



An Introduction to Vygotsky. Harry Daniels, ed. New York: Routledge, 1996. 290 pp.

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In the introductory chapter of *An Introduction to Vygotsky*, Harry Daniels describes the broad focus of this book as the development of Vygotsky's "analysis of the relationship between the social and psychological which is concerned with development and learning" (p. 1). Daniels and several of his contributors also stress the importance of viewing the emergence and development of Vygotsky's ideas within their social, political, and historical context. Accordingly, Daniels's introduction and several of the subsequent chapters describe changes in, interpretations of, and debates about Vygotsky's ideas over time.

Following Daniels's introduction are 10 articles reprinted from major journals and texts. In these articles, authors examine key elements and extensions of Vygotsky's work. Although chapters have not been explicitly organized by themes, several themes can be discerned within and across these chapters. Some authors address relations between individual, social, and cultural development (Wertsch and Tulviste, chapter two; Holzman, chapter three; and Lave and Wenger, chapter six). Some describe Vygotsky's theories either by tracing the development of Vygotsky's ideas from a historical perspective (Minick, chapter one and Kozulin, chapter four) or describing key aspects of Vygotsky's general theory (Wertsch and Tulviste, chapter two). Others focus more on the development of Vygotsky's concepts in such particular domains as language (Holzman, chapter three and Emerson, chapter five) or memory (Bakhurst, chapter nine). A fourth subset of authors explores extensions and implications of Vygotsky's work, particularly the zone of proximal development, for teaching, learning, and assessment in interactive contexts (Lave and Wenger, chapter six; Engestrom, chapter seven; Hedegaard, chapter eight; Campione, chapter 10; and Schaffer, chapter 11).

Daniels has selected chapters that raise interesting issues and questions about the significance of Vygotsky's work for the disciplines of psychology, linguistics, and education. Authors also raise issues currently debated among Vygotskyian scholars. Several chapters are particularly helpful in placing the development of Vygotsky's ideas and later interpretations of his work in a social, political, and historical context, a perspective that deepens one's appreciation of Vygotsky's work. But the diversity of content included in this volume's chapters, and in some cases, the isolation of texts from their full and original contexts, contribute to two sets of problems.



First, *An Introduction to Vygotsky* generally seems more relevant for advanced than novice readers. Most authors discuss issues that expand upon an informed reading of Vygotsky's work, rather than providing a cohesive introduction. Authors vary considerably in the degree to which each makes specific reference to and explication of Vygotsky's ideas; several explain particular aspects of Vygotsky's work, but none present a comprehensive review. Authors frequently describe either interpretations or implications of Vygotsky's work. In order to understand such extensions of Vygotsky's approach, readers must have prior familiarity with Vygotsky's own writings. Several chapters draw heavily on linguistic approaches that may be unfamiliar to students new to Vygotsky's work. A few texts have been taken out of their original contexts, and this also reduces their clarity and significance.

A second problem lies in a lack of clarity in this volume's themes and the integration of chapters into the text as a whole. Themes suggested at the start of this review represent my attempts to identify relations among individual chapters which are not explicitly stated in the text. Daniels's introductory chapter provides a review of some of Vygotsky's key concepts, background and context, and suggestions for additional reading. However, it does not clearly identify themes or relate issues between chapters. Daniels does discuss each chapter individually, but without providing a clear frame for viewing individual chapters in relation to each other and the overall themes of the book. Prospective readers of this volume might have benefited from an explicit grouping of related chapters into subsections with thematically based headings and introductions to these themes in the book's introductory chapter or notes at the start of each subsection.

Despite these critiques, *An Introduction to Vygotsky* provides a set of interesting readings that does introduce readers to some of the debates and interpretations surrounding Vygotsky's original writings and implications of Vygotsky's work for education and assessment. These readings will help researchers and scholars already familiar with Vygotsky's work to place Vygotsky's theory and related interpretations and debates in their historical and cultural contexts. Chapter two, by Wertsch and Tulviste, might also be useful for introducing such constructs as the zone of proximal development to students. In general, however, I would suggest using this text with graduate students who have been previously exposed to or possibly are concurrently reading Vygotsky's own writings rather than in an introductory course.

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