman of 1930s Russian psychology.
Your scorching intellect extinguished too soon.
Yet you created an unprecedented, unparalleled socio-cultural theory in ten short years.

You dared to counter Piaget’s view that young children talk only about themselves,
Realizing they were practicing external thinking, soon to be their rich “inner speech”— your seismic insight.
Leading Flavell to know the self-monitoring system he named metacognition.

How masterfully you unearthed that missing piece of language acquisition.
Expanding the brilliant work of behaviorists, cognitivists, and nativists,
you realized fully developed language required children's social interactions.

Riffing off the power of these social interactions, you observed how learning happens most effectively.
You recognized how children absorbed concepts from adults and each other.
You coined the term “zone of proximal development” to describe this phenomenon.

Almost a century later, after many translations, your theories thrive.
Now we watch young children interact, problem solve, and voice play by plays.
We teach children to use their inner speech, their monitoring voice, to reflect on their own thinking.
We group children of different abilities to learn in perfect synchronicity.
Ah Vygotsky, in your brief thirty years you generated monumental learning theories.
You drew us into your zone, to be enriched and ever changed by you.

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